

**JUBILEE MEMORIAL OF THE
AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY:
BEING A REVIEW OF ITS
FIRST FIFTY YEARS' WORK**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649508631

Jubilee Memorial of the American Bible Society: Being a Review of Its First Fifty Years' Work
by Isaac Ferris

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

ISAAC FERRIS

**JUBILEE MEMORIAL OF THE
AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY:
BEING A REVIEW OF ITS
FIRST FIFTY YEARS' WORK**



BIBLE HOUSE Astor Place, New York.

JUBILEE MEMORIAL

OF THE

AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY:

BEING A REVIEW OF ITS FIRST FIFTY YEARS' WORK.

Prepared by appointment of the Anniversary Committee, and preached in parts,
6th May, 1866, in Presbyterian Church corner 19th Street and Fifth Avenue,

BY ISAAC FERRIS, D.D., LL.D.,

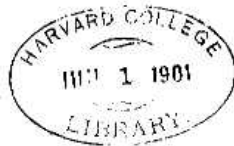
CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK CITY.

PRINTED BY VOTE OF THE BOARD OF MANAGERS.

NEW YORK:
AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY,
BIBLE HOUSE, ASTOR PLACE.

1867.

~~03142~~
C10041.3,9



Miss Wetmore
through
A. C. White

HARVARD
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

JUBILEE MEMORIAL
OF THE
FIRST FIFTY YEARS
OF THE
AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY.

How intense and how wide spread was the interest of the Jubilee year to the Jewish people! and what a thrill of joy pervaded the masses, as the dawn of such year brought with it releases, restorations—liberations—over the whole land, with all the attendant blessings connected in the Divine arrangement with this remarkable season!

It is not precisely such a year we enjoy; but ours is a year of joy over work accomplished; over blessings diffused through a vast field of want; over spiritual emancipations from the galling yoke of sin; over the shedding of a flood of heavenly light on the sad condition of millions of the benighted, and furnishing to men ready to perish the means of relief. And what has added to the interest of our Jubilee, is the wonderful and long prayed for emancipation of millions living in a state of literal bondage in our land, and the removal for ever of the yoke of slavery, which has distinguished this year.

Its coming has awakened peculiar feelings among our friends over the land, and it is pleasant to note by what appropriate exercises they have commemorated the happy season. At this centre of operations, it has been our privilege to hear from the lips of honoured men, representing various branches of the Christian family circle, of "*the advantages of a written revelation*"—of "*the purity of that revelation*"—of "*the inspiration of the Bible*"—of "*the human and divine in the Bible*"—of "*the Bible and Civil government*"—of it "*as a book for mankind*"—and of "*what it has done for the world the past*"

century." We come now to the closing exercises of the contemplated series—which is intended to be occupied with the work done; or, a historical review of the first fifty years of our great National Institution. Though this be not a field for much beside the statement of facts (and hence, perhaps, to the general hearer, of little special interest), yet from that circumstance it has much to interest every friend of the Bible cause. The business aspect of such a great movement must embrace matters of detail; and these illustrate the vitality, the power and efficiency of the Institution—its adaptedness for the great work for which established; the manner in which it has realized the hopes of its founders; but above all, the wisdom and beneficence of the organization—and clearly prove it to have occurred in the fulness of time and under the Divine auspices.

It is recorded, that at the time of the organization an emphatic voice from the midst of the attending audience cried out aloud: "This is none other than the work of the Lord." That which was said then has been often repeated; for every step of our advance shows the Divine hand which laid the foundation; and this, it is thought, we shall see on the present occasion.

The want of a supply of Bibles was deeply and widely felt in the earlier days of our republic, in the midst of its struggle for national life, and various remedial measures were adopted. It is a striking circumstance, that while our fathers were pressed with the burdens and hardships of war, they felt the need of the Bible, and sought to have the people supplied with this best of guides and comforters, and this safest of instructors on their rights and their duties. What a lesson to their descendants! In 1777 a memorial came before the Congress of the Revolution (which had adopted the Declaration of Independence), seeking such relief of the public want at their hands as their wisdom might devise. The application was not flouted at, as if we were a nation without a religion, but proper attention was given to it, and a reference was made of the subject to a committee, who, while they could not provide for the printing, recommended that the government take immediate measures to secure 20,000 copies from Holland, Scotland, or elsewhere, at the expense of Congress.

In 1781—as, in consequence of the war, the English Bibles could not be imported, and when none could tell how long the war might last—on another memorial, a committee reported a recommendation of a Bible printed by Robert Aitken in Philadelphia; on which, the resolution in the following ever memorable words was adopted:

“Resolved, That the United States, in Congress assembled, highly approve the pious and laudable undertaking of Mr. Aitken, as subservient to the interests of religion; and being satisfied of the care and accuracy of the execution of the work, recommend this edition to the inhabitants of the United States.”

As one well says, “What moral sublimity in this fact, as it stands imperishably recorded and filed in the national archives!—the *first* Congress of the United States assuming the rights and performing the duties of a *Bible society*, long before such an institution had an existence in the world!”

It was in 1804 when that grand and most memorable event took place, *the organization of the BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY*, concerning which our first Secretary, Dr. John M. Mason, said it was “ten thousand times more glorious than all the exploits of the sword;” and of which Dr. Spring has since said, “Old England has no brighter jewel in her crown.” The Christian world joins to-day in thanksgiving to God for the worldwide blessings it has diffused and is diffusing. We are happy that her representatives are with us to-day, to participate in our joy, while they bring her most cordial greeting, and that among them is the countryman of him whose earnest appeal for the Scriptures for the Sunday schools and the destitute in the principality of Wales, in 1802, first moved the British heart to the great work which has been accomplished.

The Bible-diffusion spirit was developed early in this century in this country, and with great rapidity after the British movement. The first organization was that in Philadelphia, in 1808; the second, that of the Connecticut State Society in May, 1809; the third, that of the Massachusetts Society in July, 1809; the fourth, that of the New Jersey Society late in the same year; and the fifth, that of the New York (City) Society in 1810. At the commencement of 1816 there were one hund-

red and thirty-two societies in our country, each independent in its work and entirely local; classified thus:

In New Hampshire. 2	In Pennsylvania. 15	In Georgia. 1
Massachusetts 9	Delaware 1	Ohio. 7
Rhode Island 2	Maryland 5	Kentucky 3
Connecticut 3	Dist. Columbia 1	Tennessee 1
Vermont 12	Virginia 12	Louisiana 1
New York 35	North Carolina 1	Mississippi 1
New Jersey 7	South Carolina 2	Indiana. 12

Besides these, there were numerous Bible associations.

The supply of the destitution within their own range was all that these societies aimed at, and this was very imperfectly met. It is matter of history, that the Christian heart of our own country was first effectively moved in behalf of the multitudes perishing in the newly and sparsely settled West and South-west, through the agency of one of the devoted band of young men who, in the shadow of the haystack in the meadow near Williams College, planned the Foreign Missionary movement (and gave themselves to it), whose results have been most blessed. Samuel J. Mills, whom we refer to, having completed his theological studies at the Andover Seminary in 1812, was moved, in his large benevolence, at once to undertake a tour of investigation into the spiritual condition of the western and southern parts of the land. He made two tours—the first in 1812 and 1813, in company with the Rev. John F. Schermerhorn, a minister of the Reformed Dutch Church; the second in 1814 and 1815, in company with Rev. Daniel Smith, of the Congregational Church. The correspondence which followed, and the report which was given to the public, of "the nakedness of the land," as regarded the supply of the Sacred Scriptures, awakened the deepest feeling. Mr. Mills, on his return North, visited various cities, and pleaded the cause of the destitute with influential laymen as well as ministers at the most important centres. Very earnest appeals were made in the *Panoplist* (a religious monthly published at Andover, Mass.), at the same time, in behalf of a union of effort in what could only be done by such co-operation; while at the same time urgent exhortations to the same effect came from England, with most glowing accounts of the success of the work in the fatherland.*

* See Appendix (A.)