

These Scriptures are the articulated voice of God to the spirit of man ; they make him wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus.

Such a Book with such a history and character can never be a subject of common place interest, or of mere passing importance. It lies at the foundation of all hope and purity to the soul of man. It touches all interests secular and sacred, personal and social, past, present, and future ; it meets man at his birth ; it confronts him at his death ; the reality of its contents is ever with him in the life to come ; its importance is forever.

It was for the multiplying of the copies of this Book, and for the circulation of its saving truths, the British and Foreign Bible Society was formed in 1804—78 years ago.

We propose submitting a few facts not generally known which we trust will be helpful in deepening our interest in, and increasing our appreciation of, the work of this Society. In the Christian Dispensation there have been **THREE DISTINCT AND WELL-MARKED PROVIDENCES** in behalf of the preservation and perpetuation of the Holy Scriptures—each of these providences have changed the face of the world—recreated the Church—regenerated the Sacramental Host of God ; and been a fulfilment of prophecies that belong to the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom.

THE PERSECUTION OF DIOCLESIAN.

In the year 303, there was inaugurated a movement against the Scriptures and the Church, which constituted an unparalleled crisis in the history of the world, it shook the whole of the Roman world. The plan was formed by the Pagan priesthood of Rome : foreseeing the growing power of the Christians and their writings, they instigated Galerius to a wholesale slaughter ; he in turn led on the more timid and better disposed Dioclesian, and East and West alike united : Persia, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Egypt, Gaul, Spain, it reached as far as Britain. The plan was matured, the edicts were published March 28, enjoining that :—

All the sacred books should be burnt ;

All the Ministers of the Christian religion should be imprisoned.

All Christians were deprived of office under the Empire ;

All this was to be enforced under pain of death ; they must

Give up their copies of the Scriptures ;

Deny allegiance to the Lord Jesus ;

Sacrifice to the gods.

These edicts were carried out and enforced to an extent on which we cannot here dwell. Toward the end of this wrathful assault, as indicating the delight in the work, addresses of congratulation were delivered from thrones, and to the assembled senate. Columns of triumph were erected and have been found in Spain. A medal was struck off with the inscription—“*Extincto nomine Christianorum,*” “The name of the Christians being every where extinguished, and their Institutions banished from the world.”

So almost universal was the destruction of the copies of the Scriptures that out of eleven hundred Greek Manuscripts of the New Testament, not one has yet been found belonging to an earlier period than that before us:

“But the Lord liveth and blessed be our Rock.”

“Heaven and Earth shall pass away but my word shall not pass away.” The Lord made bare His arm before the world—and every leader in this outrage died a fearful death—in disease, or suicide.

The word was quickly disinterred as from sepulchres, and with the greatest care recopied for circulation—Eusebins being charged with fifty copies. And the Word came forth like Noah and his three sons from the Ark, to repeople the earth. The rainbow of promise spanned the heavens ; and in twelve years after, the storm had ceased. Constantine is seen, whatever his motives were, the providence of triumph to the Scriptures is all the same, calling the first