

A MEMOIR

On the Subject of a General

Bible Society

FOR THE

*United States of
America.*

BY A CITIZEN

OF THE STATE OF NEW-YORK.

NEW-JERSEY :

PRINTED IN 1816.



A MEMOIR, &c.

IN a country possessing as many Bible Societies as the United States, it cannot be necessary to prove the obligation every christian is under, to promote the universal diffusion of the Sacred Records of his Religion. The obligation is felt and acknowledged, and if the efforts of the Christians in America, to distribute the Scriptures, have not been proportionate to their abilities, it has arisen from their ignorance of the great want of Bibles, and from a want of concert among themselves in consequence of the plan they have unfortunately adopted, of confining themselves to *Independent Local Bible Societies* alone.

To prove that greater exertions are necessary than have hitherto been made, and to shew the duty and importance of abandoning our present system and adopting a new one, is the object of the following memoir.

To prove that greater exertions are necessary, it will be sufficient to shew first the great want of Bibles both at home and abroad; and secondly, the extent to which we have relieved this want. In the consideration of this latter subject, the inefficacy of our present system will fully appear, and consequently the duty and importance of adopting a new system.

On entering upon the first inquiry, our hearts sink within us, at the recollection, that while the population of those countries in which the Religion of Christ is professed, is no more than 213 millions, it is computed that there are in the world, 550 millions of souls who have never heard of his name. But while we lament the darkness of the heathen world, let us not think that the light of the Gospel is freely diffused in those lands, on which the Sun of Righteousness has risen; for on examination we shall find, that thousands and millions, are hid from the brightness of his beams.

The whole number of Bibles which in 1807 had ever been printed for the immense Empire of Russia, whose population exceeds 40 millions, was about *six thousand*—and so late as 1811, there were in the Provinces of *Es-thonia* and *Livonia*, 400,000 families without a Bible.

In 1812, the number of persons speaking the Finnish language was not less than 1,300,000; and yet for 30 years not a Bible had been printed for their use, and scarcely a single copy could be purchased.

In 1811, there were upwards of 1,500,000 Protestants in Hungary possessed of but few Bibles.

In 1813 it was computed that *four* out of *five*, in Denmark were without Bibles.

In 1807, in Ireland, whose population is about 50,000, there were only 40 or 50 Bibles.

In 1810, there were of the Persian Christians, (so called) 200,000 who had never seen a Bible in their own tongue, and in Ceylon, 350,000 professors of Christianity equally destitute.

In 1805, it was computed that in the southern part of Ireland, two thirds of the Protestant families were without Bibles; and among the Catholics it was supposed that not more than *one* family in 500, had a copy of the Scriptures.

Let us now direct our view to Great-Britain, where we are apt to suppose that "the darkness is past, and that the true light now shineth."

In Wales, there are 350,000 people speaking the Welsh language, but for 30 years before 1793, not a Bible had been printed for their use.

In 1807, among 4000 persons in a certain Parish in Scotland, there were found but 12 Bibles.

In England so late as 1814, of 960 families in the Town and neighbourhood of Southampton, 415 families containing 1784 individuals, were found on examination to be without Bibles.

In 1810, it was computed that there were 10,000 families in the county of Norfolk without a Bible.

From an actual inquiry made by order of the Bishop of Durham, it was discovered, that in that diocese, there were 5,800 families without Bibles, estimating the rest of England and Wales in this proportion, they must contain 350,000 families destitute of the Scriptures.

If such be the famine of the word of God in Great-Britain, where Protestantism and religious zeal have so greatly tended to diffuse it, how grievous must be the scarcity in France, Spain, Italy, and other Catholic countries!

Let us now look at home, and let us begin our inquiries, with a state that has long been distinguished for the religious habits of its citizens. The Report of the Connecticut Bible Society for 1812, informs us, that there were more in that state without the Scriptures than the friends of the Society could supply; and let us remember that this Society is one of the oldest and ablest in our country, and the State better supplied with Bibles, than probably any other district of the same population in the world. The Report of the Massachusetts Bible Society for 1813, asserts that there are many settlements in the district of Maine, in which only *one* or *two* Bibles could be found. During the year preceding this Report, the Society had distributed 2,296 Bibles

and 532 Testaments; and they declare that "however improbable it may seem, this number was needed."

In 1814, it was estimated that there were in the Mississippi Territory, 5000 *families* destitute of the Scriptures; 12,000 in the Territories of Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri; 8,000 in the State of Louisiana; 10,000 in Tennessee; 1,3000 in Ohio; and 30,000 in Kentucky; such is the dearth of the Scriptures both at home and abroad. Surely "darkness has covered the earth, and gross darkness the people."

But while we deplore this darkness, and are astonished at its extent, let us examine what we have done to dissipate it.

Owing to the want of a centre of Religious Intelligence in the United States, it is impossible to ascertain with exactness, the number of Bibles which has been distributed by the American Societies;—but a few facts which we possess, will enable us to arrive at some general conclusions.

The Report of the Connecticut Bible Society for 1813, states the whole number of Bibles distributed by that Society since its establishment at 7644; and adds, that this is a greater number than had been distributed by any other Society in the United States. There were in the U. States, at the commencement of that year 24 Bible Societies; of these, 4 were formed in the course of the preceding year, and cannot be supposed to have distributed many Bibles during the few first months after their organization. Let us admit (although we are assured of the contrary,) that the remaining 20, had distributed as many Bibles as the Connecticut Society had done; the whole number then distributed at the beginning of 1813 was but 152,880. But when we recollect that the Connecticut Society was the second Society established in our country; that two of the above 20, were Bible and *Prayer Book* Societies, and another was a Bible and *Tract* Society; and of course only a part of their funds appropriated to the diffusion of the Scriptures: we shall perceive how very distant the admission we have made is from the truth. Since 1813, the number of Bible Societies has increased; but the new Societies have been chiefly *Town* and *County* Societies; embracing small districts; and enjoying very limited patronage, and most of them but of recent date. If then we state the whole number of Bibles which at the commencement of 1816 had been distributed by the American Societies, at about 150,000 we shall probably overrate the actual amount. It is said that in Kentucky there are 30,000 families without a Bible; the amount of Bibles then distributed by Christian America since 1808, is not more than sufficient to supply each of these families with 5 copies.

But to love others besides ourselves, is the peculiar characteristic of Christianity—let us therefore inquire, to what extent we have diffused the light of Revelation beyond our own borders. In order to send the Bible to foreigners, we must publish it in other languages than our own. It is be-

neved the American Societies have not distributed the Bible in more than languages, viz: English, French, Dutch and German. The exact number of Bibles which have been sent out of the country, cannot be ascertained, but is most probable, that with the exception of some sent to Canada, no considerable number in any language has been sent beyond our own Territories: and that the French, Dutch, and German Bibles which have been distributed, have been given to those of our own citizens who speak these languages.

Thus it appears that since 1808, when the first Bible Society was established, the Christians of the United States, have through the medium of their Societies, distributed about 150,000 copies of the Bible in four languages chiefly among their own countrymen—such is the offering which as a Nation we have made at the shrine of Christian benevolence—such is the return we have made to Heaven for the national and individual blessings we enjoy!

Having thus ascertained what we have ourselves done in the cause of the Bible, let us see what others have done in the same cause. It appears from the last Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society that the Christians of Great-Britain, have during the last eleven years, through the medium of this Society, been instrumental in distributing 1,299,282 copies of the Bible, in 51 languages, and have aided in the establishment of Bible Societies in almost every part of the Protestant world. The income of this Society for the last year amounted to \$ 443,000; a sum sufficient to purchase in this country 600,000 Bibles like those distributed by the American Societies.

In one year then, the British Society could distribute 600,000 Bibles while the American Societies, for the last seven years, have not probably distributed more than 150,000! And does the zeal and ability of the British Christians exceed ours in this proportion?—Heaven forbid. To what then is this amazing difference to be imputed? Solely to the difference of the instruments employed. Let us therefore examine these instruments and compare them with each other.

To promote the general diffusion of the Bible, the Christians of America have established 108 *Independent Local Bible Societies*, which are scattered through the United States from Vermont to Louisiana,* of these are 10 which, from their name profess to be *Auxiliary Societies*. The author has seen the constitutions of three of them, and they are to all intents and purposes *independent Societies*, being under no obligation to render the slightest pecuniary assistance to any other Society whatever. Of the remaining seven, are female societies, the author is ignorant of the constitutions of any of them; but as it does not appear from their names that they are auxiliary to any society in particular, it is most probable that nothing more is meant by the term than an accordance with the objects of the Societies previously established. We are therefore correct in saying that the means by which the Christians of America are promoting the general diffusion of the Bible, are 108 *Independent Local Bible Societies*. We have already seen the effects produced by these

* See the list published by the N. Y. Bible Society.

means; and have contrasted them with the astonishing and magnificent result of the labours of the British Christians. Let us now examine the instrument employed by those Christians, and compare it with the means we have used.

It is believed that throughout the vast dominions of Great Britain, there is but *one* independent Bible Society, that one is the **British and Foreign Bible Society** established in London. In the true spirit of the Religion of Christ it is a Foreign as well as a British Society—regarding all mankind as brethren, it extends its benefits to all. Having but one object in view, and that no other than the dissemination of the pure word of God, it invites the co-operation of Christians of every name, and to secure this co-operation, it gives every clergyman who subscribes to its funds, a vote in the management of its concerns. This Society therefore does what no society ever did before; it unites the efforts and contributions of the most discordant sects, and directs them to the advancement of the glory of God, and the salvation of man. A society pursuing an object so simple, and yet so grand; by means so liberal and unexceptionable was not long without assistance. The Christians throughout Great Britain, seconded the views of their brethren in London, and established *Auxiliary Societies*. These societies are not auxiliary in name only—after defraying their own contingent expenses, they transmit the residue of their funds to the Parent society, and generally receive in return Bibles at first cost to the amount of *one half* of the sum remitted. By this arrangement the Auxiliary societies relieve the Parent society from the labour of distributing Bibles in those districts in which the Auxiliaries are established; while they augment its funds to a wonderful amount. As the Parent society has its auxiliaries, so the Auxiliaries have their associations. The sphere of action to an auxiliary is generally a County, or populous City. This County or City is divided into a number of small districts, and in each district, a small society is organized, called a *Bible Association*. Each member of the Association contributes at least a penny a week, and with the funds thus raised, the managers of the Association purchase Bibles for the supply of the destitute in their own district, and the residue is paid into the Treasury of the Auxiliary, whence it is finally sent to the Parent Society in London. Thus through the medium of 406 auxiliaries, and some thousands of Associations, scattered through the British Dominions from Edinburgh to Cornwall—from the Cape of Good Hope to St. Helena—from Calcutta to Halifax, is the British and Foreign Bible Society receiving the voluntary tribute of thousands and tens of thousands of Christians; and the blessings of those who were ready to perish are falling in rich profusion on its founders and patrons.

Can it now be necessary to institute a comparison between the American and British system, in order to prove the superiority of the latter? Can it be necessary to prove that the same funds when collected into one sum and placed at the disposal of one society, are capable of producing more extensive and beneficial effects, than when divided into 108 distinct sums and placed at the disposal of as many distinct societies? Will it be said that these funds may occasionally be united as objects which require more than common expense to put themselves? Let it be remembered that of 108 Societies are scattered

from one extremity of the Union to the other; and that before such an union can take place, the proposed object must be stated to each society, and the consent of 108 independent bodies be first obtained. But not only must the consent of these societies be obtained; but they must be first satisfied with the manner in which, and the persons by whom the proposed object is to be effected.

Owing to the independence of our societies, and the consequent smallness of the funds of each, no edition of the English Bible has yet been printed for distribution, which the eye of age can peruse with ease. If any object could unite the funds of our Societies one would suppose it would be the publication of a good edition of the English Bible. Such an edition is now contemplated by the New York Society; but at the very time that this society is soliciting aid for this purpose from all parts of the union, the Kentucky society has made known its intention to print a similar edition and is soliciting similar assistance. Neither Society therefore can expect aid from the other, and of course there can be no union of funds, nor will either edition be given to the public as soon, nor on as reasonable terms, as an edition printed by one Society with the united contributions of all, and intended for the supply of the whole union.

In consequence of the impossibility of this consolidation of funds, most of our Societies are dependent on the Booksellers for their Bibles, and they pay to them an advance on the first cost of the Bibles which on another system might be made to increase the number of copies distributed, to no inconsiderable amount.

At present our Societies are without any common plan of operation. It frequently occurs that Societies send their Bibles within the districts of each other. Thus the Connecticut Society has sent Bibles into New York, and the New York Society into the Eastern states. Our Societies have but little intercourse with each other, and are frequently better acquainted with the transactions of the British Society, than with those of a society in an adjoining state; even their printed Reports are not reciprocally exchanged; and often times, they are ignorant of each others existence. As our societies move in such contracted spheres, their Reports are for the most part destitute of interest; and the Societies themselves are frequently unknown at a short distance from home.*

* The author was some time since at a County Meeting within 50 miles of New York, called for the purpose of forming a County Bible Society, he proposed making the Society auxiliary to the New York Society. The proposal was strenuously and successfully opposed, on the ground that the meeting were ignorant of the principles of the New York Society; and a call was made for its constitution; none could be produced, and probably not a single copy could have been found in the Town. Many present had never heard of the existence of that Society; and a clergyman present opposed the proposal from a supposition that the Society was confined to Presbyterians.

We have no centre of Religious Intelligence, and therefore no Report of any of our Societies can command general attention. On the other hand the Reports of the British Society, condensing the Religious Intelligence derived from their numerous auxiliaries and correspondents, are among the most popular publications of the age, and have already passed through a second edition, they are read with avidity in England and America, and some of them have been translated into foreign languages.

Our Societies find it difficult to assemble a respectable audience at their annual meetings; but the annual meeting of the British Society is one of the most crowded and interesting assemblies in England, attended by individuals the most distinguished of any in the kingdom for piety, eloquence and rank.

The British Society is regarded with reverence and affection by her numerous offspring, and can with propriety counsel and direct them in the prosecution of their common object: but among us, what Society may presume to advise or direct another? Some of the American Societies are already departing from that simplicity of design which is the highest recommendation of Bible Societies, and their surest pledge of success. I mean the distribution of the Scriptures without note or comment; and are associating with this simple object in which all can unite, other plans about which there may be diversity of opinion; such as the introduction of religious exercises at their annual meetings; the establishment of Sunday schools—the use of a Bible as a school book, &c. In England, these irregularities would be discountenanced by the example and advice of the Parent society; but here we have no counseling voice, no directing hand.

The British Christians have the delightful satisfaction of knowing that they have been instrumental in sending the light of Revelation into the most benighted parts of the world, and of publishing the glad tidings of salvation, in languages in which they had never before been heard.

In this exalted pleasure we can never hope to share while we persevere in our present system. What Society among us can expect to publish the Scriptures in the languages of Asia and Africa; when we find it so difficult to print them in our own tongue?

But it may be urged, that although our societies may not be able to publish expensive editions; yet that the number is so rapidly increasing that before long there will be no extensive district of our country without a Bible Society; and that these Societies will at least supply the want of Bibles at home. Let us not deceive ourselves with this pleasing expectation. The number of our Societies, is no test of our zeal in the cause of the Bible, nor does it enable us to estimate the number of copies distributed. No Society is so easily formed as a Bible society; almost any pious individual has it in his power to establish one. To a proposal to form such a society, no objection is made; it interferes with no religious or political views. A small meeting is sufficient, and one may be convened at a short notice. Persons are easily found who will consent to be *officers*; private members must be obtained afterwards if possible. A constitution is soon agreed on and printed, and thus another Bible society swells the list. But the amount of money raised, the number of Bibles distributed, is probably never known or thought of beyond the limits of the Vir-

lage or County in which the society is established. In England the amount of the contributions of each auxiliary, and frequently of the associations, is given to the world in the Report of the British and Foreign Bible society, and the exact number of Bibles and Testaments distributed can at any time be ascertained by a reference to the same document.

If further proof be wanting of the superiority of the British system over the American, it may be found in the adoption of the former and the rejection of the latter by almost every Protestant nation in Europe. The United States is the only nation that has attempted to distribute the Scriptures by means of a number of small Bible societies, rejecting the aid of a general institution. Russia commenced on the American plan; but the error was soon discovered and the St. Petersburg Bible society was speedily changed into the *Russian Bible Society*. This change has been attended with the happiest consequences, and the Russian society aided by a number of auxiliaries in different parts of the Empire, is now publishing the Bible in *thirteen* languages. But this is not the only national institution of the sort on the continent of Europe, we there find the *Prussian Bible society* with an auxiliary at Potsdam; the *Swedish Bible society*; the *Finish Bible society*; the *Hungarian Bible society*; the *Bible society of the Kingdom of Saxony*; the *German Bible society*, with a number of auxiliaries; the *Netherlands Bible society* with about thirty auxiliaries, and several other general institutions.

When we first commenced our unfortunate system, the affectionate voice of the British and Foreign Bible society warned us of our error "Had" said the committee of that society in answer to a notification of the formation of the Philadelphia society, which was the first established in the country; "had it entered into your views to comprehend as many Provinces" (states) "as could be brought to concur with you in *one Institution*, of which Philadelphia might be the centre, the committee would have regarded your plan as *better adapted* to the accomplishment of your object, and would gladly have extended to it, a proportionate degree of pecuniary encouragement."

Let us now seriously ask ourselves whether we can conscientiously persevere in a system whose effects are so disproportionate to the great want of Bibles, which, we have found to exist both in our own and other countries; as well as to the abilities with which Heaven has blessed us—a system which has been either avoided or abandoned by every Christian nation but our own, that has engaged in the distribution of the Bible: and let us also ask ourselves whether we can conscientiously, any longer refuse, to adopt in the place of this system, one which the experience of the last 12 years, and the example of the most zealous and enlightened nations in Europe, prove to be the most efficacious human means ever devised, for spreading the knowledge of the Gospel. If our consciences decide for the rejection of the present system, and the adoption of a new one, then we are next to inquire, in what way a general institution can be established, and what rules should be adopted for its government.

A Bible Institution for the United States, may be formed by a confederacy among the existing Bible societies; or by the establishment of a *new society*.

To the first method, many objections immediately present themselves. It is uncertain how many societies would enter the confederacy, and how long those who did enter, would continue in it; the resources therefore of the Congress to which the concerns of the confederacy would be confided, would be forever precarious. It would be difficult to apportion the representatives from the societies to the Congress; since the old and wealthy societies would not be satisfied with an equal representation with Societies of recent date and inconsiderable funds. If the powers of the Congress be made absolute, many of the societies will not enter the confederacy—if they are not absolute, the Congress will be deficient in vigor. But supposing the confederacy formed, and the powers of the Congress defined, where are the delegates to meet—how long are their sittings to last? In what way are their expenses to be defrayed? As to the establishment of a new society, its advantages and nature will be best understood, by giving a constitution for such a society accompanied with explanatory remarks.

CONSTITUTION.

ART. I. "The designation of this Society shall be the **AMERICAN AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY**, of which the sole object shall be to encourage a wider circulation of the Holy Scriptures, without note or comment: the only copies in the English language to be circulated by the society, shall be of the version now in common use."

REMARKS. The society is to be a *foreign* as well as an American society; and why should it not be? Are the Christians of America under fewer obligations than their brethren in Britain to extend the blessings of their Religion beyond the confines of their own country? If it be said that we ought first to supply the want of Bibles at home, it may with equal justice be said, we should send no Missionaries abroad, while we have vacant Pulpits at home. Had the apostles never travelled from one city to another, till they had converted all in the first, slow indeed would have been the progress of Christianity.

ART. II. "This society shall add its endeavours to those employed by other societies for circulating the Scriptures through the United States and their Territories whenever it shall be required and shall according to its ability extend its influence to other countries whether Christian, Mahometan, or Pagan."

REMARKS. The aids which this society may afford to other societies are numerous and important when the funds of the local societies are small and the wants of their districts urgent, they may be assisted with donations of Bibles from the general society. Societies in our Territories may perhaps be furnished with Bibles in the language of the neighbouring aborigines. The present societies may at all times be supplied by the new society with Bibles on more advantageous terms than can be obtained from the book-sellers. Instances also may frequently occur in which this society may co-operate with the British and Foreign Bible society and other extensive institutions in spreading the Scriptures among the Heathen.

ART. III. "Each subscriber of two dollars in the beginning and four dollars annually shall be a member.

ART. IV. Each subscriber of thirty dollars at one time shall be a member for life.

ART. V. Each subscriber of fifteen dollars annually shall be a governor.

ART. VI. Each subscriber of one hundred and fifty dollars at one time, or who shall by one additional payment increase his original subscription to one hundred and fifty dollars shall be a governor for life.

ART. VII. Governors shall be entitled to attend and vote at all meetings of the committee."

REMARKS. The annual subscription to the British society is about \$ 4,50; the proposed annual subscription to this Society is \$ 400. The more equal distribution of wealth in this country seems to require this reduction. By putting it in the power of all who wish it, to take part in the management of the society as is done by the V. VI. and VII. Art. the funds as well as the patronage of the society will probably be greatly increased. Many will perhaps feel disposed to pay \$ 15 annually when such payment will entitle them to a seat at the committee board, even if they do not constantly occupy their seats. The possession of power is gratifying, even if it be not exercised. The objection that these articles will increase to an indefinite extent, the number of those who may be entitled to vote with the committee, will be examined in another place.

ART. VIII. "A committee shall be appointed to conduct the business of the society, consisting of thirty six members, and a large majority of them to be laymen. Six of whom shall be foreigners resident in *New York* or its *Vicinity*. Twenty-seven of the above number who shall have most frequently attended shall be eligible for re-election from year to year. The committee shall appoint all officers, and call special general meetings, and shall be charged with procuring for the society suitable patronage both American and Foreign. The committee shall meet on the first monday of every month or oftener if necessary." A quorum for doing business shall consist of at least nine members of whom the President shall be one, and in case of his absence then the first Vice President to be one.

REMARKS. Although there will be many who will have the right of taking part in the management of the society, yet as the exercise of this right will be optional, and may be suspended without any dereliction of duty, it is necessary, to prevent the possibility of the business of the society being neglected, that certain individuals should be appointed to attend to that business. A committee is to be elected for this purpose. For obvious reasons, a portion of this committee are to be foreigners. The greatest number of the members of the committee ought to be *Laymen*; because laymen are generally more conversant with the details of business, and better qualified to superintend the concerns of an extensive establishment—to conclude contracts—to make shipments, &c. than clergymen.—Laymen are also possessed of greater leisure, and more extensive influence than clergymen, while their religious tenets are less generally known: by the appointment of a sufficient number of laymen therefore the society would acquire greater weight of influence, and would be less exposed to the effects of sectarian jealousy, than by the appointment of clergymen to reform the secular business.

To the committee, and those who are entitled to vote with them is entrusted the power of appointing the officers of the society. As the respectability and usefulness of the society will depend in a great degree on the personal character and zeal of its officers, the selection of these officers is wisely confided to the deliberate vote of the committee, and not left to the hasty inconsiderate choice of a promiscuous assembly at a general meeting. As the committee possess the power of naming an indefinite number of Vice Presidents they may, when they find a distinguished character, who is friendly to the society and whose name would shed a lustre on it, add him to the list of Vice Presidents. In this way the society may in time enrol among its officers the governors of the different states, and the chief members of the general government, nor can it be doubted that such a selection would tend greatly to increase the patronage of the society and to conciliate the good will of every political party. To the committee is entrusted the duty of procuring patronage for the society, both American and Foreign. It cannot be doubted that the British society would hail with peculiar delight, the formation of the *American and Foreign Bible Society*; and when we remember, that it bestowed on the Russian Bible society nine thousand dollars, it will not be deemed either unbecomng or unreasonable in us to expect to share in its bounty.

But in many ways may the committee obtain American patronage. It is not chimerical to hope that on a proper representation to Congress of the nature and views of the Society, that body may be induced to grant to the committee the privilege of franking all letters on the business of the society under a certain weight, and with the same restriction to receive letters free of postage.

This would greatly facilitate another mode of obtaining patronage, and it would be, to make the constitution of the society, with the names of its members and officers as extensively known as possible. Every clergyman in the U. States might be requested by a circular letter to add his own name to the list of members; to read from his Pulpit the constitution and address of the society and to make a collection for its funds. Not a Hamlet in the country should be without the constitution of the society and suitable addresses explaining the nature and importance of the Institution.

Another very important office of the committee will be the establishment of some general regulations for supplying auxiliary societies with Bibles. The British society returns to auxiliaries, Bibles to the amount of *one half* the sum remitted. Under present circumstances, it would perhaps be most prudent for the American society to return Bibles to the amount of *three fourths* the sum remitted.

The seat of the Society is by this Art. fixed at *New York*. In no country perhaps do local jealousies so often interfere with plans of extensive utility as in the United States. In the present instance however, when the glory of God and the good of man are the solid objects in view, it is the imperious duty of every Christian to divest himself of all local prejudices, and to consent that the society shall be established in that place which is most favourable to the prosecution of its exalted objects. New York is fast becoming the London of America, and already possesses facilities for correspondence with and transportation to all parts of our own and other countries, which are enjoyed in an equal degree by no other city on the continent.

Some place must be chosen where this great society may be permanently fixed, and where it may enjoy all the advantages and conveniences which low situation can afford—a soil in which it may “take root downward, and bear fruit upward,” and for this purpose no place can be found so fit as *New York*. The committee are to meet at a stated time in each month, first for the specification of business, and secondly to enable those who are entitled to vote with them, to know when to find them together.

By rendering only twenty-seven of the committee eligible for re-election and those, such members as have attended most frequently, the society will every year dismiss from the committee such as are wanting in zeal and faithfulness, and yet without giving any personal offence.

ART. IX. “Each member of the society shall be entitled under the direction of the committee to purchase Bibles and Testaments at the society’s price which shall be as low as possible.”

REMARKS. If the society sells Bibles and Testaments for as much as they cost, its funds cannot be impaired, and if the society sells cheaper than the book seller’s, many may be induced to buy of the society, who would not buy of the book-seller’s. As this privilege is confined to the members of the society, it will be exercised chiefly for supplying children and servants with Bibles, and it may operate as an inducement to subscribe to the society.

ART. X. “The annual meeting of the society shall be on the fourth Wednesday in May; when the committee shall be chosen, the accounts presented, and the proceedings of the foregoing year reported.”

REMARKS. The manner in which the annual meeting of the society shall be conducted, will be of great importance. The British society, well aware that the Socinian and the Calvinist; the Quaker and the Episcopalian cannot cordially unite in any one form of external worship, have banished from their meetings all religious exercises. In the place of these, they have substituted voluntary addresses from the members, both Clergy and Laity, and have found the experiment attended with the most beneficial effects.

ART. XI. “The President, Vice Presidents, Secretaries and Treasurers shall be ex officio members of the committee, the two last only and the inferior officers, clerks, and servants, who shall receive emoluments, and pecuniary recompense from the society.”

ART. XII. “Every clergyman who is a member of the society shall be entitled to attend and vote at all meetings of the committee.”

REMARKS. The provision contained in this last article, is peculiar to the British society, and a large share of its wonderful success, may be imputed to it. This Art. not only prevents the society from becoming an instrument of any one denomination, but it even prevents the suspicion of such an event. By this Article, and by some of the preceding ones, the number of those who may be entitled to vote with the committee may be enlarged to an indefinite extent. Some may apprehend inconvenience from this extension of the privilege, but the apprehension is groundless. Admit that the whole number shall amount to *ten thousand!* Of these how very small a proportion will reside in *New York?* and *there alone* can the privilege be exercised. But although

very few of the whole number will have it in their power ever to exercise this right, yet some of them, and particularly the clergy will occasionally visit the city, and at such times, it would be highly gratifying to them to meet and vote with the committee and to learn the present occupations and future views of the society, and on their return home to communicate to their friends and parishioners the information they have thus acquired. With regard to those who reside in the city, it is by no means certain that any inconvenience would arise from the constant attendance of them all: but those who have taken part in the direction of Bible societies, will not regard such an event as probable. Few are disposed to devote much of their time to the management of a society which will make them no pecuniary compensation, nor promote any sectarian or political views.

ART. XIII. "At the general meetings, and meetings of the committee, the President, or in case of his necessary absence the Vice President first on the list then present; and in the absence of all the Vice Presidents, the Treasurer, and in his absence, such member as shall be voted for that purpose, shall preside at the meeting shall be one.

ART. XIV. "The committee shall also have the power of choosing such persons as shall have rendered essential services to the society, either members for life, or governors for life."

With these last articles, on which no remarks are necessary, our proposed constitution closes. We have thus given it a careful examination, and found it well suited for a great society, embracing all ranks and denominations, and extending its care and benefits over the whole union. Will it be said that although this constitution promises fair, yet that many of its provisions are so novel that they ought not to be adopted till their utility has been tested by experience? The objection is fortunate for the constitution. The experience of the last 12 years, and the most wonderful success, bear witness in its favour. With a few immaterial alterations, required chiefly by local peculiarities, this constitution is a literal copy of that of the British and Foreign Bible society. Will an objection unthought of before, now be urged against the constitution, viz: its *foreign origin*? The objection may be inconsiderately urged, but the reflecting Christian will quickly recall it. He will not dare to reject an instrument which promises to promote the glory of God, merely because neither he nor his friends nor his countrymen, have the honour of inventing it.

Let us now review the steps we have taken—we have examined in the course of this Memoir the extent of that darkness for the dispersion of which Bible societies were instituted—we have found it involving in its deadly gloom more than 500 millions of heathen, and many millions of nominal Christians—We have seen it brooding over these states, and settling with portentous aspect on our wide extended Territories. On inquiry, we have found that the light which we have dispersed, consists of a few faint and scattered rays, streaking our own horizon, but not penetrating the gloom beyond it. At the same time we have found England, and other nations who have adopted her system, kindling a flame whose light is seen, and whose warmth is felt in the darkest and most remote regions of the earth, and we have ascertained that the same instrument

by which this holy fire has been lighted in Europe may be successfully employed for the same purpose in our own country.

With the Christians of New-York, and with the delegates from the different Bible societies, who are soon to meet in that city, it remains to commend this pious work. If a society on the plan described in this memoir should be formed in New York by the advice and with the approbation of the Delegates and should these Delegates enrol their names among its members, there can be no doubt that their constituents would follow their example. Thus there be planted in our Land, a Tree of Life, whose leaves shall be for the healing of the Nations—a Tree whose height shall reach unto Heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of the earth, and thus through the blessing of God, the Christians of America do their part in making “his way known upon earth; his saving health unto all Nations” and in hastening the arrival of the period when “the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign forever.” AMEN.