

**REPORT**  
**AND**  
**PROCEEDINGS**  
**OF THE**  
**BIBLE SOCIETY**  
**OF**  
**UPPPER CANADA,**

**YORK, December 8th, 1820.**

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## REPORT, &c.

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At a general meeting of the Bible Society of Upper Canada, held here this day—

His Excellency, Sir Peregrine Maitland, Lieut. Governor of the Province, in the Chair.

After an appropriate Prayer, the Report was read by the Rev. Doctor Strachan.

“In presenting an annual Report of their proceedings to the Society, I have much gratification in stating, that it has been marked by an increased call for the Holy Scriptures; and this not only among recent, but likewise among the first settlers. But the stock of Bibles and New Testaments on hand being limited, rendered it necessary to be cautious in the distribution, more especially as great numbers applied who were able to purchase. Some, when they found that they could not procure the Bible gratis, were induced to pay a small part of the price; and therefore all that have been given in donations, have been, it is presumed, issued judiciously. The amount sold is £34 4 3. Two hundred and ten Bibles and New Testaments have been distributed during the last year; which makes the whole issued by the Society since its commencement, five hundred and fifteen. That a greater number was distributed last year than this, arises not from a falling off in the demand, for it has greatly increased, but from a more careful discrimination in selecting proper objects, and especially from the active exertions of the Diocesan Committee for promoting Christian knowledge, which distributed Bibles and New Testaments as well as Prayer books, and consequently supplied many that would have otherwise applied to this institution.

“The Committee appointed by this Society at its last annual meeting, to consider what measures could be adopted towards instructing the Mississagua Indians, and converting them to the Christian religion, have had several meetings, the result of which is a recommendation to assist in procuring a translation of the New Testament into their language, as the dissemination of the Holy Scriptures is the only thing that this Society can promote agreeable to its constitution.

"The Committee therefore beg to be discharged from any farther consideration of the subject, with this closing remark, that civilization, if it do not precede, must go hand in hand with religion; and that it will be impossible to tame the wild heart of the Indians, without collecting them in societies, and making them feel the comfort of a fixed habitation; which can only be done by placing a zealous Missionary or Missionaries among them; matters which come more properly under the cognizance of the Committee for promoting Christian Knowledge than under this Society.

"In this new country, the distribution of the sacred Scriptures, is attended with the happiest effects. On going into the woods, the new settlers are separated from one another, and left in a dismal solitude; they feel therefore more strongly impressed than usual with religious truths, and are more directly called upon to confide in the protection of a superintending Providence. Here there are no secondary aids to distract their thoughts; for amidst the solitude and gloom around them, they can have no hope of assistance from man; their only dependance is upon God. Indeed the very nature of their labours, which bring them hourly into danger, forces reflection and serious meditation; and their frequent miraculous escapes from the falling of trees, continually remind them that they are left to the protection of Heaven; and hence a spirit of devotion naturally arises in their breasts. Living by themselves, and insulated as it were from the rest of the world, they feel their relationship to the ruler of the Universe in a manner which perhaps they never before experienced, and which cannot be done away. At such times, reading and meditating upon the Scriptures, strengthen the bonds which connect us with heaven and one another.

"It is pleasing to remark that the religious character of the Province, becomes daily more interesting. Churches are building and the desire for Christian instruction greatly increasing.

"It must be admitted by all who are in the habit of reflecting upon the Prophecies, and especially those which foretell the universal spread of the Gospel, and of comparing them with the melancholy dispensations which distract the Christian world, that some point of unity was wanting in which all the followers of the cross might join, and which in its development would inculcate every thing essential in the word of God; now this has been brought about in the most effectual manner by the simple determination of dissemina-

ting the Holy Scriptures and them only. The Parent Society acting upon this principle (as is well known) was established by a very few persons, altogether destitute of political power and influence, and in times of great perplexity and distress at home, and of political struggles and convulsions abroad. It soon attracted universal attention—received support from persons of every rank and creed. And not only diffused itself over the British Isles, over the Christian world, but over the heathen nations, and is now a stupendous and glorious institution, emitting its beams over the whole globe. Its progress has been most wonderful; and to what can it be ascribed? Was it suggested, and has it been guided by human wisdom? Has it been fostered and rendered successful by worldly favour and influence? Its object is the diffusion of the pure word of God; and consequently the glory of God and the good of immortal souls; and its astonishing success in circumstances so unfavourable, answers the question in the negative.

“It must indeed be admitted, that many Societies suggested by avarice or ambition, have existed long, and spread their influence far and wide, for they were united with worldly and political interests and preserved for a time by the passions of men, but this Society is founded on principles to which the human heart is not of itself inclined. And a connection with it promotes no political, no worldly, no party interests; on what grounds then can its success be accounted for, but that it is of God and not of man.

“One great advantage has arisen from this institution; namely, that it has roused the friends of religion to adopt and pursue the best plan for restoring to the Gospel that general sense of its great value and importance which seemed to have passed away. It had been neglected and despised so much by the wealthy and fashionable—spoken, written against, misrepresented and ridiculed, by the sceptical Philosophers and their adherents, that thousands considered it of no moment. But now it rises daily in general estimation, and promises to become, as it ought to be, the universal book, while its fiercest opposers are lying in their graves their memories passing fast into oblivion, and their books mouldering on the shelves detested or forgotten. Thus the friends of religion joined in one great object, shew their strength and appal their enemies.

“Before the establishment of the British and Foreign Bible Society, there appeared among the Protestants of all deno-

minations an astonishing apathy about religion. There was little or no communication among Christians of different nations, nor any desire to become acquainted with each other; but no sooner was the Bible Society established, than all denominations perceived in it a foundation laid for the growth of Christian love and fellowship, without compromising their particular opinions. Accordingly mutual intercourse has sprung up and a spirit of harmony and conciliation has uniformly directed all their communications—And the friends of the Bible have found an ample requital for all their exertions in disseminating it, in those feelings of affection and attachment which the principles of the association and its simple but magnificent design, are so well calculated to foster and increase.

“Amidst the rancour of war and the most bloody commotions, the friends of the Bible never forgot the principles it inculcates, but endeavoured to inspire a better spirit. I hold in my hand a specimen of this conciliatory spirit, which will gradually triumph over all those wicked and violent passions which raise up nation against nation, in a report of the American Bible Society, sent to be communicated to this association. It is most gratifying to learn by this communication, that our neighbours are proceeding with such energy in emulating the Parent Society. Already have they distributed upwards of ninety thousand Bibles and New Testaments; nor is it less grateful to behold their warmth and affectionate acknowledgements to the British and Foreign Bible Society, which they style, with great truth, their venerable Parent, and express their joy that it proceeds with unrelaxed exertions and undiminished means in its illustrious career; acknowledging their utter inability to exhibit any thing like an adequate representation of the share which it is taking in the great work of disseminating the Holy Scriptures. May we not rationally hope, that the spirit of Christian love which dictated this eulogy, will prevail in both nations till their mutual heats and jealousies shall have disappeared? May we not farther hope that the intimate connection between the members of the Bible Societies of different nations, will engender a spirit of affection through them all, and become the rapidly spreading commencement of that blessed æra, when peace shall universally prevail?

“Another great advantage arising from the exertions of the British and Foreign Bible Society is, that of translating the Scriptures into all languages. This could not have

been effected by individuals. It required vast means and great excitement, both of which it finds in the bosom of this Society. The Bible has been translated into almost every tongue; and all nations and languages are becoming interested in its favour. It has indeed been said, that to send the Bible alone, is of little use; for without preaching, the world will never be converted. This is certainly true; because our Lord commanded his disciples to go into all nations and preach the Gospel to every creature; but though the Bible alone, cannot convert nations, it may be of infinite advantage; and even to the living Missionary, how beneficial is it to find in every Pagan house that he enters, a Bible, and many impressions made by its perusal in favour of what he is going to teach. Both together are to convert the nations; but God by his efficacy may call some by his word alone; and this has been done in the case of two Priests of Budha, who found some copies of the Scriptures which had been translated by the Society into the Cingalese, and were so much astonished and affected that they forsook their superstition, and prevailed with Sir Alexander Johnson to bring them to England, where they might be more perfectly instructed in the truths of revelation. They have been baptised according to the rites of the Church of England, admitted to the Sacrament, and are preparing to return to Ceylon, to preach the Gospel. Now had not the Scriptures been translated and sent to Ceylon by the Society, these two men had remained heathens, but now they may be most advantageously employed in converting their countrymen, as may be reasonably hoped from their excellent talents and extensive influence.

“Nor is it possible that a book, which its very enemies have been compelled from its excellence to call divine, the only book necessary for a Christian, and the most useful of all even to persons not of that belief—a book which requires only to be attentively read to convey into the soul the love of its Author and the will of fulfilling his precepts, can be of no use. “Never” says Ruosseau, “did virtue speak a language so sweet—never did external wisdom express itself with such energy and simplicity. There is no quitting the perusal without feeling oneself a better man than he was.” “If any one,” says Jenyns, “doubt of the superiority and excellence of this religion beyond all that were ever taught before, let him read attentively those incomparable writings by which it has been handed down

" to us. Let him compare them with the most celebrated  
 " productions of the heathen world—if he does not feel, that  
 " more than any other writings, they are beautiful, simple  
 " and original, I do not hesitate to pronounce him as desti-  
 " tute of judgment as of faith." The Scriptures cannot be  
 read without producing the most blessed results, and God  
 in due season will send forth labourers into his vineyard.  
 In the mean time, it is our duty to disseminate the Scrip-  
 tures as a preparation for the lips of flesh and blood to con-  
 vey peace, life, holiness and happiness.

" I cannot close this report in a manner more agreeable to  
 this Society, than by reading the speech of Lord Teign-  
 mouth, the venerable President of the British and Foreign  
 Bible Society, on receiving a vote of thanks at the annual  
 meeting last May. This pious Nobleman having had the  
 satisfaction of hearing the report state that two millions  
 five hundred thousand Bibles and New Testaments had been  
 distributed by the Society, and beholding two converts  
 from the efficacy of the Scriptures standing before him,  
 spoke as follows—

" Gentlemen,

† Whatever anticipations we may have  
 " formed, of the progress of the great cause in which we  
 " are engaged, we have hitherto had the satisfaction to find  
 " them realized ; and the facts which have this day been  
 " laid before us, have added to the numerous proofs of the  
 " happy effects of that impulse which has been imparted to the  
 " Christian world by the British and Foreign Bible Society.  
 " Never has the benign spirit of our holy religion appear-  
 " ed with a brighter or a more attractive lustre, since the  
 " Apostolic times, than in the zeal and efforts displayed,  
 " during the last sixteen years, for disseminating the records  
 " of divine truth and knowledge. The benefit of these ex-  
 " ertions has already extended to millions, and while we  
 " contemplate the vast machinery now in action for the un-  
 " limited diffusion of the Holy Scriptures, the energy which  
 " impels its movements, and the accession of power which  
 " it is constantly receiving, we cannot but indulge the ex-  
 " hilarating hope, that the Angel, having the everlasting  
 " Gospel to preach to them that are upon the earth, has  
 " commenced his auspicious career. Even now, the light  
 " of divine revelation has dawned in the horizon of regions  
 " which it never before illuminated, and is again becoming vis-  
 " ible in others in which it had suffered a disastrous eclipse.



" But, while relying on the prophetic word, we rejoice in  
 " the anticipation of a period, however remote, when this  
 " glorious light shall shine in all the fullness of meridian  
 " splendour, diffusing life and joy to the remotest corners  
 " of the earth, we have the satisfactory assurance, that we  
 " are discharging a Christian duty of paramount obligation,  
 " comprehending in its object the glory of God and the sal-  
 " vation of man. It is our endeavours to raise our fellow  
 " creatures from this state of moral degradation and spiritu-  
 " al darkness; resulting from ignorance of the word of God,  
 " in which such numbers of them are still unhappily placed,  
 " leading them to the pure inexhaustable fountain of hea-  
 " venly wisdom, from which they may derive light and know-  
 " ledge to guide them through the intricacies of their mor-  
 " tal pilgrimage, and the hope of everlasting bliss in the  
 " life to come; and imbibe that spirit of love which gives  
 " animation and warmth to the charities which constitute  
 " the ties and happiness of all human relations: and our  
 " satisfaction is enhanced by the confidence, that it is an  
 " undertaking in unison with the gracious purposes of a  
 " merciful God, who wills ' that all men should come to the  
 " knowledge of the truth,' and who, on opening the springs  
 " of eternal felicity, proclaimed to the uttermost bounds of  
 " the earth, ' Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever  
 " will, let him take of the water of eternal life freely.'

" This gracious invitation has been proclaimed to the  
 " world through the instrumentality of the Bible institutions;  
 " and the eagerness delight and gratitude with which it has  
 " been accepted by thousands, authorize the pleasing con-  
 " viction, that the water of life has not been distributed in  
 " vain. Indeed we have ample evidence to support this  
 " conviction. We have the testimony of those who have  
 " penetrated the abodes of sorrow, disease and crime, into  
 " which the word of God had been introduced, perhaps for  
 " the first time, by this, or a kindred Society, that they had  
 " the happiness to find in them many witnesses to its cheer-  
 " ing and consoling efficacy.

" We have satisfactory information of its influences in  
 " promoting extensive moral reformation. We have Catho-  
 " lic attestation, that in schools of that Communion ' a new  
 " spiritual life, a sense of, and taste for religion, an aspira-  
 " tion after higher heavenly objects, had been excited in  
 " many youthful minds, by the perusal of the New Testa-  
 " ment, and that impressions had been made on them, which

“justify the most pleasing hopes with respect to future generations. And what is said of the inhabitants of one country, may, it is to be presumed, be applied to those of others: Fruits of piety and good works, the genuine produce of the seed of the divine word, are seen to adorn the lives and conversation of thousands.

“In these testimonies, the members and friends of the Bible Cause, have ample remuneration for their exertions, as well as the most encouraging motives for perseverance in their work of benevolence. But I do not hesitate to say in the pious and impressive language of a continental Bible Society—

“ ‘If among the thousands to whom the Bible is given, only one weary pilgrim of this earth should be refreshed, one sufferer relieved, one weak believer strengthened, one thoughtless sinner roused, one wanderer led back to the right way, one who has fallen raised up, one soul saved, who would not gladly co-operate in such a work, and cheerfully bestow his mite in its behalf?’ ”

The Honorable Justice Campbell moved, That the Report now read be received.

“I beg leave to congratulate your Excellency as President of the Bible Society of Upper Canada, on the great progress made of late years in the dissemination of moral and religious instruction amongst the inhabitants of this extensive Province. Of all human means for accomplishing so desirable a purpose, surely none can be more efficient, under the Divine blessing, than the general distribution of the Holy Scriptures amongst the poor and uninformed part of the community. The amazing extent to which this truly benevolent purpose has been carried into effect by our Parent Society in England and its various auxiliary Societies in different parts of the world, must be a subject of pleasing contemplation to all well disposed persons, of whatever country or religious persuasion, and it cannot but be particularly gratifying to your Excellency and to the members of this Society to reflect that we have not been found wanting in contributing our mite to this great and good work. What has already been effected by us, seems far beyond the expectation of the most sanguine, and may indeed be termed extraordinary, considering our very limited means, and the short time that has elapsed since the establishment of our Society. This appears in a most satisfactory manner from the Report just read by our Reverend and worthy Treasur-

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er, to whose active exertions, under your Excellency's patronage and liberal assistance it is chiefly to be attributed. I therefore move that the Treasurer's Report of the proceedings of this Society, as now read, be received."

Doctor Powell then moved, That the Treasurer be directed to send for Bibles, in the name of this Society, to the depository of the British and Foreign Bible Society in London, which was seconded and unanimously carried.

Doctor Baldwin.

"Mr. President—I cannot proceed to remark upon the subject of the resolution I shall have the honour of submitting to the Society, without first expressing the great gratification I feel, and in which no doubt every member present participates, in witnessing your Excellency not only honouring us with your patronage, but by your presence animating and assisting us in our work.

"Our worthy Treasurer, Sir, has in his report noticed the flattering prosperity of the exertions of the Parent Society in various quarters of the world; and while, as Englishmen, we must feel peculiar pride in the political eminence of Great Britain, we should entertain a still more exalted love of country towards her in the triumph of her Church, in all its pious march; I do not mean the Episcopal Church alone, but the truly Catholic Church in all its denominations, and all her religious Societies; the united result of which cannot fail to give a lustre to her national character that will, please God, never tarnish.

"But, Sir, while we look with pleasure on all these pious labours of our mother country, yielding their golden increase on the Indies and the Ganges, and from Southern Africa even to Siberia, let us not be lost in mere contemplative admiration; rather let us turn our eyes towards home, to these Provinces, and we shall see a field for Christian exertion as extensive, noble, and fertile, as any in the world, and under the blessing of Providence, about to yield as luxuriant a harvest. I allude to the conversion of the Indian tribes, to Christianity. And here let me observe that while I repeat what the report has just stated, that the Committee to whom was referred the important consideration of the means of communicating the Christian faith to these tribes, found the constitution of this Society such as does not admit of any thing being done by us in that respect, the object of this Society being merely that of circulating the Bible; it would in such an attempt depart from its consti-

tution, in some measure invading the province of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and would involve the necessity of sending Missionaries, a matter quite beyond the power of the friends of this incipient branch of the Bible Society; and therefore the Committee have requested to be discharged from that duty; yet let it not be supposed that the Committee have any doubt of the practicability of civilizing the Indians. No, Sir, the Committee have sanguine hopes of the result, if a plan and means were set in operation, but it belonging to other authorities to undertake a matter of this nature, the Committee could not with any benefit enter on the consideration. To conclude, let it not be forgotten, that omitting all care of the Indian's condition, is omitting a serious duty; that he is our brother, and that if we do not make some exertion to stay the desolating degradation that seems to have seized upon him, we cannot be Christians. I move, Sir, that it be resolved that the Society views with great pleasure the success of the continued exertions of the Parent Society in translating the Scriptures into various languages." Carried unanimously.

After a conversation of some length, in which most of the Members took a part, it was unanimously resolved: That for want of any translation of the Scriptures in the prevailing language of the Indian tribes, within this extensive Province, numbers are unavoidably without that religious instruction necessary to their happiness, but the means of removing this evil are not within the reach of the limited funds of this Society.

The Solicitor General begged leave to propose, That this Society views with affectionate interest the mighty progress making through all the Christian world in disseminating the Scriptures—

"Mr. Chairman—After having heard the very admirable and highly animating Report just read by the Rev. Doctor Strachan, and observing the benevolent and sympathetic feelings exhibited by this meeting towards our savage brethren in this extensive colony, and the earnest desire they have expressed of extending to them as far as possible the benefits of this Society, I am sure there will not be one dissentient voice to the sentiments contained in the Resolution I have just submitted."

The Attorney General.

"Mr. Chairman—I do not rise for the purpose of attempting to strengthen, by any thing I can say, the conviction

which must prevail in every pious and well ordered mind, of the great importance of the benevolent work to which, according to our ability, we are lending our humble efforts. If we are Christians more than in name, we must think and feel as Christians, and if we have brought ourselves to think and feel as Christians, we shall never be backward in acting as Christians.

“I take it for granted that our assembling here is a proof of the sincerity of our Christian profession, and I congratulate the Society that in this infant Colony, so lately redeemed from the wilderness, adequate evidence is afforded of the same holy zeal which is at this moment engaging the Christian world in one common cause.

“Indeed it is matter of surprize by what arguments those can satisfy their consciences who abstain from uniting in the pious work of distributing the Holy Scriptures. To most or certainly to many other charitable and benevolent institutions, objections may be raised plausible enough, and to a certain extent, just in some instances. It may be said, and is often urged, that by too readily relieving want, we are encouraging idleness; and often no doubt the exertions of the humane have only the effect of tending to prolong an existence, which crime or disease has rendered miserable or irksome; but surely it is not questionable whether good or evil results from disseminating the treasures of divine knowledge. The Scriptures are given to man as his guide to eternal happiness; if therefore our exertions to place that instruction within every person’s reach are *at all* successful, that success is infinite in its value. If one soul be saved by it, it is saved from the endurance of eternal misery. If one soul be made blest by it, it is made blest in the enjoyment of never ending happiness.

“The object is beyond all price. It may be said all this we know; we feel the necessity of religious instruction, we know the good that may be done by extending it. Then let us remember it is said in the Holy Writings, “If ye know these things happy are ye if ye do them,” and let us take to ourselves the inevitable consequence if we know these things, *guilty* are we if we do them not.

“But among the most important temporal benefits that may be expected from the zealous union of different Christian nations in spreading the Gospel through all lands, is the community of Christian feeling which such exertions must produce. The Gospel they are thus extending is the

Gospel of peace, and may we not, must we not believe, that in this general awakening of the Christian world to this pious duty, we see the visible operations of God accomplishing the prophecy of that blessed time when nation shall no longer rise against nation, nor shall there be war any more. It may tend perhaps in some degree to this happy consequence that all who join in this Christian work should express their hope that such may be one blessed effect of their exertion; and I therefore move, that this Society express their conviction That the religious communication which the distribution of the Scriptures promotes between Christians of different nations, may, under the blessing of God, produce the happiest and most important results."

Doctor Strachan, in seconding this motion observed, that it was evident "to every person who took the trouble to examine the state of Christianity twenty years ago, that a mighty change was effecting. That already much had been done, and the foundation laid for the most important revolutions in the religious opinions of the heathen. In the East, a spirit of enquiry has been awakened among the natives, and they are becoming eager for instruction. Persons recently returned from that distant portion of the British Empire, had observed that a wonderful change had taken place there within a very few years, both in the disposition of the natives to receive instruction and in the opinions and views of the Europeans resident among them. A similar change is gradually taking place in this country: in truth it appears that the zeal which gave rise to so many religious Societies in London, and which has added new strength and energy to those already existing, begins to manifest itself where it was the least expected. Those who are conversant in the narratives of travellers, will recollect that it was their boast to refer upon every possible occasion, to the Classics. One boasted that he travelled through Italy with Virgil in his hand, and derived great delight from examining on the spot the various descriptions of this excellent Poet. Others in visiting the different parts of Greece and the plains of Troy, have endeavoured to discover the names of places from their resemblance to the descriptions of Homer. To discover classical allusions was to obtain a triumph to which the traveller did not fail to attach much importance. But even here, there is a change, and many travellers are now found with their Bibles in their hands, instead of the Classics, comparing the

present state of various places with what they were when visited by the Apostles and their first disciples. I met lately with an example of this which may be as interesting to this Society as it was to me.

“The traveller set out from Constantinople to visit the Apocalyptic Churches in Lower Asia.

“On arriving at Ephesus, which was blessed so long with the Apostles labours, he found no vestige of its ancient splendour remaining; and only fifteen cottages, forming a miserable village; near the place where it must have once stood. There he saw only three Christians; and these so lamentably ignorant, that they never heard of St. Paul, or only recognized his name as one in the Calendar of their Saints.

“When he arrived at Smyrna, he found the Christian Church, in point of numbers, still respectable, consisting of nearly 20,000 Greeks, 6,000 Armenians, 5,000 Catholics and 140 Protestants, but deplorably ignorant; the people not having access to any copies of the Sacred Scriptures.

“In Pergamos, now called Bergamo, the Church in respect to numbers may still be said to flourish. The Greek Christians have a Bishop and several Priests, and may amount to 3,000. There is likewise a small congregation of Armenians, consisting of about 200. The clergy were found exceedingly ignorant of the Sacred Scriptures.

“The same observations apply to Thyatira, now called Ak-hisar, as to Pergamos, for it contains an equal number of Christians.

“On visiting Sardis, the traveller was sadly disappointed, for he had trusted that in its utmost trials this Church would not have been suffered to perish; yet he was told that not a vestige of it remained. But on farther enquiry he was agreeably surprised to find a small Church establishment in a neighbouring village, to which the Christians in the city resorted, as they had been forbidden by the Turks to build a Church in Sardis.

“In Philadelphia he was gratified to discover some surviving fruits of early zeal and the form of a Christian Church. There are about 1,000 Christians who have a Bishop and about twenty resident Clergymen.

“Laodicea is now a heap of ruins; but near it there is a village containing about fifty poor inhabitants, in which number are two Christians, who cannot read. The prayers of the Mosque are the only prayers which are heard near the

ruins of this once flourishing city, on which the threat seems to have been fully executed, in its utter rejection as a Church."

The Honorable Chief Justice here rose and proposed the thanks of the Society to the Secretary and Treasurer.

It was then ordered that the Report be printed, and a copy forwarded to the Parent Society.