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George Champlin Sibley Papers

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1-15-1845

**George Sibley Notes on the American Bible Society in St. Charles,  
Missouri, January 15, 1845**

George Champlin Sibley

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[cover]

British issue~~~ Bibles~~

Testaments 1.107.578

American B. S. . . . . H. . . . . 633.395

Expenditure 765.000 dollars.

[Inside]

At a meeting held Jany. 15<sup>th</sup> 1845 at the Ct. House St. Charles after candlelighting. Some 40 or 50 persons attending.

The American Bible Society of which this Society is an auxiliary, was instituted in the year 1816. Its sole object as specified in its constitution, is "to encourage a wider circulation of the Holy Scriptures, without note or comment" its fundamental rule that has never been departed from is, "That all secretarian objects must be laid aside, and alone undertaken which all can cooperate."

There are at present in the United States, nearly One Thousand Societies cooperating as auxiliaries, with the parent Society; which is itself cooperating with the kindred Societies of England, France, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark, Saxony, Norway, Greece, India, Holland, and Some other Countries, with all their thousands of auxiliaries.

In this vast association, embracing in its plan of operations, the whole habitable Globe, are to be found, with only two or three exceptions, all the evangelical Christian denominations that come under the general designation of Protestant. And altho' this enterprise the grandest even attempted by mankind is opposed with the most bitter hostility by the great power and influence of the Papal Hierarchy. Yet it is rapidly advancing and prospering more and more, every year. It is evidently blessed of God.

The aggregate number of copies of the Bible and Testament issued last year, in about 140 different languages. May be stated at about One Million four hundred thousand: And it may be assumed that since the year 1804 (when the British Society was formed) not less than Twenty Millions of copies have been printed and for the most part circulated. More has been done tho' the instrumentality of this great association to distribute the Bible in Substantial Book form, adapted to all classes and conditions of man within the last 40 years, then was effected in the 18000 years preceding. When sold these Books are put at very low prices by the Agents of the Society, but great numbers are given away to the poor. Without money and without price. The operations of this union of all protestant Christendom are everywhere sustained and wholly sustained, by the Voluntary, free will offerings of the people. Never yet has a page of their publications been blotted by any \_\_ tax upon the hand earnings of the poor: the widow's mite, the orphan's cent, as ell as the rich man's \_\_ contribution to this most Holy enterprise, are all all voluntarily given. And the evidence is abundant and Satisfactory that all those gifts amounting in the whole to a large Sum, are and ever have been, faithfully, fully, and judiciously. Oplied to the Single object for which they were intended. "The further circulation of the Holy Scriptures, without note or comment". The extensive and zealous cooperation of all Christendom (Protestant Christendom I should say) thro' their numerous societies, axillaries, and agencies, has been wonderfully advanced and favored, not only by the perfect agreement that exists among them, but by the vastly increased and

constantly increasing facilities of printing and transportation, and the other prominent discoveries in Science within the last 40 years. These facilities, whilst they have been employed mainly for the advancement of mere human enterprizes, enabling men to push their schemes of avarice and ambition, into regions from which them were before shut out, and of which they knew but little; are also employed for the spread of the Scriptures of truth, into all those hitherto benighted regions occupied by the far greater portion of the human race. And it is a fact worthy of our notice and admiration, that in very many instances, the Bible has preceded, and opened the way for commercial intercourse, by means of the new facilities mentioned. By those means, the friends of the Sacred Scriptures, have been able to penetrate into countries, before deemed utterly inaccessible, and to reach unknown nations and tribes of people.- Yes, even where the active pressing cupidity and untiring perseverance of Commercial enterprise; and the daring \_\_ arm of conquest, have again and again been baffled and defeated, and shut out, by fierce, suspicious races of men, the Christian Missionary, along and unarmed, with no missile in his hand save the Bible, with no errand but "Behold I bring you tidings of great joy. On Earth peace good will toward men". Finds easy and often welcome access. The fierce Savage opens his door and his heart also, to the seemingly unprotected, and unassuming stranger and soon assumes an enterily new and different character, and ere long learns to read his Book in his own language, to love and live by its precepts. This is no fancy sketch.-

One of the promises contained in this Book, given by its author when on earth is "That this Gospel of the Kingdom Shall be preached in all the world"- "And then shall the end come"- People are very apt to overlook the signs of the times in Relation to this express promise of the Savior.- The wonderful improvements in the art of printing. The rapid means of intercommunication, and of transportation. The very recent invention of the magnetic telegraph, and the invention of the Sub. Machine Battery with other inventions calculated to promote peace, or at least to suppress Wars among nations, all within the last 40 years; when viewed in their proper light and bearing, ought to conceive us that events big with interest to our race, are rapidly approaching. To suppose that all these mighty enquires of intelligence and power are permitted and designed by Him who Rules on high (for no one believes they have happened by chance) merely to advance the wordly projects of man, were foolish presumption. Doubtless they are designed for the ultimate benefit of mankind; but we may rationally conclude that they are given to us for purposes infinitely higher and more desirable than to aid men in their common ephemeral transactions. Or extend their mere worldly knowledge. Is it too much to suppose that the great designer may be, to use all these and probably many others not yet suggested to the mind of man, to aid the combined efforts of the Bible given to the World by Jesus Christ? Forty years ago it seemed to many believers, an almost hopeless undertaking, even to send the Gospel into all the World; so very feeble and limited were the means then available; tho' many of the faithful never did doubt but that means suited to the end, would be permitted in due season. And no careful observer of passing events in this connection can have failed to remark, that facilities to carry on his great work have been afforded in proportion as human expectations have been faithfully put forth.- We have now reached a point in the progress of our cause, from whence we may plainly see that even with our present century. But should our facilities be increased for only twenty years to come, in the same ration only that they have increased for the last forty years; and the friends of the Bible very where do their duty, it is by no means a rash assumption that the whole will be accomplished before the end of the year 1865-. The principal thing that seems now to be lacking, in money, to enable all our associate Bible Societies, at once to double, treble, and quadruple their issues and distributions, for the Press is

perfectly competent now, to furnish annually an hundred millions of copies at still cheaper rates than can be done at this time, cheap as they now are.

Last year the American and British societies issued one million two hundred and twenty eight thousand copies; with a fund of about five hundred and fifty thousand dollars.- It is competed that there are at this time One thousand millions of people in this World; of whom one hundred and forty millions are denominated Protestant Christians, or Reformation. And of those One Hundred Millions, more or less, favor our great Bible enterprise. And of these last about ten millions are in the United States. Deducting from these aggregates, about one third for little children and errors of calculation, and supposing the remaining Sixty Six millions to contribute individually five cents a year for the next twenty years; it would yield in that time a fund of sixty six millions of dollars; sufficient to enable our glorious associations even as they stand at this day, to issue more than One Hundred & fifty millions of copies before the year 1865. Which, with those already extant in careful hands, and those published by other presses than those employed by our societys and put in circulation thro' the Booksellers; will be ample supply for all the destitute families throughout the whole world.- By the same rule, and at the same rate (five cents a year) the protestant population in this Union, might contribute annually four hundred thousand dollars; or eight millions in the twenty years. Which would issue half a million of copies a year- and by the same rule and rate of 5 cents a year, the protestant population of St. Charles county, might contribute at least 300 dollars a year = and if they would tax themselves for this good cause, One cent per month and pay it, their annual contribution would amount to the handsome sum of Eight hundred dollars.-

I present these statistics and estimates, not varying materially I believe from the truth, because they are not only interesting, but very striking in many points of view, they clearly show what important result may be produced by individual contributions, so very insignificant, as viewed separately, that even a street beggar in rags and tatters would be ashamed to refuse it. – If our protestant friends in St. Charles county would all thus contribute according to their families, one cent each per months, our country will do more, four time told, than ever before.

I have thus endeavored to lay before you such a view of our Bible in all its main features, as may enable you to understand it's a present condition it future prospects, and its just demands and expectations. From all which you will learn that you have the high honor of forming part of a mighty association, whose members are to be found throughout the World, whose great object is to send the Book of God into all the world whose whole work is done openly and above \_\_ having no secrets or concealments whatever, and whose patron is God himself- - Surely it ought to be deemed a privilege for any one to lend aid in any way to such a cause- Who can refuse a mite to assist in sending forth more and more widely the wonderful Book of Books. The oldest Book in the world, and yet always new and fresh. The Book from whence is drawn all that we know of peace liberty, or the free [page cut out, no text appears to be missing] government. The Book which if suppressed, and blotted out of existence and out remembrance; wonderful assuredly lease us in chaos and confusion, in the most object slavery, heathenish darkness and degrading ignorance. The Book that a wise and merciful God our creator, has freely given us for our guide and consolation. The only book given by inspiration of God to men. The only Book that teacher by Divine authority, of righteousness, of judgement and of things to come. The only Book that tells of Jesus Christ the beloved, and of eternal life and happiness thro' his atonement and mediation. The only Book that can never become obsolete; and the only book that no mortal can

attempt to suppress on to prevent its free circulation, without incurring the awful guilt of high handed sin against its divine author who so far four \_\_\_ its \_\_\_ its free circulation .

Held 15. Janry. '45 at night

A. D. 1845- read at a bible meeting at the court house

“A free Bible makes free men, the world over” p. 110. See also page 111#