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### SPECIAL NOTICE.

The fiscal year of this Society terminates on the 31st day of March. Treasurers and Depositaries of Branch Societies are earnestly requested to forward to Mr. John Young, Bible House, Toronto, in good time, all funds in their hands, whether from *contributions* or *sales*, so as to be included in the revenue for this year.

The reports of Branches, subscription lists, etc., and any information concerning the decease of life members and office-bearers, any change of officers or residence, or any other matter of importance, should also be forwarded to the Secretaries, so that the necessary corrections may be made, and that our Annual Report may be as complete as possible.

### THE BIBLE.

TESTED BY ITS HISTORY AND BY ITS PRACTICAL MORAL POWER OVER MEN.

The following paragraphs are taken from a most impressive discourse by Dr. Henry Allou, of London :

The Bible is our authoritative religious book claiming to be a supernatural revelation of the thought and heart of God. We say of it that it is "given by inspiration of God," and that it is full of moral power—"profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," so that by means of it "the man of God is made perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Is then the Bible, as tested by its history and by its practical moral power over men, the efficient instrument for recovering men from godlessness and

moral evil, and to piety and virtue, that it is here affirmed to be? Are men who receive the Bible and submit themselves to it made good men, or otherwise? Is the practical influence of the Bible beneficial or injurious?

On many sides its claims are disallowed. It is denied that in any divine or special sense it is inspired at all. A book of transcendent human genius it is admitted to be, but inspired of God only as all intellect is of God—only as Plato, and Bacon, and Shakspeare, and Milton, are inspired. It is not, we are told, even true as a history. Its chronology is preposterous, its statistics are erroneous, its science is false, its miracles are impossible violations of natural law, its prophecies are but remarkable coincidences or sagacious prognostications. There is in the book nothing that may not be accounted for on natural principles. Probably at no previous time has the literature of Christianity been so variously and severely questioned, or more contemptuously disparaged.

How then are the divine claims of the book to be vindicated? Christianity has scholars and philosophers abundantly competent to reply to the scholars and philosophers of infidelity; to determine how far these exceptions are well founded, and what value is to be attached to such inferences as may be drawn from them. Nay, it is not arrogant to say that the chief learning and science, criticism and philosophy of the world, are arrayed on the side of Christianity. The greatest names in the history of learning have long been and still are those of men of devout religious belief. The master minds of our literary and philosophical history have accepted this book, not indeed in the forms which its less instructed or more fanatical believers may have insisted upon, but yet as pre-eminently and uniquely a book from God.

Hitherto, moreover, every assault of hostile criticism has only called forth new champions of the faith, who by fresh researches and new lines of argument have shown how impregnable and manifold its defences are. If, therefore, we adduce empirical arguments, it is not for lack of philosophical ones. While every skeptical attack has been refuted again and again, the great apologies of Christianity are still unanswered. From Augustine to Butler, from Athanasius to Paley, the chief scholastic bulwarks of Christian theology have been called forth by hostile assaults. And thus it must ever be. "No weapon formed against it shall prosper."

But the vindication of the Bible need not be left to learned argumentation. The battle need not be relegated to the fields of philosophy and criticism. We may appeal to the religious character and to the religious achievements of the Bible. Alone among the religious books of the world it is a book of history—it consists of historical facts concerning men and things: and further, as a book, itself has a history among the nations of the earth. The Bible is not like the Zendavesta, a book of liturgies; nor like the Vedic Hymns, a book of impossible legends; nor like the writings of Confucius and Plato, a book of moral philosophy; nor like the Koran, a book of mere doctrine and precept. Fundamentally and characteristically it is history. The Old-Testament is the lengthened history of a nation, in which its entire religious cultus is embodied; the New Testament is the history of a Person, in whom all distinctive Christian teachings are incorporated. This subjects the Bible to the most searching tests. What, then, is the moral character of the Bible as judged by the religious sense of men; and what have been the moral effects which in the course of history it has wrought?

Take as a test of the Old Testament the Book of Genesis. Is it history or is it legend? Is it from God or is it of men? Do we need a Niebuhr to give us a reply? Nay, verily. Make what abatement we may for historic or scientific difficulties, for obscurities or errors, great, unmistakable, and indisputable religious characteristics remain. How, for instance, are we to account for the personal characters of its heroes? Abel, Enoch, Abraham—whence came the conception and delineation of such men? Moses is older than Homer. How is it that Abraham, the "friend of God," is not, like

Herakles, a demigod or a hero? Always in closest intimacy with Jehovah, he is yet a proper man, as human in all his thoughts and actions as the men of to-day. How is it, again, that the Jehovah whom he worships is not like Zeus, an incongruous conception of supernatural attributes, human imperfections, and even vile passions—hatred, cruelty, and lust? While the worshipper has no single trait of divinity, the Jehovah whom he worships has no single trait of humanity. How is it that these conceptions of the human and divine, and of their relations, so incomparably transcend all the mythologies of the world, that in fundamental ideas we have neither surpassed nor altered them since?

How is it, again, that the morality taught in the Book of Genesis so singularly transcends even that of Plato, as might easily be shown in important details; nay, that it is so wonderfully accordant with the moral conceptions and feelings of our day, so that Christian preachers deduce the greatest religious lessons from them? The characters of these old heroes—Abraham, Jacob, Joseph—are fully delineated, and their faults and immoralities exposed. The moral portraiture is suffused with the colouring of their own age and feeling; and yet wrong is never confounded with right, we are never permitted to approve the wrong or disapprove the right. Even in the delineation of Jacob, one of the most complex and tortuous characters in history, the line between right and wrong is never once blurred or transgressed. The wrong of Jacob whom God chooses, the right of Esau whom God rejects, are clearly and firmly set forth, and the religious principles which justify both are clearly indicated.

Are we then asked for a vindication of the Book of Genesis? We will not contend about the science of its first chapters, about the chronology of its generations, about the ethnology of its dispersion. Let science determine how much or how little of these are exact. We appeal to its religious evidence, to its wonderful delineations of moral character, to its grand conceptions of God as the great first cause of all things and as the ruler of men, to its lofty and unique morality, to its noble types of religious manhood. The evidence of the theological and moral greatness is surely far more than that of the science or the history! How came it to pass that when the philosophy of a Plato and the morality of an Aristotle were so signally defective, this old book of three thousand years ago anticipated the fundamental theology and morality of our nineteenth century? Is not the only possible answer—These were men whom God had healed, and this is God's record concerning them? Difficulties of science or of history have no weight against these moral evidences; they are negative only—difficulties of our ignorance or of our erroneous interpretation, which greater information might remove. But: there can be no mistake about the positive features of these religious and moral characteristics, and before the claims of the record can be rejected these must be accounted for.

Turning to the New Testament, still grander moral delineations are presented to us. Peerless and divine stands the moral portraiture of Jesus Christ. Whence is it? of man or of God? a mere human conception or a divine inspiration? Is it history or is it romance?

Whatever we may think about Christianity, Christ himself is the greatest moral miracle of human history. Who but He, when the Pharisees asked for a sign, could have rebuked them because they did not see the divine attestation that he himself was—the divine beauty of his life, the divine truth of his words? Had they been “of the Truth” they would have “heard his voice.” His works would have appealed to their true hearts, as the Alpine horn appeals to the answering mountains; they would no more have asked the spiritual Christ to attest his divine mission by miracles, than they would have asked the astronomer to demonstrate the noonday sun. Who but he, when Philip requested to see the Father, could have replied, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father?”

Whence, then, the New Testament conception of Jesus Christ? It is a question that has been a thousand times asked, but that has confessedly never been answered. Had Jesus never lived could his character have been imagined? Has any conception of romance approached it since? Whence that pure childhood, that sinless youth, that peerless manhood? a life without defect, a character without a flaw, in which no fault had to be corrected, no stain washed out. For Jesus did not, as others, *become good*; he *was good*, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." What a wonderful character it is, however we look at it.

Think of his calm, majestic *strength*, his perfect self-possession, his unswerving dignity, and yet his nature intense even to passion in its emotions. He denounces the Pharisees, but without a vestige of unholy passion: he drives out the money-changers, but without a spark of religious fanaticism.

Think of the *wisdom* of his holiness. His is not the innocence that is ignorant of human life, it is the strength that is above it.

Think of his *self-consciousness* and *self-assertion*. He never confesses defect, never expresses a feeling of unworthiness. No tear of penitence rolls down his cheek, no prayer for mercy breaks from his lip, no confession of moral weakness enters into his prayer. When he speaks concerning himself it is to avow his human faultlessness, to assert his divine perfection and prerogative. For nineteen centuries Jesus of Nazareth has been the world's idea of moral goodness, as perfect on earth as God is perfect in heaven. His fearless challenge to the men of his day, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" has been repeated to every gainsayer since. His character has been subjected to unparalleled tests, and without the discovery of a single flaw. Scepticism itself, while rejecting Christianity, has almost uniformly done homage to its Christ. Acknowledgments of moral admiration and reverence—almost of worship—are perpetually wrung from the apostles of infidelity, one of the latest and most emphatic from Mr. John Stuart Mill.

The purest and loftiest name of antiquity is that of Socrates. Who ventures to darken the bright portraiture of Christ with even a suggestion of the defects of Socrates? What wonder that Rousseau was constrained to say, "If the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God. His history has marks of truth so palpable, so striking, and so perfectly inimitable, that its inventor would incite our admiration more than its hero."

Think again of the singular *proportion and adjustment* of his character. What a wonderful harmony of greatness and gentleness, holiness and pity, strength and sympathy; the grandeur of the loftiest manhood, the tenderness of the gentlest womanhood. How the two hemispheres of human excellences are in him filled and rounded to a full-orbed humanity. He was more than perfect man, he was ideal humanity. We reverence as much as we love him, we love him as much as we worship him.

Think of his *moral excellences in combination with his intellectual greatness*. His clearness, calmness, strength! How singularly free from over-excitement of the imagination, from all approach to self-delusion, from all error and defect. He is never impulsive, never dogmatic, never in extremes. His goodness is never weak or sentimental. In everything he is wise and strong, intelligent, profound, majestic. He sanctions no single excess, he prohibits no lawful enjoyment. He wondrously holds the balance of life, always and perfectly preserving the golden mean. His teaching is still our perfect ideal of life; none of his principles are found erroneous, none of his requirements fall into disuse. His moral kingdom is planted in the heart of our common life, and claims everything in it. He does not call men out of the world in order to become his disciples; he sends them into the world, to serve him there, and to enthrone him there as the Lord of human life.

What a conception his *spiritual kingdom* is! He, a peasant of the mountain village of Nazareth, without literary education, ignorant of the world's his-

tory, of its geography, of its races, of its politics; nurtured amid the misconceptions, prejudices, and exclusiveness of his countrymen—conceives a kingdom of pure spiritual life, that is to include all races of men and all generations; in its principles and requirements, alike adapted to the ancient Asiatic and to the modern European, to the shivering Esquimaux and to the torrid Hindoo; a kingdom of universal brotherhood, in which all men are to be knit together in holiness and love; a kingdom to be won and ruled by only moral forces, whose only sword is “the sword of the Spirit,” whose only coercion is the coercion of strong conviction and affection; a kingdom whose foundations are to be laid in a cross—the great instrument of his triumphs—and which unaided is to maintain a successful war against all the opposing powers of the earth, against all the strongest passions of human nature. This was his conception, and for nineteen centuries the course of events has justified it. His cross has gone forth conquering and to conquer, and at this moment it is the symbol of the mightiest intellectual and moral forces of the world.

What must have been the intellectual and moral grandeur of the nature in which such a conception as this could be rooted, and out of which it could spring. The very conception is the greatest miracle of human history; upon any hypothesis it places its author infinitely higher than all the statesmen, all the philosophers, all the moralists who have appeared in our world.

May we not, then, fairly appeal to the moral portraiture of the New Testament in proof that it is of God? Not merely to its apostles and saints, its Ephesians and Corinthians, its *healed men*, but also to their healer, to him who is the incarnate ideal of all goodness, the perfection of the human in the divine. If our blessed Lord never existed as these brief records of the four evangelists so artlessly and yet so profoundly delineate him, whence their conception of him? If four men could simultaneously imagine such a character, each presenting an individual portrait of him, and yet all so congruous and harmonious—why not a fifth or sixth? Skepticism has had its men of genius—why has it never produced another gospel?

Upon the moral integrity of its Christ Christianity is staked. He alleged that he wrought miracles. He bade the disciples of John tell their master the things they had seen and heard; how they deaf heard, the lame walked, the blind saw, and, most marvellous of all, the poor had the gospel preached unto them.

But if he never wrought such miracles, if they were miracles only in seeming, achievements of greater knowledge or cleverness, not only is his religion deprived of its credentials, but it is founded upon a huge imposture. The loftiest truth, the purest morality of the world, is the offspring of a lie—a moral solecism so great that our entire consciousness rejects it.

It is vain to talk about Christ's personal goodness and excellent doctrine, and deny his miracles. He declared that he raised Lazarus from the dead, that he himself came forth from the sepulchre. If these things did not occur in the sense intended, if the pretended death of Lazarus was only a pious fraud of the family at Bethany, if Christ himself was only in a state of suspended animation, he is infinitely less than a good man. He is found a false witness before God; he roots a holy religion in falsehood and fraud. He must be apologized for whenever he is named, his self-assertions excused, his self-selected credentials explained away. Is he not more culpable than Mohammed in his pretended journey to Paradise, more unscrupulous than the fabricator of the “Book of Mormon?” He claims more than religious teacher ever claimed, sets up a higher moral standard; and if his claims have forged credentials appended to them. Pharisees were right—he is “a deceiver of the people.” He whom we thought the most perfect of men is really one of the most base. I cannot receive as a perfect man a Christ like this. Either he himself was deceived, and must be ranked as the most credulous of men—and this in the face of the imperial intellect of the Sermon on the

Mount—or, there is no alternative, he is the incarnate Son of God. We must either receive the Christ altogether or reject him altogether. I could sooner disbelieve the entire Bible than the supernatural claims of such a Christ. “If Christ be not risen our preaching is vain, your faith is also vain.”

Nor is the *religious history* of the Bible less conclusive than its moral portraiture. Wherever it has come it has proved its divine power by healing men. The completed Scripture has existed for eighteen centuries. We are familiar with its history. Testimonies to its practical religious power have been adduced by its friends and wrung from its enemies. What nations can be compared in moral goodness with Christian nations? Who amongst the rejectors of Christianity could be put forward as competitors for the palm of virtue and philanthropy?

We know what Christianity did in apostolic times, when it came into contact with the unutterable depravities of Greece and Rome—what it found its converts, and what it made them. We know what it has done in every land to which it has come since;—what just now Europe is in contrast with Asia, America in contrast with Africa. We know what fifty years ago the South Sea Islands were, and what—the officers of our navy and the intercourse of our merchant ships being witnesses—they are now. And throughout its history, without a solitary exception, wherever the Bible has come, it has produced the effects that we see in the Sandwich Islands, in Tahiti, and in Madagascar. While, before it savagery and obscenity and bloodshed have rioted, and guilt has cowered and misery shrieked, behind it healed men have thronged—pardoned, purified, happy—filling its path with benedictions and virtue.

And its latest triumphs have been the most signal. A few chapters of the Bible, sometimes a single page, have sustained and propagated the Christianity of Madagascar; inspiring its converts with the virtue of saints and with the heroism of martyrs. I myself have looked upon a few dirt-stained and blood-stained verses brought home by Mr. Ellis, which wrought as a moral power to turn men from Satan unto God, and sustained their faith, first in caves and forests, and then in imprisonment and death; and wrought in them processes which, according to Mr. Ellis, made their prayers and praises and their moral virtues undistinguishable from those of our English churches.

No other book does this. Stand in a pulpit and read to men Plato, or Milton, or Bacon: where are there converts? whose hearts do they change? whose lives do they sanctify? Read to them the Bible, and healed men spring up everywhere, “walking, and leaping, and praising God.” There is no evidence so convincing as this; the truth that turns sinners into saints, that purifies men’s hearts, and makes their lives holy and benevolent, is the divinest of all truth.

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The precious results of sending young men in the name of all the churches into every home to circulate the word of God, and to urge upon all the importance of consecrating themselves to Christ, can never be known until the leaves of the judgment-book unfold. This work is one we believe no Christian or patriot can for a moment afford to ignore or withhold his cordial sympathy from.

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#### BEQUEST.

We beg to acknowledge the receipt of \$500 from A. E. Barker, Executor, being the amount of a bequest by the late Charles Robertson, Esq., of Kincardine, Ont., in aid of the work of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

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The “Building Committee” still require about \$2000 to clear the debt and furnish the Board Room. Contributions will be received thankfully.

# Bible Society Recorder.

TORONTO, 1st JANUARY, 1888.

## BOARD MEETINGS.

The usual monthly meeting of the Board was held on Tuesday, 18th Oct., at 7.30 p.m. Hon. G. W. Allan in the chair.

Rev. H. Grasett Baldwin led the devotional exercises.

After reading and confirming the minutes, the death of the Hon. Wm. McMaster, Vice-President and Treasurer, and of the Rev. Dr. Nelles, Vice-President, were referred to. It was ordered that suitable resolutions of condolence be prepared.

The appointment of a new Treasurer was deferred until a public meeting of the members of the society be called to amend Rule 12 of the Laws and Regulations of the Society, said meeting to take place on 18th November. The Directors to meet for monthly business on that evening instead of on the third Tuesday. A report from the Joint Agency and Colportage Committee was presented and held over for consideration at next board meeting.

A report from Joint Building Committee was read and adopted.

The Depository's cash account, list of gratuities, schedule of Colportage and Colporteurs' reports for September, were presented.

An application from the Rev. R. N. Brown, Gravenhurst, for a grant of Bibles was referred to the permanent Secretary to get fuller information.

Rev. Dr. Caven closed the meeting with prayer.

The Board met on Tuesday, November 15th, at 7.30 o'clock, p.m.

After prayer, led by Mr. Warring Kennedy, the meeting, in accordance with the proposition made at last meeting, adjourned till Friday, 18th, at 8 p.m.

The general meeting of the members of the Upper Canada Bible Society was held on the 18th November, at 7.30 o'clock p.m. Rev. Dr. McLaren in the chair.

The Rev. J. Burton opened the meeting with devotional exercises.

The Senior Honorary Secretary, Mr. Warring Kennedy, having stated the reason for which the meeting had been called, moved, seconded by Mr. John K. Macdonald, "That No. 12 of the Laws and Regulations be amended by the addition of the words 'or officer' after the word Director." Carried.

Rev. Dr. McLaren then closed the meeting with the benediction.

The adjourned meeting of the Board of Directors was held on Friday evening, 18th November, at 8 o'clock. Rev. Dr. McLaren in the chair.

Rev. J. Fielding Sweeney led the devotional exercises.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The following resolutions of condolence were presented, referring to the death of the Hon. Wm. McMaster and of the Rev. Dr. Nelles, both Vice-Presidents of this Society. It was ordered that copies of each be sent to the respective families of the deceased:—

**In Memoriam.—Hon. William McMaster.**

“The angel of death has again visited us, and with feelings of profound sorrow we are called upon to record the sudden removal from our midst on Thursday morning the 22nd day of September, 1887, of the Hon. Wm. McMaster, Senator of the Dominion, and Vice-President and Treasurer of this Society. Although he had attained the ripe age of 76 years and was officially the oldest member of the Board, the Directors little expected to be so soon deprived of his presence and help. So late as the evening previous to his being stricken down, a note was received from him apologizing for his absence from the monthly meeting of the Board. The late honorable gentleman became a member of the Bible Society in the year 1836, when it was known as the ‘Toronto Auxiliary Bible Society,’ at which date he was appointed minute secretary. He was elected a life member in 1853: elected a Vice-President in 1854; and Treasurer in 1856, which office he filled till the time of his death. During a period of 51 years, Mr. McMaster proved himself a warm and faithful supporter of the Society, recently evinced in a marked degree by his liberal contributions towards the erection of the new and beautiful building we now occupy for Bible purposes. His attachment to the Society was unswerving, and throughout this long term he commanded the respect and confidence of all who were identified with him in the good work. His punctuality and regularity of attendance at the meetings of the Board were often a subject of commendatory remark by his co-directors. His extended experience in connexion with the affairs of the Society, rendered his counsels very valuable, especially in circumstances of doubt and difficulty, and being now deprived of these the Board sensibly feels the loss it has sustained. The Hon. Senator occupied a high position in our city in the walks of commerce, finance, religion and benevolence, a position which he attained by a course of industry, perseverance and upright conduct, and by his readiness at all times to assist in ‘every good word and work,’ indeed few citizens ever filled as large a place in the commercial and religious life of Toronto. Although his familiar form will no longer be seen by us here, yet the memory of the late hon. gentleman will long be cherished by this Society. As we cast our eye over our roll of mortality we are reminded that ‘this is not our rest.’ The standard-bearers one by one are passing away, and we who are permitted to survive for a few days longer are impressed with the force of the scriptural admonition, ‘Whosoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.’ Eccl. ix, x. This Board tenders to the sorrowing widow their deep sympathy in this hour of her severe affliction, praying that ‘the God of all grace’ may afford her abundant consolation. It is further resolved that a copy of this resolution be suitably engrossed and forwarded to Mrs. McMaster.”

**In Memoriam.—Rev. Dr. Nelles.**

“It is with feelings of sorrow that we are called upon to record in our minutes the death of the Rev. Dr. Nelles, Chancellor of Victoria University, and one of the Vice-Presidents of this Society. A few days illness termin-



ated a life of incalculable usefulness on the 17th day of October, 1887—his sixty-fourth birthday. The fever that carried him away so suddenly, and with so little pain, was God's kindly messenger to him, and we bow with submission to the All-wise and Good and say, 'Thy will be done.' The deceased divine became a member of this Society in the year 1870, at which time he was elected a Vice-President. The distance at which he resided from the city rendered it impossible for him to attend the regular monthly meetings, but it is known that he was a warm friend of the U. C. B. Society, and often placed his learning and eloquence on the altar of Bible truth in the advocacy of the claims of the sacred word. In educational circles, Dr. Nelles stood in the front rank, indeed few men in Canada did more to mould the mind and character of so many of the young men of this country. In the en-grossing duties of the College President, those of the Christian minister were not forgotten, and by his death the church of God has lost one of its noblest spirits and one of its most tender and generous hearts. His rare natural gifts were developed by sound scholarship and a broad culture, which caused him to be held in high esteem by the educators of this province. The God whom he served has called him from his life-long labor to his everlasting reward. His last request was that on his tomb should be inscribed nothing but the words, 'Now we see through a glass darkly.' The Board desires to express its sincere condolence with the bereaved family, and that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to Mrs. Nelles."

Reports were read from the committee on Agency and Colportage, also from the special committee on the memorial of the Booksellers and Stationers' Association of Ontario, recommending that a discount of 10 per cent. for prompt cash be allowed to all booksellers, provided they agree to sell at our catalogue prices. Both reports were adopted.

The appointment of a Treasurer was then proceeded with, and on motion of Mr. Warring Kennedy, seconded by Mr. George E. Gillespie, Mr. John K. Macdonald, was unanimously elected to the position.

The consideration of the report of the Joint Committee of this Society and the U. C. Tract Society, on the Winnipeg memorial, was postponed till next Board meeting.

The Permanent Secretary reported donations of \$50 each from Mrs. George Dawson of Brampton, and Mrs. John Cline of Brampton. In accordance with the rules of this Society, these ladies were elected life members.

Rev. Wm. Kay was appointed Collector of city subscriptions for the current year.

After the usual routine business the meeting was closed with prayer by the Rev. Dr. McLaren.

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The December meeting was held on Tuesday, the 20th, at 7.30 p.m. The President in the chair.

The Rev. Dr. Gregg led the devotional exercises.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

It was ordered that the report of the Joint Committee on the memorial from the Winnipeg Branch, be referred back to the committee for re-consideration and amendment.

Reports from the committees on Ketchum Trusts, Agency and Colportage, and from the Treasurer, were received and adopted.

An application for a grant of Bibles for the Gaol, was received from the city missionary, Mr. Robt. Hall, and referred to the Secretaries with power to act.

An application from the Superintendent of Methodist Church Missions, for a grant of Bibles for Indian schools, was also referred to the Secretaries to obtain further information and report.

The meeting was closed with prayer by the Rev. Dr. Williams.

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ADDRESS BY THE LATE REV. HENRY VENN.

DELIVERED IN MAY, 1861.

(*A Reproduction.*)

[The Rev. Henry Venn, B. D., was honorary clerical secretary of the Church Missionary Society from 1819 until his death in 1873. He was a man of large sympathies and great executive ability, but he seldom spoke in public, and a remarkable exception to this habit was the address which follows, and which appears in the Memoir of his Life, by the Rev. Wm. Knight. Many years have passed since it was spoken, but years have not lessened its value, and we are glad to reproduce it at this time, as containing so forcible a statement of principles, so clear a recognition of the importance of uniting all Christian people in Bible distribution, and so candid in the tribute paid the society on whose behalf he spoke, as not the handmaid but the royal benefactor of all missionary societies, and justly entitled to take precedence of them all.]

When I was invited by your committee to take part in the proceedings of this day, a moment's reflection convinced me that it was simply in consequence of the official post which I hold in connection with a great missionary society, which led them to think of my name. The same consideration shall guide me to that line of remark in which alone I can presume to address this great meeting. It might be supposed that one, the great object of whose life has been the promotion of the interests of a missionary society—whose whole time and thoughts are occupied in the management of affairs which belong to the sending forth of the living voice to proclaim the gospel of salvation—would estimate less highly the labors of a society which is engaged in what may be called the mechanical circulation of the written page. But it has been very different with me. The more I have entered into the interior of the missionary work—the oftener and the longer I have conversed with those who have come from every corner of the earth—the more I have acquired an intimate knowledge of the working of missions; not only the missions of the society with which I am connected, but of other societies in which it is our privilege to unite together in brotherly conference; the more I have known and studied the state of the world at large, and its great want, the higher has this society risen in my estimation; and the more clearly have I perceived that the work and constitution of this society supply a great need in the missionary enterprise. I no longer look on the British and Foreign Bible Society, as I once mistakenly did, as the handmaid of the great missionary associations throughout the world, but I confess that I now look upon her “as the King's daughter, all glorious within, and with her clothing of wrought gold,” and that we, missionary societies, “are her companions, that bear her company.”

I give the Bible society this precedence on many grounds. My Christian friends, I would not presume to offer to this great and impressive assembly thoughts which had not been the subject of long and deep reflection. I am not accustomed to address public meetings such as this. I am an

humble workman. But, in the course of my daily labor, certain convictions have forced themselves on my mind ; and I thank God that he has given me the opportunity of stating them before this meeting. One of the grounds on which this society may claim precedency is the mode in which she renders aid to all missionary societies. She is not the handmaid, but the royal benefactor. I have to thank this society for all the encouragement she has given to our missionaries, throughout the world, by printing, to any extent on the shortest notice and under circumstances of every conceivable difficulty, whatever translations we have asked it to print. But the society has done more than this. There is a modest tone in the report as it states, version after version, "at the request of the Wesleyan Society," "at the request of the Church Missionary Society," "at the request of the London Missionary Society." The Bible Society has done far more than printing at the request of this or that society ; she has exerted a gentle pressure on every society. We, perhaps, being engaged in other matters, might have been backward in placing in the hands of our native churches the whole word of God. The pressure has come from this society : her language has been : "Why do you tarry ? Give us more of that blessed word. We are ready to print it. We are ready even to support your own missionaries, if you cannot do it yourselves, while they are engaged in this work ; only let the whole word of God be given at the earliest period to the native churches." And thus she has acted, not only for the Church Missionary Society, but for every other society. The secretaries of other societies are present to answer for themselves.

There is another mark of royal munificence in the actions of the British and Foreign Bible Society. It takes our version, or the version of any other society, and puts upon it the stamp of common property. It is no longer the version of the Church Missionary Society, or any other society. That little stamp which is on the backs of all the books which the British and Foreign Bible Society issues, is like "the broad arrow" which makes it common property for the defence of the whole nation, no longer belonging to this or that society, but belonging to the church of Christ in every clime and in every age. There is, I think I may say, even a yet higher claim which this society possesses upon our regard, than the aid she renders, and the manner in which it is rendered. This society is a centre of union among the various missionary societies, and exercises a moderating and binding influence among them all. In our separate committee rooms we are necessarily engaged with peculiar questions. We have, for instance, in our society, the Episcopal question, the Liturgical question, and many other questions, and I presume that every other society has its own peculiar and special questions. If, then, we had no common ground—if we met only in our separate committee-rooms—we might imagine that we are engaged, not in the propagation of a common Christianity, but of some peculiar form ; we should be thinking of Episcopacy, or Independency, or Presbyterianism. But when we go to the committee-room in Earl Street we learn that the great object to which all our efforts are directed is one and the same—the establishment of Christianity throughout the world. The same benefit which manifests itself in the church at home, manifests itself, I think, much more in the churches abroad. It has been often cast in the teeth of Protestant missions, and it is to this day the practice of our opponents to say that the Protestant church presents such a variety of sects, and such divisions and subdivisions, and so much opposition between each other, that the native mind cannot discover which amongst us is the true religion, the religion of the word of God. To all this it is a common and obvious answer, that the Bible is the point of union. But observation and long experience have induced me to ask another question, "Where would the Bible have been without the Bible society ?" It might have been in each mission. We might have had an Episcopalian Bible ; we might have had a Presbyterian Bible ; we might have had a Baptist Bible. But

now in our native churches, especially in those countries in which native churches are raised up by several missionary societies, the natives see this point of union. Here is something tangible, something visible, something in which they can bear part; and here is an answer which they naturally make to all such objections as I have alluded to, namely, if we have separate missionary societies, we have one Bible society, the centre and foundation of all true religion.

Another question has often arisen in my own mind, as I doubt not it has in the minds of others, and has been to me an occasion of anxious thought—Are we to reproduce in India, in China, in Africa, all our differences at home? In the early ages of Christianity, that which gave the greatest impetus to the cause was the sight of one community, of which it was said, "See how these Christians love one another," and in which all the members in the same locality formed one church. Is this blessed sight never to be seen in India or in China? My mind has found relief from this anxious thought in the contemplation of the work of this society. I am persuaded a corrective will be found in the free and large diffusion of the word of God. Happily, works of controversy are not translated, the range of Christian literature is very small, and hence the Bible has in the native churches a supreme, nay, almost an exclusive influence; and we may look forward to the time when churches composed of Bible Christians, as they will emphatically be, will outgrow the denominational features in which they were cast, and then we may happily see the Bible Christians of India, forming a genuine national church in India and so in other countries. I remember to have received from Africa an answer to the question, "Do you find that the circumstances of several missionary societies laboring in the same locality has the effect of perplexing the mind of the natives?" "No; the missionaries of all societies are spoken of by the natives as bookmen." The term "bookmen" is only a homely version of the term Bible Christians; and may that designation supersede in the native churches all other denominations! Such, I trust, will always be the blessed effect produced by the operations of this society.

I must, before I conclude, touch on one other point, which appears to me well worthy of consideration. I conceive that the Bible society is bringing home to the church in this country certain reflex truths which are of inestimable value. I will not dilate now upon that which both our noble president and the bishop of London have touched upon, but confine myself to the missionary view of the case. The distribution of the word throughout the whole world brings back a striking testimony that it is the voice of the one Father of all mankind, the voice of the one God before whom all men must bow with adoration. I have asked missionaries from north, south, east and west, "How does this book, when you put it into the hands of the natives in their own language, find acceptance with them?" The answer has invariably been in effect, "It is the very book they want: the moment we put it in their hands we find that they want nothing more simple and nothing more profound."

And we have not only this general testimony to the Bible being the word of God, we have also special confirmations of the truths of the Bible assailed amongst ourselves at the present day. Men in their cloisters, men in their studies, breathing a Christian atmosphere, with minds full of Christian ideas, of which they cannot divest themselves, may presume to say that the facts stated in the first chapter of Genesis are myths, are fables, are the accounts of men who were imperfectly informed. But now, look throughout India. See what the one truth that God made Adam and Eve and put them in Paradise, is doing. Those who are acquainted with India will I am sure, bear witness to the statement, that that truth is producing in India the most wonderful revolution that India has ever yet seen—that it is dissolving those fetters of misery and degradation which for three thousand years have chained down

the national mind. That first page of Genesis is dissolving caste, and in dissolving caste, it is dissolving the curse of India. Take another instance: What is it that has degraded the female sex in India more than anything else? Is it not the abominable sin of polygamy? And how shall we eradicate polygamy from the Eastern mind? Even missionaries stationed in India, Africa, and other parts of the world, have sometimes been led to doubt whether polygamy may not, under certain restrictions, be permitted in the Christian Church. We take our stand on the broad fact—Jesus Christ forbade it. But what is the argument which abroad is found most effectual? It is just this: God made Adam and Eve and placed them in Paradise. That fact decides the question in the native mind. There are numbers of polygamists among the natives who do not dare to present themselves for Christian baptism while that fact stands in the Bible. I would put it to any man who is able to form a judgment—I would ask the skeptic whether it be possible to conceive that a myth or a fable could produce such glorious moral effects among mankind—whether such facts do not prove that the book is divine—divine not merely in its general texture and composition, but divine from the very first page of Genesis to the last page of Revelation.

I must allude to one other subtle error which we meet with abroad, and among our educated classes at home—I allude to Pantheism. It is a horrid thought, that even a Christian man can be found to sit down and discuss Pantheism, as though, after all, there might be some truth in it. Let that man go out to India; let him see Pantheism in all its vile and oppressive cruelty in the creed of the Brahmins. Then let him see the Brahmin open God's blessed book, and mark the impression produced, that there is a God, and that that God is a God of truth and a God of love; and all his Pantheism will dissolve.

In conclusion, let me remind you that this society has a sphere of operations far beyond all missionary societies. It was well remarked in the report that there are parts of the world which this society can alone penetrate. We have a missionary station at Peshawar, but we cannot go through the Kyber Pass; we cannot send a missionary in that direction. I trust that this society will ere long succeed in conveying a translation of the Scriptures in the Afghan language through that celebrated Pass. The invasion of the Bible will be the best kind of invasion. It is the Bible alone that can penetrate into such remote places, as it is the Bible alone that can penetrate the zenanas of India, in which half its population is incarcerated. This society not only waters and refreshes the little cultivations of all the missionary societies, but "it waters the earth and enriches it with the river of God, which is full of water," pouring its beneficial influence upon "the dwellings in the wilderness," causing it to "rejoice and blossom as the rose." So also the operations of this society will far exceed in duration the operations of all missionary societies. The apostle says, "Now abideth faith, hope, and charity;" these three; but the greatest of these is charity; because charity shall abide when faith and hope have passed into reality. So I would say, when the missionary societies shall have done their work throughout the world, this society shall remain with a larger sphere of operations, and, I trust, with brighter glory than ever.

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### RECEIVING THE BIBLE

Our acceptance of the gospel and obedience to its requirements, depend upon the way in which we receive the will of God as revealed in the Bible. If we accept it as authoritative because spoken by God, we have a sure foundation on which to rest. But if we submit it to trial, and decide according to our own preferences, reason, and attainments, our entire religious convictions must be feeble and liable to be shaken at any time. Christ himself set forth the proper method of receiving the word of God and the sal-

vation which it makes known when he said : " Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein." The most noted saints, the most successful preachers, and the greatest theologians, have been distinguished for receiving God's truth as little children.

In the discriminating and admirable delineation of the character, gifts, and work of the late Rev. A. A. Hodge, D.D., delivered at his funeral by Rev. W. M. Paxton, D.D., we find the following significant and true statement of the way in which this wonderful theologian received the word of God :

"He received the Bible simply on the authority of God ; hence it was the word of life and light to his soul. He believed a doctrine simply because God said so. Few men were so thoroughly versed in the philosophy of the age, and perhaps no one was able to handle these arguments with greater power and sagacity ; but the basis of his own personal belief was not philosophy or human reason in any of its dicta, but simply the word of God. These two features of his religious experience made him a teacher whose theology was Scriptural and *christo-centric*. It rested on the Bible, and gathered around and centred in Christ."

This is according to the divine teaching with respect to receiving the word of God. And those who accept it in this way not only conform to the requirement, but find strength and comfort to their own souls, and become strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. " Thus saith the Lord " should be an end of all doubt and controversy. Just as soon as the real meaning of any passage of the Bible has been ascertained, its authority is to be admitted, even though the carnal mind or partially sanctified heart may rebel against it, and our intellect may be unable to understand it fully. What we know not now we may know hereafter ; though there are no doubt many things pertaining to God, His word and His works, that we will never, either in this life or in that which is to come, be able to comprehend.

And all preaching that does not insist upon the reception of the Bible " simply on the authority of God " is faulty, weak, and will fail to edify the church or bring sinners to repentance. All apologising for what God has said is out of place ; and all attempts to discredit or lower the force of anything God has revealed because we may be unable to explain it or assign what we may be pleased to call satisfactory reasons for it, in the Sabbath school or in the pulpit, cannot fail to be injurious. In this way not a few preachers have made their people weak and sickly. To all such the inquiry of Job may be pertinently put : " Canst thou by searching find out God ? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection ? It is high as heaven ; what canst thou do ? Deeper than hell ; what canst thou know ? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea."—*Presbyterian Banner*.

RECEIPTS FROM BRANCHES AT THE BIBLE SOCIETY HOUSE,  
TORONTO, FROM 1st OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 31st, 1887.

	On Purchase Account.	FREE CONTRIBUTIONS.		
		U. C. B. S.	B. & F. B. S.	Sundries.
Sandford Branch.....		10 20		
Parham do .....	4 41	85		
Verona do .....	3 15			
Seeley's Bay do .....	9 57	1 26		
Alliston do .....		10 25	10 25	(1) 10 25

(1) To Quebec Auxiliary.

## RECEIPTS AT THE BIBLE SOCIETY HOUSE.—Continued.

	On Purchase Account.	FREE CONTRIBUTIONS.		
		U. C. B. S.	B. & F. B. S.	Sundries.
Ivy Branch.....		2 81		
Thornton do.....		5 79		
Rosemont do.....		3 34		
Bradford do.....		5 07		
Cataraqui do.....		4 05		
Odessa do.....		4 20		
Pittsburg do.....	4 29	9 80		
Battersea & Sunbury do.....		2 46		
Garden Island do.....		5 27		
Wolfe Island do.....		2 65		
Sydenham do.....		1 10		
Inverary do.....		1 10		
Mount Forest do.....	37 86			
Eugenia Depository.....	13 15			
Sunderland Branch.....		25 00		
Ashburn do.....	4 89	1 22		
Cumminsville & Lowville.....	2 15	12 87	7 43	
Brooklin Branch.....	4 28	2 40		
Lambeth do.....		17 20	17 20	
Milton do.....	11 00			
Port Hope do.....	86 75	200 00		
Kirkton do.....	1 80			
Burgoyne do.....		18 00		
Victoria (B.C.) do.....	100 00			
Temperanceville do.....	1 49	26 48	20 81	
Theford do.....		21 50	21 50	
Maple Valley do.....		15 00		(2) 11 25
East Williams do.....		85 00	57 00	
Stouffville do.....	60 00	25 27	25 27	(2) 25 28
Cheapside do.....	11 38	1 84		
Pickering do.....	4 94			
Prince Albert do.....		3 77		
Greenbank do.....	7 95	18 38		
Greenwood & Kinsale do.....	3 03	1 57		
Claremont do.....		4 86		
Dunbarton do.....		2 62		
Highland Creek do.....		2 62		
Cherrywood do.....		2 23		
Brougham do.....		1 52		
Port Rowan do.....	7 54	13 46		
Caunington do.....		66 00		
Nanticoke do.....		2 53		
South Cayuga do.....	12 24	55 15		
Selkirk do.....	4 00	8 83		
Harristown do.....		42 00		
Lucknow do.....	18 99	21 86	10 93	
Blueval do.....	7 00			
Seaford do.....		3 58		
Newtonville do.....	2 15			
Coldsprings do.....		4 50		
Peterborough do.....		100 00	100 00	
Tilsonburg do.....	6 30	60 18		
St. Thomas do.....		92 00		
South Etobicoke do.....		27 56		
Port Dover do.....	19 32			
Bervie do.....		1 59		
Springville do.....	80	11 37		

(2) To Building Fund.

## RECEIPTS AT THE BIBLE SOCIETY HOUSE. -Continued.

		On Purchase Account.	FREE CONTRIBUTIONS.		
			U. C. B. S.	B. & F. B. S.	Sundries.
Glenallan	Branch	7 97			
Cambray	do		2 25		
Dunsford	do		10 75		
Gleecarm	do		1 40		
Little Pritain	do		2 88		
Stirling	do	33 21			
Galt	do		100 00	50 00	
Drummondville	do		117 36	58 69	
Hespeler	do	10 11			
Edgar	do		24 12		
Elmina	do	30 99	22 92		
New Hamburg	do	25 18			
New Dundee	do	27 88			
Lloydtown	do	6 00	16 00	16 00	
Caledon East	do	5 86	15 10		
Frankford	do	6 23	5 20		
Tweed	do	8 00	11 13		
Moira	do		10 96		
Campbellford	do	19 54			
Drayton	do		38 95		
Bloomfield	do	9 70	5 30		
Tamworth	do	8 09			
Preston	do		5 76		
Newburgh	do		41		
Milford	do		2 33		
Cherry Valley	do		75		
Deseronto	do		2 14		
Melrose	do		5 00		
Weston	do	8 55			
Brantford	do	257 25			
Scotland	do		19 17		
Tavistock	do	23 94	5 13		
Crediton	do		3 63		
Zurich	do		5 46		
Millbank	do		5 20		
Elmwood	do		2 42		
Eldon	do		3 24		
Amherstburg	do	22 80			
Mildmay	do	45 68			
Wellandport	do	18 10	9 95		
Caistorville	do	3 30	7 67	3 83	
Caistor	do			1 35	
St. Anns	do	5 39	5 73	5 72	
Smithville	do	1 85	7 15		
South Saltfleet	do	2 45	11 86	11 86	
Beamsville	do		1 52	1 51	
Grimsby	do	8 83			
Winona	do		1 15		
Streetsville	do	20 00			
Pine River & Amberley	do	8 00	5 85	5 85	
Ayr	do		16 00		
Roslin & Thomasburgh	do		16 56		
Bracebridge	do	26 15	55 00		
Plattsville	do	31 82			
Churchill	do	6 09			
Thornhill	do	11 20			
Holstein	do	4 85	60 00	25 00	