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The Rising of the Holy Bible to the Restoration

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In his well-known autobiography, Parley P. Pratt describes an important missionary event in Church history. While in Toronto, Upper Canada, in 1835, he tells of a meeting in which John Taylor's conversion hung delicately in the balance: “In a large apartment, well furnished,” Pratt recalls, “was soon convened a solemn, well dressed, and, apparently, serious and humble people, nearly filling the room. Each held a bible, while Mr. Patrick presided in their midst, with a bible in his hand and several more lying on the table before him. With one of these I was soon furnished, as was any other person present who might lack this, apparently, necessary article. In this manner these people had assembled twice each week for about two years, for the professed purpose of seeking truth.”^[1] Pratt was invited to speak for two to three hours, in which time he taught John Taylor and others how Daniel's prophecies of a “stone . . . cut out of the mountain without hands” (Daniel 2:45) was now being fulfilled in a latter-day restoration of priesthood authority and gospel truths. That meeting profoundly affected the history of the Church.

Latter-day Saints would do well to pause and reflect on the debt we owe to the Holy Bible, what President Heber J. Grant called that “Book of books.” It was, after all, the Holy Bible that inspired the boy prophet, Joseph Smith, in the spring of 1820. It was from the Holy Bible that Moroni, a Book of Mormon prophet, quoted so liberally during his nocturnal visits in the fall of 1823 (Joseph Smith-History 1:36–42). And it was from Joseph Smith's inspired version of the Bible that so many important revelations were received, including the divine discourse on Christ's infinite atonement in Doctrine and Covenants 76, the eternal nature of marriage and the family in section 132, and the doctrines of creation and man's purpose and destiny as found in the book of Moses.

Likewise it was from the pages of the Bible that most early missionaries preached the gospel, whether Daniel 2, Acts 3, or Revelation 14, to a public who had already come to know the Bible. It was from the pages of the Bible that early missionaries taught the Restoration, and it was in comparison to the Bible that so many early converts found their way to accept the message of Cumorah.^[2] Again from the Book of Mormon: “For behold, this [the Book of Mormon] is written for the intent that ye may believe that [the Bible]; and if ye believe that ye will believe this also; and if ye believe this ye will know concerning your fathers” (Mormon 7:9). In the years immediately leading up to the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, something quite remarkable occurred that promoted the “biblicization” of the Western world, that went far to create a Bible culture, an awareness and widespread popular ownership of the Bible that had not existed before.

Although the Bible had been printed and in circulation for centuries before, only in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries did it finally begin to be printed in vast quantities and distributed worldwide into the hands of millions who before that time had never owned their own personal copy of scripture. Between the years 1780 and 1830, the popular availability of the Bible to the common person multiplied many times over. Commentators of the late eighteenth century in England and in America speak of a dearth, a famine of owning the word of God. Yet by 1831, at least here in America, Alexis de Tocqueville reported that “there is hardly a pioneer's hut that does not contain a few odd volumes of Shakespeare” and that book dealers peddled “an enormous quantity of religious works, Bibles, [and]

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sermons.” What had happened to change this equation in those intervening years? What initiated this change? Certainly the formation, rise, and phenomenal achievements of the Bible dissemination movement of the early nineteenth century are at least partially responsible. Who was instrumental in beginning this movement? And what factors explain its remarkable success?

The British and Foreign Bible Society

The year 2004 marks the bicentennial celebration of the founding of the venerable British and Foreign Bible Society in London, England, on March 7, 1804. What started inauspiciously quickly exceeded every expectation of its founders. Speaking in the spring of 1820, the Right Honourable Lord Teignmouth, former governor general of the British East India Company and president of the British and Foreign Bible Society, took justifiable pride in the society’s spectacular accomplishments:

“Never has the benign spirit of our holy religion appeared with a brighter or a more attractive lustre, since the Apostolic times, than in the zeal and efforts displayed, during the last sixteen years, for disseminating the records of divine truth and knowledge. The benefit of these exertions has already extended to millions; and, when we contemplate the vast machinery now in action for the unlimited diffusion of the Holy Scriptures, the energy which impels its movements, and the accession of power which it is constantly receiving, we cannot but indulge the exhilarating hope, ‘that the Angel, having the everlasting Gospel to preach to them that are upon the earth’ has commenced his auspicious career. Even now, the light of divine revelation has dawned in the horizon of regions which it never before illuminated, and is again becoming visible in others in which it had suffered a disastrous eclipse. . . . By his special favour the Bible Institution has proved a blessing to mankind, and with the continuance of it . . . it will be hailed by future generations as one of the greatest blessings, next to that of divine Revelation itself, ever conferred on the human race.”^[4]

If the Bible had been the custody of the monastery for so many centuries, it became the veritable anthem of the Reformation. In 1384 John Wycliffe, at the peril of his life, was the first to produce a handwritten manuscript copy of the Bible in English. With Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press in 1455, the first printed book was the Bible in Latin. In 1522 Martin Luther printed his German New Testament, and four years later William Tyndale printed the first English New Testament. Then in 1611 appeared the magisterial King James Version of the Bible, soon accepted as the authorized version for the realm. The Bible became the discourse of sinner and saint, puritan and pilgrim. With the passage of time, the Church of England found itself on the defense against the rise of radical religious Nonconformists in the early eighteenth century whose interpretations of the Bible varied widely from those of the established church.

It was the rise of John Wesley, especially, and his brand of Methodism, beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, that would revolutionize Christianity and bring the Bible to the fore. Wesley traveled twenty-five thousand miles and preached 52,400 times between 1738 and his death in 1791. Due, in part, to his skill of skirting the niceties of theological debate, his doctrines of justification by faith while rejecting the complementary Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, his genius at organization, and his capacity to inspire and recruit legions of itinerant preachers (“illiterate enthusiasts,” as their detractors derided them), Wesley would eventually count his followers in the millions. Trumpeting the authority and the inerrancy of scripture, he taught out of the Bible that all men and women needed to be saved and that “before God all souls were of equal value,”^[5] a message that resonated with the masses of poor among the lower classes of British society.^[6]

In the process, Wesley and his popular brand of revivalism helped to defuse and deflect the seething unrest of the working classes away from anarchy and revolution and towards morality and Christian conversion. As one leading historian noted, “The elite of the working class, the hard-working and capable bourgeois, had been imbued by the Evangelical movement with a spirit from which the established order had nothing to fear.”^[7]

His gospel message equipped his followers to reject the anti-Christian doctrines of the French Revolution, the deism of Thomas Paine and his widely read *Rights of Man*, and the agnosticism of the Utilitarian school of Jeremy Bentham and James Mill. By the end of the eighteenth century, more Englishmen may have counted themselves Methodist than they did Anglican, even though Wesleyan Methodism had ever so carefully sought to reform the established church, not

dethrone it.^[8] Little wonder that with Methodism's soaring rise to popularity, Parliament passed the New Toleration Act of 1812, which essentially provided legal recognition of the Nonconformist movement and granted religious freedom.

It would be erroneous, however, to conclude that the Evangelicals alone loved and promoted the Bible. Besides some within the Church of England itself, many intellectually gifted, deeply spiritual Christians other than the more rigid Evangelicals had long been advocating free and independent study of the Bible. Samuel W. Coleridge and those who followed him in the so-called Coleridge Movement of the early nineteenth century shunned the excesses of evangelical enthusiasm and stressed more the broader harmony of reason with religion in the deepest spiritual sense, that "it is the spirit of the Bible, and not the detached words and sentences, that is infallible and absolute."^[9] Coleridge's views would later be echoed by such Scottish luminaries as Thomas Erskine, Thomas Carlyle, and Macleod Campbell.^[10]

After Wesley's death in 1791, the Evangelical movement centered at Cambridge University where it was nurtured by reverend-scholars Isaac Milner and Charles Simeon, and at London, where it was advanced by the so-called Clapham Group. This progressive society was led by such men as Lord Teignmouth, Zachary Macaulay, James Stephen, Sir Richard Hill, the well-known abolitionist M. P. William Wilberforce, and Hannah More. Referred to as that "Bishop in Petticoats," More was a "novelist, theologian, reformer of morals, evangelist of the poor, founder of schools, and a woman who was treated on an equal footing with bishops."^[11] Above all, the Clapham Group sought to imbue the Church of England with Wesley's spiritual fervency.

Wesley's immensely popular revivals did much to instill a renewed British interest in the Bible, an interest that was soon channeled in other ways. The rise of the Sunday School movement, as started by Robert Raikes (d. 1811) in 1782

and promoted by John Wesley, Sarah Trimmer, Sydney Smith, and Hannah More, also played a contributing role.^[12] Ever suspected by conservative Anglicans as a hotbed for Methodist propaganda, the Sunday School movement and its eventual success were ever underestimated by the established church. Though the British population was increasing, school attendance and literary rates in the late 1700s were declining, particularly in northern and western regions of England, because of rapid industrialization, redistribution of population, parents abandoning their children to work in new-age factories, and the need for more and younger workers, both male and female. As the established church offered little in the way of educating children and youth, the Sunday School movement, with its emphasis on learning how to

read, experienced almost instantaneous popularity.^[13] Sunday Schools became "the best and most widely known 'agencies of working class education,'" where children were also taught cleanliness, decency, honesty, and moral

obedience.^[14] From out of Hannah More's Cheddar schools, for instance, came many of her famous morality tracts and

didactic writings, such as her famous "The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain."^[15] Her popular book, *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*, sold in the millions of copies and was as well read as anything by Sir Walter Scott or Jane Austen. The cumulative

number of those learning to read and write and worship by 1820 reached at least six million!^[16] And at the core of the Sunday School movement was the Holy Bible, to be read, studied, and committed to memory. Yet the truth was that very few students and not many teachers could afford their own personal copy of scripture. In the year 1800 a Bible

"would have cost the equivalent of a day's wage for a labouring man, and half a day's wage for a New Testament."^[17]

Simultaneous with the Sunday School movement was the rise in Protestant foreign missionary societies and missionary

tract societies, which greatly contributed to the need for Bibles. Indeed, missionaries could do little without them. The appeals of William Carey in England had led to the establishment of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792. Three years later the London Missionary Society was formed “with the aim of evangelising those South Sea Islands described to the world by Captain Cook.”^[18] The Church Missionary Society, with an eye on reaching Africa, followed in 1798. By 1817 there were at least 117 such missionary societies in Great Britain and its colonies, all seeking to proclaim the word of God.^[19] Their purpose was to spread the gospel “in every quarter of the globe and in the distant islands of the Sea.” By 1822 missionary stations had been formed in Africa, Russia, India, Ceylon, the Sandwich Islands, the West and the East Indies, Labrador, New Zealand, and Greenland, and among the Delaware, Chippewa, Cherokee, Arkansas, and Osage Indians.^[20]

In the wake of these missionary endeavors, the demand for the Bible—and unique methods of payment—followed, as this 1818 report from Tahiti indicates: “Reading is becoming general among this people, and they are diligently engaged in teaching each other: 3000 copies of Luke have been printed and sold for 3 gallons of cocoa-nut oil each copy. Many thousands are sadly disappointed that there are no more. We believe ten thousand might have been sold in ten days.”^[21]

With the rise of domestic and foreign missionary societies came the concomitant development of Missionary Tract Societies, beginning with the London Religious Tract Society in 1799. While most were British, scores of tract societies also sprang up in America in the first two decades of the nineteenth century.^[22]

Thus, the Sunday School movement, the rise of missionary societies, and the emphasis on distributing Christian tracts were all contributive to increasing Bible awareness. However, the spark that ignited the Bible movement was the desperate lack of Bibles in northern Wales most poignantly felt by a “sweet Welsh maiden.” Since 1791 Wales had been experiencing a religious awakening, and among the converts was one Mary Jones, then a girl of about ten years of age. She walked two miles every Saturday to a relative’s home to read from the nearest Bible. Over the next several years, she saved enough money to finally purchase her own. At age seventeen, she walked twenty-eight miles barefoot to buy her first Bible from the good Reverend Thomas Charles. As the popular story goes, “he reached her a copy, she paid him the money, and there [they] stood, their hearts too full for utterance, and their tears streaming from their eyes.”^[23]

Inspired by the young girl’s devotion, Thomas Charles traveled to London in 1802 in quest of ten thousand Welsh Bibles from the almost moribund Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), an Anglican Bible society that had begun in 1698.^[24] Its representatives questioned, doubted, and declined his request. He then approached the London Missionary Society and Religious Tract Society. It was the Reverend Joseph Hughes of the latter society who wondered why no such vibrant Bible society existed. Subsequently he, along with Rev. C. Steinkopf of the German Lutherans; Rev. John Owen, chaplain to the Anglican Bishop of London; Mr. Samuel Mills; Zachary Macauley; William Wilberforce; Granville Sharp; and some three hundred others set about organizing the founding meeting of the “Society for Promoting a More Extensive Circulation of the Scriptures at Home and Abroad” on March 7, 1804, at 123 Bishopsgate Street in London.

Quickly renamed “The British and Foreign Bible Society” (BFBS), the fledgling organization immediately garnered interdenominational, “pan-evangelical” support with its first three secretaries acting as a triumvirate: John Owen, Anglican; Joseph Hughes, Evangelist or Nonconformist; and Carl F. Steinkopf, Foreign. The respected John Shore, Lord Teignmouth, was appointed president, an office he would hold for thirty years. Its purpose: “To encourage a wider dispersion of the Holy Scriptures . . . through the British dominions, and . . . to other countries, whether Christian, Mahomedan, or Pagan.”^[25] Thus was born “a society for furnishing the means of religion, but not a religious society.”^[26] The new institution in short order not only would print 20,000 Welsh Bibles but would in the space of only

three years print and distribute 1,816,000 Bibles, Testaments, and portions thereof in sixty-six different languages!^[27]

“All Scripture Is Given By Inspiration of God”

What accounts for this remarkable success? Most scholars rightly point to the British and Foreign Bible Society’s multi-denominational organization and support as a critical positive factor. While some Anglican prelates in particular bemoaned the absence of the Book of Common Prayer, and later arguments erupted over whether or not to include the Apocrypha, virtually everyone rallied around the society’s constitution, the seminal first article of which mandated that its Bibles (then only the King James Version) be distributed “without note or comment.” Prefaces, explanatory notes, and particular creeds and theologies “were explicitly forbidden.”^[28] The conviction reigned that the power of the word was sufficient enough to inspire, reprove, correct, and instruct “in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

While the original leadership was deeply religious, they were also tough-minded business people, innovators, and risk takers with a global perspective. Soon after the society’s formation and in the wake of Napoleon’s recent Moscow defeat in 1812, Secretary Steinkopf, a Dr. Pinkerton, the Rev. R. W. Sibthorp, John Owen, and others embarked upon incredibly ambitious tours of Prussia, Denmark, Russia, Sweden, Finland, and even the Middle East. Unforeseen by these founders was the remarkable and immediate popularity of what rapidly became a thriving business and vast international grassroots movement. The rapid multiplication of auxiliaries and associations, in chain-reaction style, in virtually every county in the United Kingdom, throughout Europe (including France), in Russia, in North America, and even in parts of the Orient was a critical element of the society’s success.^[29] Its phenomenal expansion was clear evidence of the popular need for Bibles at home and abroad.^[30]

Local leaders of various Christian faiths, including Roman Catholic priests in several areas, with independent boards soon took ownership, promoting subscriptions, appointing agents, and receiving and filling orders for scriptures. This capillary action, right down to the hosts of volunteer “home visitors” and colporteurs (traveling salesmen) who went from house to house, skirted the traditional bookseller method of distribution. And at this level, women served by the thousands, often appointing their own auxiliaries with their own presidents, officers, and appointments. The ladies’ associations were “enormously more successful and widespread than those of gentlemen.”^[31] By 1819 the British and Foreign Bible Society counted 629 such auxiliaries, and in 1820 women home visitors in Liverpool alone made 20,800 Bible visits.^[32]

The great barrier, however, to popular ownership of the Bible in the United Kingdom and elsewhere was not so much ignorance, illiteracy, indifference, or even Catholic resistance but poverty—abject and universal poverty. As late as 1812, British bishops estimated that at least half the population of the United Kingdom was destitute of Bibles.^[33] In Ireland and other more impoverished countries, the percentage was steeply higher.

But thanks to significant contributions of hundreds of wealthy philanthropists and of thousands of small donations from supporters everywhere, the British and Foreign Bible Society vigorously financed ways to reduce the costs of production. By former royal decree, Cambridge University, Oxford Press, and the King’s Printer owned the charters for printing the Authorized King James Version of the Bible, if for no other reason than to ensure accuracy and dependability. But by ordering vast quantities, utilizing such new advances as steam-power presses and stereotype printing (“a process by which pages of type were cast as permanent metal plates and stored for reprinting”^[34]), using cheaper paper and binding, and printing in smaller, quarto-size volumes, the society continued to reduce the costs of its Bibles. A Bible that once would cost a day’s wages to buy now sold for twenty-five shillings, within reach of most family incomes.

Nor was the proliferation in Bibles just a matter of reduced cost. The society early on vigorously sought to translate the scriptures into foreign languages, beginning with the Mohawk Indian language for those in Upper Canada. Other early translations soon followed, including Italian (1807), Portuguese (1809), Dutch (1809), Danish (1809), French (1811), and Greek (1814). As one contemporary put it: “The most extraordinary dispensation of the whole, however, is the remarkable exertions in translating the Bible into so many different languages—into seventeen languages in the Russian empire alone. . . . This is an extraordinary event. The like, in all circumstances, has never taken place in the world before.”^[35]

Yet even this winning combination of affordability, sound leadership, excellent organization, spirited volunteers, and a distribution system that sailed the world on board the Royal Navy does not fully explain the phenomenon. The fact is, in this prescientific epoch before the negativism and agnosticism of the mid-nineteenth century, the time was right for this new “Holy War.” Many interpreted the successful termination of the Napoleonic Wars as a victory of Christian thought against the godless secularism of the French Revolution, a divine approbation of the expanding British Empire. It was a new “Age of Light” of blessed opportunities, a “New Morality.”^[36] “Since the glorious period of the reformation,” wrote one American observer in 1818, “no age has been distinguished with such remarkable and important changes.”^[37]

And what were the results? By 1834 the British and Foreign Bible Society had distributed 8,549,000 volumes in 157 different languages.^[38] By 1900 that figure had grown to 229,000,000 volumes in 418 languages. And by 1965 the society had printed 723,000,000 volumes in 829 languages!^[39]

“Errand of Mercy”—The American Bible Society

On this side of the Atlantic, the need for copies of the Bible was no less real and immediate. Until 1780 almost all Bibles in America had been printed in Great Britain. The Puritans had brought with them the Geneva Bible, first published in 1560, with its notes and teachings by John Calvin. Other immigrants brought the Bishop’s Bible, published by the Church of England in 1568.^[40] But with the suspension of British imports during the Revolutionary War, there developed a “famine of Bibles,” which was one of the many ills which “a distracted Congress was called upon promptly to remedy.”^[41] Scottish-born Robert Aitken, at the direction of Congress, became America’s first Bible publisher in 1781. Isaiah Thomas printed the first folio Bible from an American press ten years later. The Quaker Isaac Collins began printing his Bibles, known for their accuracy, that same year. The Irish-American Matthew Carey became the best-known Bible printer in early America, publishing more than sixty different editions in the early 1800s.^[42] Propelled in part by the Second Great Awakening, the formation of Bible societies, and the aim of evangelizing the West,^[43] between 1777 and 1820 four hundred new American editions of Bibles and New Testaments had been issued. By 1830 that number had climbed to seven hundred.^[44]

Yet production could not keep up with population. Between 1790 and 1830, America’s population skyrocketed from 3.9 to 9.6 million, with a very large number not owning their own Bibles. For instance, an 1824 Bible society report from Rochester, New York, noted that in Monroe County alone, some 2,300 families were without Bibles.^[45] An 1825 report stated at least 20 percent of Ohio families were without, and out of thirty-six counties in Alabama, half did not own scriptures. In that same year, a reported ten thousand people in Maine were without Bibles and similarly, in North

Carolina there “cannot be less than 10,000 families . . . without the Bible.” Even large metropolitan areas such as New York and Philadelphia were reported as seriously lacking.^[46]

Such lack had been the reason for the organization of the Philadelphia Bible Society in 1808, the Connecticut and Massachusetts Bible Societies in 1809, and the New York Bible Society in that same year. Scores of others followed throughout New England and in the South. Yet even with these, many feared a famine in the land, not of food but of hearing the word of God. Among these was the intrepid Reverend Samuel J. Mills, who viewed the Louisiana Purchase and the opening of a vast new western frontier as a potential new “Valley of the Shadow of Death” in a future America unschooled in the Bible. In a series of tours and travels throughout the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys, Mills spread his message of Christian revivalism. More than any other person, Mills was the inspiration for the establishment of the American Bible Society.^[47]

Seeing the need for cheaper American Bibles, at a convention of Bible societies in New York, Samuel Mills, Lyman Beecher, Thomas Biggs, Jedediah Morse, John E. Caldwell, William Jay and several others presided over the formation of the American Bible Society in May 1816. Elias Boudinot, a former New Jersey delegate to the Continental Congress, presided over the society in its infant years. Soon forty-two other smaller state and regional societies merged under its expanding banner.^[48]

Like its British parent and model, the American Bible Society had as its “sole object” “to encourage a wider circulation of the Holy Scriptures, without note or comment”^[49] and to “supply all the destitute families in the United States with the Holy Scriptures, that may be willing to purchase or receive them.”^[50] Initially headquartered on Nassau Street in New York City, the American Bible Society constantly enlarged its facilities to keep up with demand and with advances in technology. Stereotype plates facilitated the printing process, auxiliaries soon spread to most American cities (301 by 1821), and every effort was made to put copies of the scriptures in every home. Among the society’s many early translations were French, Spanish, and some Native American languages, the first of which was Delaware. After just four years in operation, the American Bible Society had printed and distributed 231,552 Bibles and New Testaments.^[51] By 1830 the numbers stood at 1,084,000.^[52] By 1848 that figure would reach 5,860,000. And by 1916, after its first century, the corresponding figure stood at 115,000,000 volumes of scripture in 164 different languages.^[53]

Conclusion

What, then, are we to make of the rise of the Bible as precursor to the Restoration? We return to that room full of copies of the Bible and Pratt’s preaching from the scriptures. Due to many people, from John Wesley to Mary Jones, and to many factors, including Sunday Schools, missionary and tract societies, and the rise of Bible societies in far reaches of the globe, and to indefinable currents in world history, there occurred in the years just before the Restoration a mighty movement to print and distribute the holy scriptures on a scale never before seen. Joseph Smith credits the Bible for inspiring him to go the grove that spring morning in 1820. His successor, Brigham Young, once said: “I never asked for any book when I was preaching to the world, but the Old and New Testaments to establish everything I preached, and to prove all that was then necessary.”^[54] And John Taylor accepted the teachings of Parley P. Pratt only after he was convinced that they conformed to biblical teachings.^[55] This establishing culture of the Bible prepared the way for the message of Cumorah.

- [1] Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt Jr. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980), 140.
- [2] For a thorough discussion of this point, see Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 184–208. See also David J. Whitaker, “The Book of Daniel in Early Mormon Thought,” in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh Nibley on His 80th Birthday*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City and Provo, Utah: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 1:155–99.
- [3] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Phillips Bradley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 2:55.
- [4] From a speech by the Right Hon. Lord Teignmouth, President, at the Sixteenth Anniversary of the Society, May 3, 1820. *The Sixteenth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: Benjamin Bensley, 1820), 223, 225.
- [5] Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement, 1783–1867* (New York: David McKay 1959), 68.
- [6] John Wesley’s enormous success was, in some part, “due to [his] recognition of the new individualistic sense of the person, which was different from the old corporateness that continuous close social life in a village or small town had produced. It was not just a call to attendance at church, or daily prayer, it was a call to a new kind and quality of life brought about by conversion” (Philip B. Cliff, *The Rise and Development of the Sunday School Movement in England, 1780–1980* [Nutfield, Redhill, Surrey, England: National Christian Education Council, 1986], 77).
- [7] Elie Halevy, *History of the English People* (New York: Ark Paperbacks, 1987), 371.
- [8] See Halevy, *History of the English People*, 374.
- [9] Samuel W. Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection and the Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1913), 298.
- [10] See John Tulloch, *Movements of Religious Thought in Britain during the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Leicester University Press, 1971), 30.
- [11] Halevy, *History of the English People*, 381.
- [12] See *Guardian* (New Haven, Conn.), January 1819, 22–26; see also “Robert Raikes: Founder of the Sunday Schools,” *Juvenile Instructor*, April 1922, 177–80.
- [13] The conviction was that if one cannot read, he or she cannot read the Bible. The British Sunday School Union was committed to teaching students how to read; see its 1816 report in which it reported ordering 436, 297 spelling books, 87,092 Testaments, and 8,177 Bibles (Cliff, *Rise and Development of the Sunday School Movement*, 10–19).
- [14] Cliff, *Rise and Development of the Sunday School Movement*, 72.
- [15] Mary Alden Hopkins, *Hannah More and Her Circle* (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1947), 217.
- [16] “At a quarterly meeting of the Liverpool Sunday School Union [in 1819] Mr. Charles Dudley stated that the number of children under Sunday School instruction in the United Kingdom, was computed to be about 670,000, and of teachers about 52,000, and that the whole number who had been taught in Sunday Schools was supposed to be about six millions.” (*Evangelical Recorder*, 25 December 1819, 80).
- [17] Cliff, *Rise and Development of the Sunday School Movement*, 116. By 1816 the Sunday School movement had also spread to America. In America the New York Sunday School Society was established in 1816 and within three years was sponsoring 36 schools, 400 teachers, and 3,700 children and adults “receiving literary and religious instruction”

(proceedings of the First Quarterly Meeting of the New York Sunday School Union Society, Seymour Printer, 1816; see also *Christian Herald*, May 15, 1819, 87). And from another report: “A few years ago, and the name of a Sunday School was scarcely known in our land. Missionary, Bible, and Tract Societies, have multiplied, but the exertions of these have been materially accelerated since the establishment of Sunday Schools” (*Christian Herald*, May 15, 1819), 93. Soon afterward the American Sunday School Union was organized.

[18] Henry Otis Dwight, *The Centennial History of the American Bible Society* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 7.

[19] Appearing in the *Evangelical Guardian Review* (New York) in May 1817 was an alphabetical list of 118 Protestant missionary stations throughout the world as sponsored by the London Missionary Society, the Baptist Missionary Society, the Church [Anglican] Missionary Society, the Edinburgh Missionary Society, the Wesleyan Methodists, the American Board of Missions, the United Brethren, the Christian Knowledge Society, and the Royal Danish Mission College.

[20] *Evangelical Monitor* (Woodstock, Vermont), April 14, 1821, 2.

[21] *Evangelical Recorder*, October 23, 1819, 59.

[22] These included the Massachusetts Missionary Society (1800), the Massachusetts Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge Among the Indians (1803), the Connecticut Tract Society (1807), New York Religious Tract Society, and many more, all of which by 1820 had distributed many millions of tracts in America. Topics covered in such tracts ranged broadly but most often centered on Christian morality themes, including Sabbath-day observance, sobriety, repentance, prayer, prohibition of card playing, and much more. As one report put it: “These tracts must be simple, serious, practical. They must be intelligible to the way-faring man, and the tenant of the cottage” (*6th Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the New England Tract Society*, May 1820, 4).

[23] William Canton, *History of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: John Murray, 1904), 1:466; see also John Owen, *The History of the Origin and First Ten Years of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (New York: James Eastburn, 1817), 15. The above famous account was first published in the January 1867 issue of the Bible Society’s *Monthly Reporter*.

[24] The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge had distributed some copies of the Bible in England, Wales, India, and Arabia. In 1701 the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts commenced, with special emphasis on the American colonies. The year 1750 saw the startup of the Scottish Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge Among the Poor, and in 1780 the Naval and Military Bible Society began; see www.newadvent.org/cathen.

[25] George Browne, *The History of the British and Foreign Bible Society, From Its Institution in 1804, to the Close of Its Jubilee in 1854* (London: Bagster and Sons, 1859), 1:10.

[26] Leslie Howsam, *Cheap Bibles: Nineteenth-Century Publishing and the British and Foreign Bible Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 7.

[27] See Canton, *History of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, 1:318.

[28] Howsam, *Cheap Bibles*, 6.

[29] Within fourteen years of the establishment of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the following societies had been organized in imitation of the BFBS: the Basel Bible Society (Nuremberg, 1804), the Prussian Bible Society (1895), the Revel Bible Society (1807), the Swedish Evangelical Society (1808), the Dorpat British Society (1811), the Riga Bible Society (1812), the Finnish Bible Society (1812), the Hungarian Bible Institution (1812), the Russian Bible Society (1812), the Swedish Bible Society (1814), the Danish Bible Society (1814), the Saxon Bible Society (1814), the Hanover Bible Society (1814), the Netherlands Bible Society (1814), the American Bible Society (1816), and the Norwegian Bible Society (1817). By 1817 these societies had printed 436,000 copies of the scriptures

(Bibles and Testaments) and had received from the parent British and Foreign Bible Society gifts of 62,000 volumes; see [www.encyclopedia.org/Bible Societies.htm](http://www.encyclopedia.org/Bible_Societies.htm).

[30] In the very first publication of the American Bible Society in 1816, it was reported that 550,000,000 people on earth “had never heard of Christ, compared with a population of 213,000,000 in nominally Christian lands. Even in the latter territories . . . only one in five persons in Denmark owned a Bible, one in a thousand in Ireland.” Creighton Lacy, *The Word-Carrying Giant: The Growth of the American Bible Society (1816–1966)* (South Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1977), 33.

[31] Howsam, *Cheap Bibles*, 53, On the positive influence of women, a Rev. Steudel of the University of Tuebingen wrote the following in January 1820: “No gentleman could be found, who would undertake the task of going from house to house, to receive the subscriptions, and to make the necessary inquiries into the actual want of Bibles; but. . . [the ladies] immediately set to work with cheerfulness and courage, not minding the cold and even unfriendly reception which they met with here and there. . . . On entering a room whence an old woman was about to dismiss them with repulsive language, a poor girl, who had earnestly listened to their representations, rose from her spinning wheel, saying, in a cheerful tone, I believe I have a few halfpence in my box; most gladly will I give them for so blessed a design.’ She fetched them, and they were her little all. Her conduct softened the old woman, and she likewise came forward with a few pence” (*16th Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society 1820* [London: Benjamin Beasley, 1820], 102). Whenever possible, the societies sought to sell their Bibles rather than merely give them away.

[32] See Browne, *History of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, 1:76.

[33] As one bishop lamented, “Half the population of the labouring classes in the metropolis of the British empire were destitute of the Holy Scriptures” (Browne, *History of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, 1:60).

[34] Howsam, *Cheap Bibles*, 79.

[35] *Remembrancer*, January 22, 1820, 88. Serious consideration was early on given to translating into the languages of India; however, the East India Company was for many years resistant to missionary work and Bible distribution, for fear of possible revolt (see Browne, *History of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, 1:34).

[36] As Briggs put it: “The wars against France reinforced the movements for the reformation of manners and the enforcement of a strict morality; in many ways, indeed, they widened the ‘moral gap’ between Britain and the Continent as much as they widened the economic gap Only moral standards, supported by ‘vital religion,’ were guarantees of social order, national greatness, and individual salvation” (*Age of Improvement*, 172).

[37] *Evangelical Recorder*, January 31, 1818, 1. And from another missionary, writing in February 1820: “We are labouring in a pacified world! The sword is beaten into the plough-share, and the spear into the pruning hook. . . . The spirit of enterprize, nurtured in a protracted contest, is bursting forth in the discovery of new nations. The relations of Commerce, broken by war, are renewed; and are extending themselves on all sides. Every shore of the world is accessible to our Christian efforts. The Civil and the Military Servants of the Crown throughout its Foreign Possessions . . . are freely offering their labour and their influence to aid the benevolent designs of Christians. . . . Let us offer, then, as we have never yet offered. Let us meet the openings of Divine Providence” (from “Extract from the 19th Report of the Church Missionary Society,” *Remembrancer*, February 12, 1820, 99).

[38] See Browne, *History of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, 1:155.

[39] See Library of British and Foreign Bible Society, Cambridge University Library Web Page: www.mundus.ac.uk/cats.

[40] See Kent P. Jackson, “Joseph Smith’s Cooperstown Bible: The Historical Context of the Bible Used in the Joseph Smith Translation” (*BYU Studies* 40, no. 1 [2001], 41). For an excellent study of the history of the Bible in America, see Paul C. Gutjahr, *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777–1880* (Stanford:

University of Stanford Press, 1999).

- [41] Henry Otis Dwight, *The Centennial History of the American Bible Society* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 3.
- [42] See David Daniell, *The Bible in English—Its History and Influence* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003), 594–96, 598–99, 627–29.
- [43] For a comprehensive and detailed study of the various American Bible editions, see Margaret T. Hills, ed., *The English Bible in America: A Bibliography of Editions of the Bible and the New Testament Published in America, 1777–1957* (New York: American Bible Society, 1962).
- [44] See Daniell, *Bible in English*, 639.
- [45] See Dwight, *Centennial History*, 85. Dwight finds it “worth noting that the Bible which fed the soul of Abraham Lincoln in the Kentucky log cabin of his boyhood, was one of those cheap little Bibles imported from London” (*Centennial History*, 3).
- [46] Lacy, *Word-Carrying Giant*, 50; see also Dwight, *Centennial History*, 84; see also *A Brief Analysis of the System of the American Bible Society* (New York: Daniel Fanshaw, 1830), 45.
- The following report was from an agent in Long Island, New York: “I am confident no region will be found in a Christian land where Bibles are more needed. There are here multitudes of people but just able to live, and who live and die almost as ignorant of the gospel as the Heathen. Many who observe no Sabbaths, enjoy no religious ordinances, and have no religion, and they value them not, for they have no Bibles” (Lacy, *Word-Carrying Giant*, 41).
- [47] See Lacy, *Word-Carrying Giant*, 49.
- [48] See *Evangelical Guardian Review* (New York), July 1817, 137.
- [49] Strickland, *History of the American Bible Society*, 31.
- [50] Lacy, *Word-Carrying Giant*, 51.
- [51] See *Methodist Magazine*, August 1821, 312.
- [52] See *Brief Analysis of the System of the American Bible Society*, 33.
- [53] See Dwight, *Centennial History*, 521.
- [54] Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–86), 8:129–30.
- [55] As he himself said before his conversion: “We rejected every man’s word or writing, and took the Word of God alone . . . [and] made it a rule to receive no doctrine until we could bring no scriptural testimony against it” (*The Gospel Kingdom*, ed. G. Homer Durham [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964], 367).