

THE CIRCULATION OF THE BIBLE.

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At the beginning of this century it is said that the Bible, or portions of it, had been published in about fifty languages, mostly European. The number is now reported to have increased to about 300 languages or dialects, the 250 increase being for foreign mission fields.

The first report of the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1808 showed an issue of 81,500 Bibles and Testaments, of which 16,500 were of the Old, and 65,000 of the New Testament and portions. For the last five years the issues of the Bible in whole or parts by this society have averaged 4,000,000 copies yearly, and 120,000,000 volumes have been issued in the 85 years of its organization; about one-half the issues now are circulated in mission lands through the efforts of about 600 colporteurs and agents. These often precede and prepare the way for the living missionary.

The American Bible Society in its first annual report in 1817 showed an issue of 6,450 complete Bibles, which has increased yearly until it has reached an average for the past ten years of 1,440,000 copies yearly, of which over 500,000 volumes annually are circulated in mission fields; in this work about 400 colporteurs are employed.

These issues, with those reported by other societies, show an annual circulation of the Bible, in whole or in portions, of about 6,000,000 volumes, and an entire issue for 85 years of 214,000,000 volumes. The issue of 6,000,000 volumes for 1888 is believed to be more than the entire issue of the Scriptures in all the centuries previous to 1800. In this work the two societies named have expended over \$60,000,000.

In view of such a wonderful increase of Bible circulation, we may well call this the great Bible and missionary century of the world's history. As it was about twenty years before the first missionaries learned a foreign language, so as to make a translation of the Bible, no great increase appeared until after 1830, while more than one-half of the 214,000,000 copies shown in our statistics, and of the translations and circulation, were the work of the past twenty-five years.

It is not too much to say that the 250 translations each represents an amount of patient heroism, self-denial and scholarship that are worthy of an honourable place in the world's history. In over 300 languages the Bible now reaches nearly all the known countries of the world. Asia gets a goodly portion of the circulation; nearly 500,000 volumes of the Bible, in whole or in its parts, were scattered among the 350,000,000 of Chinese for 1888. Of other countries a circulation of over 300,000 is reported for India, 76,000 in Japan, 13,900 in Persia, 11,500 in Ceylon, 37,000 in the Malayan Islands, 6,000 in Syria, 18,000 in Liberia, 300,000 volumes in Russia, 125,000 in Turkey, 7,750 in Greece, 137,000 in Italy.

At Milan, in Italy, an Italian publisher has begun the publication of the Bible in numbers at one cent each, of which 50,000 copies were sold the first week.

In Africa, Algiers and Tunis get 7,750 volumes, Egypt 30,500, Madagascar 20,000. Of the more than thirty translations into the languages of Africa, and through the many agencies of eastern, western and southern portions, many other thousands are circulated, but the statistics are not easy to collect.

In North and South America, Mexico has had 120,000 volumes in the past twenty years; and for 1888, Brazil received 28,000, Peru 8,000, and other portions of South America over 75,000 copies, of which the Argentine Republic received 32,300 volumes. Agencies in Central America among the Indians, and in the West Indies, call for many thousands more. As the Bible is translated into twenty-two languages for the Pacific Islands, many