

always owing to contact with those who have the written Word of God. When fifty-seven years of thoroughgoing persecution and idolatry had laid waste the temple and altar of Jehovah, in the reign of the wicked Manassah, the finding of a copy of the Law, and its public reading by order of Josiah, brought conviction of sin, amendment of life, and the restoration of a purer worship amongst the Jews of that period. The public reading and expounding of the Law by Nehemiah and Ezra, brought about a revival of pure religion amongst those who returned from the captivity. The translation of the Old Testament into the Greek language, 280 years before Christ, spread the bright dawn of a new morning over the nations round about, and prepared them for the clearer and fuller Revelation of the love of God in Christ, which the preaching of the Gospel and the writings of the New Testament spread throughout the Roman empire during the first and second centuries of the Christian era. And when the lapse into the night of ages crept over the Church, and flung the spell of spiritual paralysis over Europe, the Word of God was bound; and I need not tell you at any length, for you know it well it was the translation of the Bible into the vernacular, and its circulation amongst the people, accompanied by the earnest preaching of the Gospel, that brought back the thrill of life, and introduced the era of evangelism, which has continued with increasing power to the present day. Wherever the reformer moves on in the sublimity or moral power, the momentum that carries him forward is generated in the heart by the light which emanates from God's Holy Word and the vital impulse of Christ's constraining love. The Holy Scriptures have from the beginning held their place in the chief centres of the world's intellectual enlightenment and moral progress; and have ever been the chief agency in promoting and conserving both the one and the other. Wherever to-day the pulses of humanity beat strongly on the highway of liberty and in the path of moral progress, there we find the Word of God as pioneer, leading the world toward its millennial rest, that one "divine event to which the whole creation moves."

IV. *God has committed His Word to the Church, in order to its uncorrupt tradition, and its world-wide circulation amongst mankind.*—The watchful care of Divine Providence over the written word, is seen in the manner of its transmission to our times. When we come to know the jealous regard of both the Christian and the Jew for the purity of the Sacred text, we see how impossible it is that there could have been any change, addition, or retrenchment, anything that would mar its integrity or sully the purity of its uncorrupted truth. Amongst the ancient Jews and also in the Christian Church there have been antagonistic sects and schools of thought, which have rendered it impossible that one party could have corrupted the Scriptures, even had they felt disposed to do so, without sure detection and exposure by the other. If the religious divisions of Christendom have served no other end, they have at least furnished a guarantee that the Holy Scriptures have been transmitted to us uncorrupt. The labours of the learned, since the revival of letters in Europe, in the criticism of the Sacred text, have been immense, well nigh exhaustive, and they go to show that the Word of God as we now have it, is pure, without defect, without redundancy, and not mixed with error.

The obligation to circulate the Scriptures is recognised and assented to by every Protestant. "Out of Zion shall go forth the Law and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem." This is based on a sense of the importance of the Scriptures to the moral life of the world. Just here comes in the agency of the Bible Society, and its claims to our support. A society the most Catholic in its spirit, and the noblest in its aims; it seeks by union of Christian effort to circulate the Word of God, until that Word shall speak in every language, and every dialect, in every house and to every human heart throughout the wide world. Could any work be more simple? Can any effort be equally sublime? Is there any work with stronger claims to the support and sympathy of Christian people? Is there any work of such importance to the welfare of mankind? The Bible Society bestows its benefits unselfishly,