RESOLUTIONS:—

Resolved, As the sense of this Grand Lodge, that the translation of the Holy Bible into the various languages of the Earth, and distributing the same without note or comment, is a truly Masonic work, and claims the co-operation of every friend of the human race.

Resolved, That we accordingly recommend to all the fraternity, under this Masonic jurisdiction, to give heed personally to this great light, and to use their efforts for diffusing its cheering beams over the world.

Resolved, That as an expression of our gratitude to the Father of Lights for his most merciful care of us hitherto, and for the unexampled prosperity at this time attending the fraternity in Maine; we do hereby dedicate to this great work of diffusing the knowledge of this most Holy Word, one tenth of all monies hereafter to be received for charters to subordinate Lodges, and for candidates initiated into the mysteries of our order: Provided however, That the expenses of the Grand Lodge already incurred for its consecration, shall be first paid, before any appropriation from our income be made to any other object whatever.

AT an adjourned meeting of the Grand Lodge, Sept. 27, the committee submitted the following REPORT, which was ordered to be printed and transmitted to the several Lodges under her jurisdiction:—

REPORT.

To the Most Worshipful the Grand Lodge of Maine.

The Committee to whom was referred certain resolutions proposed for the adoption of the Grand Lodge, respecting the appropriation of a stated portion of the funds of the Grand Lodge to the translation, printing and distribution of the Holy Bible, without note or comment, among the various nations of the earth, have attended to that subject, and ask leave to submit the following report:—
The opinions expressed by all classes of Masons, leave no room to doubt their readiness cheerfully to appropriate some portion of the funds of the institution to the purposes contemplated by the resolves submitted to the Grand Lodge, provided it can be done without violating any fundamental principle of our ancient order.

It becomes necessary, therefore, to advert to the original principles and design of Masonry, in order to solve correctly the interesting and momentous question now presented to the Grand Lodge.

Without entering into all the arguments which have been advanced at different times, by writers on this subject, it is sufficient in this place to remark that all approved writers on Masonry, and all histories of the order which are received as authentic by the fraternity, concur in referring the origin of Masonry to the patriarchal ages, and in regarding its great object as the cultivation of pure religion. Its features have been satisfactorily traced in the religious mysteries of the Egyptians, Greeks and Druids, and the same characters, combined with the cultivation of the arts, are perceived in our traditionary accounts of its existence among the Jews. It is by the same authors supposed to have languished after the conversion of the Druids to christianity, and to have been revived, in renewed splendor, in the early part of the tenth century, at the formation of the Grand Lodge of York.

If these historical accounts are deserving of credit, (and we have never yet heard their correctness questioned) there is no probability that Masonry owes its origin to any combination of builders, or that it was anciently devoted to the cultivation of one branch of learning more than another. We are rather impelled to the belief that the wide and elevated views of our ancient brethren, extended to the preservation and advancement of all good learning, and of every branch of useful science, ever regarding that to be most worthy of attention which leads to right conceptions of the character of that Being whom all enlightened men profess to seek and to adore.

Upon this ground it is easy to account for, and to reconcile all parts of our ancient mysteries. Even the implements of architecture, found among our emblems, form no objection, since it is universally agreed to have been the custom of the ancients to convey moral instruction by visible symbols; and none are more happily adapted to the purpose for which they are now used, than the working tools of Masons.

But upon any other supposition, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to afford any rational explanation of any part of our ritual. If Masonry was not originally a religious and moral institution, it must have been merely a fraternity of architects, associated for the cultivation of their art, and for the relief of each other when in poverty and distress. But it may safely be affirmed that such a fraternity would not have adopted any symbols or ceremonies not relating to their particular profession. And it may be asked what professional benefit a company of mere architects could derive from the anchor of hope, the emblems of the sun, moon, and stars, the pot of incense, the mystic numbers, the all-seeing eye, the sword and heart, the sciences of music, grammar, rhetoric, logic and astronomy, or from definitions of the senses of tasting and smelling? Or why secrecy should so often be enjoined by such a society, under such solemn sanctions? Yet in the mysteries of the ancients, teaching, as they did, a system of religion directly opposite to the idolatrous superstitions of the populace, we clearly see sufficient reasons for
Secrecy, and the utility of imparting the knowledge of true religion by slow degrees, and by symbolical instruction.

Often indeed are we reminded that operative Masons make use of certain implements for the purposes of their art, but that we use them for purposes "more noble and glorious;" and that Masonry is "an holy institution."

Those views of the nature and design of Masonry are in no wise peculiar to the fraternity in this quarter of America, nor to the present generation. They are distinctly stated in Hutchinson's spirit of Masonary, published about forty years since, with the express approbation of the Grand Lodge of England, as well as in other books deserving of great credit, both before and since that time. And to those writings the committee refer for more extensive elucidations than can be given in the compass of this report.

It is evident, then, that the great objects of Masonry originally were the advancement of literature, science, and true religion.

That the Lodges in Europe have never supposed their funds to be consecrated exclusively to the relief of poverty and personal distress, is manifest from the manner in which they have expended them.

In Germany, Denmark and Sweden, charity schools were erected by the Lodges more than half a century ago, for educating the children of Masons "in the principles of science and the doctrines of christianity." In the year 1773, the united Lodges of Dresden, Leipsic and Gollitz, erected at Frederickstadt, a seminary of learning for children of every denomination in the electorate of Saxony. And to use the words of a well known Masonic Historian, "it deserves to be remarked that the founders of these institutions, amid their anxiety for the public prosperity, never neglected the spiritual interests of the children." The same liberal and just view of the objects and uses of Masonry were entertained by our English brethren, who, in the year 1778, instituted a free school "to train up children in the knowledge of virtue and religion."

It may be deemed superfluous to cite any illustrations of the same principles among the Lodges, grand and subordinate, in America, known, as they must be to all well informed Masons. But the views of the committee are so justly expressed by the late M. W. Grand Master of the State of New-Hampshire, in his annual address in the year 1818, to the Lodges of that jurisdiction, that they cannot forbear to quote his own words. After advertin to some local and peculiar causes which had diminished the annual revenues of the Grand Lodge, and suggesting the propriety of making donations from the funds of each subordinate Lodge, to the Grand Lodge, for certain specified purposes, he observes that "The gratuitous distribution of the Holy Scriptures; assistance to indigent young men of our fraternity in completing an education which will qualify them for public usefulness; also, encouragement to those pious Masons who have gone, or may go as Missionaries among the Heathen, are certainly subjects which deserve the attentive consideration of our charitable order. Contributions for these, or the like purposes, would reflect honor on the Masonic institution, would serve to allay prejudices, and conciliate the esteem of those that are without; and might prove the means, under Providence, of essential benefit to mankind." It deserves to be further remarked that the Grand Lodge of the State of Vermont, in the
same liberal and truly Masonic spirit, have made donations to the Bible Societies of that state and of the United States, and at their communication in October, A. D. 1819, they passed an official and Masonic approbation of "the translating, printing, and distributing of the Holy Scripture, without note or comment."

If it should be objected that no instance is to be found in Europe of the application of Masonic funds to the distribution of the Bible, it may be replied that the existence of any Bible Society is of no earlier date than the year 1804; and doubtless but few of the streams have yet begun to flow, which will finally swell that grand river of beneficence to mankind. Nor can we admit it as a just objection against a legitimate and laudable exertion of our powers, that other Lodges have not yet directed theirs to the same object; since the same argument will apply with equal force against the commencement of every virtuous undertaking.

It has been objected that to apply the funds of Lodges of Christian Masons to this object, would destroy the universality of Masonry; and would justify our Jewish brethren in disseminating the writings of Moses only, or the Mahometan Masons in multiplying copies of the Alcoran.

But it should be observed that our Jewish brethren receive, as Holy Writ, not "the writings of Moses only," but the whole of the Old Testament: and as the distribution is made "without note or comment," we perceive no good reason against their sending out that part of the Bible alone, since Christians have found great advantages to result from the translation and publication, among idolatrous nations, of detached portions at a time, as well of the Old Testament as of the New. It has been thought most advisable, in many cases, to adopt this gradual method of instruction—And should our Jewish brethren be induced thus to co-operate with us in this great object, the consequence would only be a more extensive diffusion of light.

Respecting the "Mahometan Masons," who form so strong a part of this objection, we have not yet found the proofs of their existence; and the known indifference of the Turks, both to science and to social intercourse, as well as the vigilance of their despotic government, its extreme jealousy of all secret assemblies, and its prompt and often indiscriminate application of the bow-string, all forbid us to believe the fact, unless upon direct testimony. We have heard of a few instances of Mahometans and Pagans being initiated into our mysteries; but these instances, according to the best evidence we can obtain, occurred in Lodges of Christian Masons, either on the European shores of the Mediterranean, or in the English possessions in India. We have as yet found no evidence that there is such a society as a Turkish or a Pagan Lodge in the world; and we have strong circumstantial proof that there is no Lodge in existence which does not use the Holy Bible as it is used among us, nor in which the initiate does not receive it as "the rule and guide of his faith and practice."

If then these Mahometan Masons thus engaged to adopt the Bible as their rule and guide, which they must have done, if initiated, as it seems in Lodges of Christian Masons; it may be asked what just ground of complaint they can have, if we publish that "rule and guide" to others; or with what reason they can claim, on Masonic grounds, to distribute the Koran?

If we receive the Bible at all, we receive it as a sacred book,—a revelation from Heaven,—as the
great Light by which our steps are to be directed. And if so, what part of it are we to reject, out of
courtesy to the faith of Masons of another religion, if any such there be? To gratify one class we must
exclude the New Testament; and another would require us to reject them both.

But if the principles of our order were promulgated in the tents of Shem,—spread in Europe by the
descendants of Gomer,—and disseminated by Abraham among the nations of Asia,—what is there, we
may ask, in the subsequent revelations of God to man, as we receive them, which is inconsistent with
these first principles? Is the religion of the Patriarchs one thing, and the religion of Jesus Christ another?
Were not both from the same Deity,—and is the latter in any opposition to the former? Are not both in perfect harmony,—the one the foundation, the other the cape stone? And can this be affirmed
of any other religion on the earth?

The answer to these enquiries leads us to this result,—that the universality of Masonry consists in
its embracing in the arms of its charity the whole brotherhood of man, and in its endeavors that all should
be "children of the light"—that all should come to the knowledge of the truth, and that the truth should
make them free.

It has been farther objected that the distribution of the Bible by the aid of Masonry "is unauthorized
by the customs of time immemorial,"—that "not a single precedent can be found of a similar pro-
cedure in ancient records."

The answer to this objection may be found in the preceding observations, and especially by advert-
ing to the very recent date of the origin of the first Bible Society in the world, instituted upon the pre-
sent system. But it may be added, that whatever may have been the customs of ancient times in this res-
pect, we have no "records" whatever which show the ordinary operations of the society much, if any,
beyond the last century. There are, it is true, some documents of an older date; but none which shew
any specific application of Masonic funds. The purposes to which such funds were more anciently ap-
plied, are rather to be ascertained by inference from other facts, and from the general principles of the
institution. If our order existed in the Grecian mysteries, its funds must have been expended in the
maintenance of religious rites. If it was known and supported by the Druids, the great object of their
mysteries, as we have good reason to believe, was the preservation of a worship more pure than that of
the populace;—in addition to which they cultivated every branch of human learning;—neither of which,
it is fair to presume, could have been effected without revenues. And if Masonry, as no Mason will de-
ny, existed in the court of Solomon,—if it was honored with the charge of erecting the first temple, and
its "children of the captivity" restored the second, unquestionably its means were not restricted to the
mere giving of alms. It would seem absurd to say that Masonry may lawfully build a temple for the
regular worship of the true God, but must not furnish it with a single copy of the law and the prophets.

What else, it may be asked, was the building of Solomon's Temple, which makes so prominent a figure
in the foreground of our traditions, but an exclusive appropriation of the whole energies of Masonry to
extend the knowledge of Jehovah, and to promote his worship, as he had prescribed it, and to but one
nation at that time in the world? We constantly affirm that this was done by ancient Masons, not merely
as the servants of King Solomon, and with his wealth, but in their Masonic character, and with all the
means which, as Masons, they could command. The institution was completely identified with the great work it was engaged in conducting; and we can perceive no difference in principle between building a temple to the Most High, in one age, and furnishing it with a copy of his Holy Word, in another:—nor between the furnishing of a Bible, out of which the truth may be taught on Sundays to the congregation, and the gratuitous bestowing of copies to the destitute, in which they may read it for themselves.

The question now before the Grand Lodge, we believe, was never directly presented to our ancient brethren. Not that we suppose they never discussed the subject of enlightening the world, or doubted the lawfulness of appropriating their means to that end. On the contrary we suppose the diffusion of the light of truth to have been a great object of Masonry in all ages. But amidst all the means which have been devised for the attainment of this object, the discovery of the liberal and catholic method of sending forth the Bible in its native simplicity—of appealing, as it were, directly to the Deity, to maintain the commanding majesty of his own Revelation, has been reserved to the present age. It originated in a spirit of enlightened philanthropy; and it has rapidly and widely extended the prevalence of those feelings which gave it birth. It is the tessellated pavement on which brethren of every sect may walk and not stumble. It is, if we may be permitted the expression, the Masonry of religion, and the religion of Masonry.

It has been urged, as a farther objection, that the proposed appropriation "would change the main object of our ancient institution from temporal to spiritual charity."

But it is incumbent on those who advance this objection, to show that temporal charity was ever regarded as the main object of our institution. If the view we have taken of ancient Masonry be correct, however extensive the temporal charities of the craft may heretofore have been, they were far from being regarded as the great purpose of Masonry. Nor is it a very easy matter to make so careful a discrimination among the objects of charity as this objection would seem to require. We do not believe that any Mason is prepared to say, that while our order permits us to relieve the wants and sufferings of the body, it steadily refuses any relief to the wounded and troubled mind;—or that while it directs us to administer to the personal wants of Masons' orphans, when they occur, it forbids us to prevent the existence of want, by affording such orphans seasonable moral and religious instruction. If we may feed the hungry and clothe the naked, it would seem to be a part of the same duty also to reclaim the wandering and instruct the ignorant. We perceive no difference of principle between supporting the poor out of our own funds, and teaching them to support themselves, unless it be a difference in favor of the latter: and an important part of this instruction consists in enforcing the moral duty of diligence and virtue from the high sanctions of religion. And where can such knowledge be so well obtained as from the Bible? In this view the bestowment of a Bible on the destitute orphan of a deceased Mason, may prove one of the greatest of all "temporal charities." We can never believe that while Masonry enjoins, on us the relief of poverty and distress, even though occasioned by error from the ways of virtue and religion, it at the same time forbids us to prevent that poverty and distress by opening to the eyes of the young and ignorant the sacred pages of Revelation: nor that while we may administer to the wants of a sick wayfaring brother, and afford him the means of pursuing his way, yet that Masonry will not permit us to cheer his journey with the divine consolations of our holy religion.
We have considered some other objections of an inferior character, but do not consider it necessary now to examine them in detail; since the preceding observations, if well founded, afford a satisfactory answer to them all. Indeed the objection arising from the insufficiency of our revenues, and any supposed pledge of them to the exclusive relief of bodily suffering, can come only from a willing objector. There is no Lodge but what can, at times, spare from its income a small sum for the diffusion of light and knowledge. And however its present funds may be limited in their application by by-laws and regulations, the same power which enacted such laws can change them, at least so far as future income may be concerned.

It should be distinctly remembered that the object of the resolutions under consideration, is, not to convert our institution into a mere missionary or Bible Society—not to propagate sectarian dogmas or notions—not to introduce any innovation into Masonry—nor to obstruct any of its ancient channels or divert any of its accustomed streams of beneficence:—but rather to rekindle the fire of an ancient altar—to open an obstructed fountain, the streams whereof will make glad the hearts of our brethren and kindred, and to prove our title to be called children of the light, by imitating the example of our Masonic fathers.

These opinions are corroborated by a consideration of the nature and character of our institution and of our public professions.

From the first introduction of a candidate into the mysteries of Masonry, to the termination of his proceedings, he is continually taught the great principles of piety and good morals; and these instructions are conveyed with a progressive frequency and force, under deeper and more imposing solemnities, in every succeeding degree. On his becoming a Mason he expressly receives the Holy Bible as "the rule and guide of his faith and practice," and solemnly engages ever to walk by its unerring precepts. It is always open in every Lodge of Masons, and is reverently carried abroad in all our public processions. We profess ourselves to be "children of the light,"—and we represent our institution as the depository of all that is valuable in art or science, lovely in morality and virtue, or true and liberal in religion. We profess the highest veneration for King Solomon "the beloved of the Lord,"—celebrated for his piety and wisdom, and for his zeal in extending the knowledge of the true God, and advancing the cause of science among men. We adopt, as our peculiar patron, the venerable harbinger of Jesus Christ,—of a dispensation more pure and exalted than any which had preceded it;—a patron, devoted, with unshaken constancy, to the spread of religion and knowledge among men, and who persisted, even unto death, in that glorious cause.

And with what consistency, we ask, can these professions be held out to the world, if, at the same time, we coldly turn away from the noblest work which ever engaged the powers of man?

Every view we have been able to take of Masonry, shews it to be an institution founded on the broad basis of universal beneficence.

We conceive therefore, that to restrict the operations of our order to the mere relief of bodily want, does in no wise answer its original constitution and design, nor do justice to its high character and professions. It was doubtless, in early ages, a most powerful instrument to subdue the ferocity of untutored man, to break the chains of ignorance and superstition, and to discipline the minds and hearts of youth
to habits of virtue. Hence we find ancient Masonry not only dispensing alms to the destitute, opening the door of hospitality to the stranger, and watching, with unwearied kindness, at the couch of disease and pain,—but also presiding in schools and seminaries of learning, handling the implements of art, and ministering at the holy altar.

These duties seem to be still generally incumbent on the craft, though the state of society may at times render the practice of some of them less necessary than that of others. In a country favored as ours is, with the abundant and gratuitous means of ordinary instruction, both civil and religious, it becomes not so necessary for Lodges of Masons to attend to these objects among ourselves; and our funds, being relieved from this demand, are applicable in a greater degree to the purpose of instructing the benighted and ignorant of other nations in the arts of civilization and of peace,—in the means of increasing their happiness in this life, and in teaching them to hope for a more perfect state of existence hereafter—instructing our brethren both how to live and how to die.

It is by the prevalence of Masonic principles that wars lose their character of ferocity, and at length will lose their existence,—that habits of industry and sobriety are created and cherished,—that good will and harmony prevail among men—and peace, and justice and benevolence will pervade the world. And it belongs to our order, by disseminating these principles where they are now unknown, to produce such beneficial results. The object is worthy our attention, is within our reach, and its achievement must exalt the character of our venerable institution.

This view of Masonry has led the Committee to the conclusions contained in the following resolves, which they respectfully recommend to the Grand Lodge, for their adoption.

Resolved, That the funds belonging to the Masonic institution in general, are not necessarily limited to the relief of bodily suffering; but are lawfully applicable to other purposes of beneficence.

Resolved, That the gratuitous distribution of the Holy Scriptures,—the assistance of the children of indigent Masons to acquire an education which may qualify them for public usefulness,—and the assistance of pious Masons who may have gone as instructors among the heathen of foreign lands or the aborigines of our own country,—are objects of a Masonic character, and deserve the attention and encouragement of our charitable institution.

Resolved, That such permanent appropriation shall be made from the funds of the Grand Lodge, as may from time to time be expedient, regard being had to the state of said funds and the various claims on the same, for the translation, printing and distribution of the Holy Scriptures, without note or comment, among the various nations of the earth.

SIMON GREENLEAF, Per Order.

PORTLAND, Sept. 27, 1820.