

THIRTY-FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE NEW-BRUNSWICK AUXILIARY BIBLE SOCIETY.

1861

On the Evening of THURSDAY, January 9th, the above Meeting was held at the Hall of the Mechanics' Institute,

The Honorable Judge PARKER, President of the Society, in the Chair.

A very large and respectable assemblage attended on the occasion, filling the Hall to overflowing. The proceedings were opened with singing a part of the 57th Psalm, and reading the 67th.

* The President then addressed the Meeting, and in remarking, with regret, on the insufficiency of the space to accommodate the yearly increasing number of those who were desirous of attending our anniversaries, urged on all present—who came as avowed friends to the circulation of the Holy Scriptures—for such only were invited—to consider the duty of giving their substantial aid to the Society and in order to show the need for this, he reminded them that we were not merely a Bible Society of New Brunswick—but an auxiliary to the great British and Foreign Bible Society—the Bible Society of the world. After commenting on the vast extent of the Society's operations under each of the distinctive heads—British and Foreign—and the great benefit we derived from the Common English Version of the Bible—adopted and approved by all denominations of Protestants—which had been so carefully and faithfully translated, and so long in use—the numerous other versions rendered necessary by the various languages and dialects of the inhabitants of the widely spread dominions of the British Crown—the new fields opening every year or the old ones extending in Foreign Countries,—the President proceeded nearly as follows:

"The one great object of the Bible Society is, that every member of the human family should have the whole and the pure word of God in his own tongue in which he was born. It is very gratifying to me to inform you that you will have before you this evening, two Reverend gentlemen who have laboured in far distant and widely separated countries,—and who will tell you what their own eyes have seen, their own ears heard, and hands handled in the work of this Society—and you will hear from them and from others, not merely of the effect of the Bible in Heathen countries—but the contrast will be drawn between the past and present state of those countries in which the Bible is freely received, and those (whether Heathen or within the bounds of Christendom) where it is excluded or only partially admitted. The great advantage which has attended the plan of Bible Colportage in this Province, as well as all other countries into which it has been introduced; will also be detailed to you.

"There is one topic—of late an almost absorbing one in England—which it would be an affectation of delicacy in me to pass unnoticed—indeed, as I consider it has a most material bearing on the Bible Society, it is forced upon our attention. You will perceive I am alluding to the late extraordinary action of one whom we can look upon only as a Foreign Prince or Prelate—though his spiritual authority is acknowledged by many beyond the sphere of his dominion and Sec. As a member of this Society, and it is only in this capacity I refer to it—I say it is forced on our notice, for we cannot but remember that from the same quarter angry and violent denunciations are constantly poured forth upon the Bible Society—its agents and its operations—and taking these in connexion with the late unprovoked aggression, I look upon them as parts of one great plan of attack; not so much on the Church of England, as on the great principles of the Reformation—those principles which are the foundation of the Bible Society. When I reflect on the causes

and possible consequences of this invasion, I most cordially enter into the spirit of a resolution passed at a great Protestant meeting recently held in London—"That the main hope of checking the progress of erroneous doctrines and practices does not rest upon measures of counter-agitation, but upon the great Protestant principles of upholding the Supremacy of Scripture as the rule of faith; and of counteracting error by the exhibition of Scriptural truth"—and I firmly rely on these principles to prevent the spreading of any such erroneous doctrines or practices within this Province—and I look to the Bible Society's depot as the great armoury from which to draw our weapons for the contest, should contest come.

"There is a point of great consequence—as to the duty of this Society and its members in regard to the individual lay members of the Roman Catholic communion—and we should I think be deterred by no denunciations—no fear of offence—from offering to them as well as others the Bible in their own tongue—to all who will accept it. We may not feel any particular call to press it on those who have it already always within their reach, and the means of procuring it—but there are thousands even in this Province who may never see it from their cradles to their graves unless we take it to them. And why should we take it to them? because in so doing we believe we are acting in obedience—not to a human but a Divine command—because we are convinced by repeated instances that God's blessing attends it. I have thought often and deeply on this subject, and I say unhesitatingly, I cannot recognise in any one man, whatever may be his title, power, or pretension—I cannot recognise in any class of men—rulers, priests, or prelates—I cannot recognise in any body of men—General Council, Synod, Convocation, or what you will, any right to debar others from the free use of the sacred Scriptures. The Bible is the authentic revelation of God's will to man—it is man's inheritance, of which his brother man should not deprive him. There is no warrant for saying the Bible is for the priest and not for the people. It is a great delusion: When I am met by objectors telling me they cannot see this as we see it, I reply, let the light shine in upon you, and then judge. Oh, that all men would look at these things by the pure light of Gospel truth as it shines forth from the book of Inspiration, and not as obscured by the mists of human traditions or the clouds of a perverted rationalism—not with minds enmured or fancies dazzled by superstitious imagery—and then would they bless the day and bless the agency which led them to the light!"

An abstract of the Report was next read by Dr. Paterson, the senior Secretary, from which it appeared that the Parent Society had been very prosperous during the past year, having realized in receipts, £91,634, and having issued 1,136,595 copies of the Holy Scriptures. The local Auxiliary has also prospered; its issues amounted to 2,415 copies, and its receipts, including the collection at the Meeting, to over £190.