

This examination of the two preceding epochs in the preservation of the Sacred Scriptures leads us up to the third, deeply impressed with the importance of the subject, and better prepared to appreciate the significance of

THE FORMATION OF THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY.

This institution is one of the most vital facts, and one of the most powerful factors of the Nineteenth Century. Without parallel for the magnitude of its operations, the catholicity of its aims; the simplicity of its constitution; and the beneficent character of its work.

The causes that led to its formation were the wide spread Revivals of the Eighteenth Century, under the labours of the Wesleys, Whitfield, Toplady, and Simeon. With this extensive awakening arose the Modern Missionary spirit and enterprise, and the formation of Missionary Societies—in the same connection the Modern Sabbath School enterprise was inaugurated by Robert Raikes. Five societies had been formed for christian work in the course of the century; and the best work they did was to lift the curtain and make known how wide spread the destitution was in the ignorance of the people, the great scarcity of copies of the Word of God, and the eagerness of the people to read and possess these Scriptures for themselves. This destitution was felt in Wales more deeply than in Britain; but, so far as we can see, the dearth of copies of the Scriptures was as great for the population. Mr. Charles, of Bala, led the way in seeking to grapple with this great necessity; the result was a meeting in London, the logic of events hurried these men on—the Bible for Wales—why not include England? and this holy purpose widened into the breadth of Christ's commission—"ALL THE WORLD"—British and Foreign.

In the Fourth Century copies were buried in sepulchres from the wrath of the destroyer. In the Sixteenth Century it was rescued from the entombment of an apostolic church. And now, in the spirit of the powerful awakening, and just as the church is coming out of some bewilderment of emotion into the deep purpose of her fresh life, we shall give the Bible to the race, in all the languages and dialects of the children of men. The first conflict was with the brute force of a cruel Paganism; in the second conflict it was the supremacy of conscience and conviction confronting human dictation and idolatrous rites of worship. But now the battle is fought, year by year weapons of conflict are being surrendered by the enemy, and the providence of God is melting these instruments of war—turning them into plough-shares and pruning hooks—and this tried, sure, converting Word of God is being put within the reach of all, at the rate of Two Millions and a Half per year.

The British and Foreign Bible Society, the American Bible Society, &c., constitute the true Ecumenical Council, gathered around "The Oracles of the Living God."

The vital principle of its Constitution is reverence for, and faith in, the Word of God—"The Word of God without note or comment," save the various established readings contained in the valued manuscripts—on those two principles universal co-operation is invited, and has been secured to an extent that greatly exceeds the most sanguine expectations. On March 7th, 1804—a signal year in many respects—in this year Napoleon I. seized the imperial sceptre, and England feared invasion, and insecurity was everywhere felt, men's hearts failing them for fear—in this same year Pope Pius the VII. came to Paris to the inaugural ceremonies of Bonaparte, but "the Kingdom of God cometh not with observation"—a few men that met at the London Tavern—the Society that was organized in the presence of Three Hundred persons—most of them the then despised Dissenters. In due time the great ones of the earth came to do honour and render help in the work of the Society, but they were not at the digging of the foundation, and the setting of its stones. It was indeed like Moses by the river's brink, a weak infant but a goodly child, yet destined to lead the world out of bondage, to Mount Zion the city of the Living God. Like Jesus in the manger in swaddling