

for a better understanding, for a fuller co-operation on the part of the Church of England, not with the Church of Rome or with the Eastern Church, but with the Protestant Churches throughout the world—with the Protestant Churches of Germany and Holland, with the Protestant Churches of Sweden and Denmark, with the Protestant Churches of France and Switzerland, with the Protestant Churches of the United States and of our own colonies—but, above all, with the Presbyterian, Independent, Wesleyan, and Baptist Churches of England and Wales, of Ireland and Scotland.”

The Rev. Dr. WILLIAM MORLEY PUNSHON said: “I feel myself highly honoured, my lord, to have the opportunity of advocating the cause of the British and Foreign Bible Society on the parent platform. Since I last stood here, many years ago, on a similar occasion, I have had the opportunity of giving such support and advocacy as I could to the operation of societies having the same object on the continent of America; and I rejoice to be again permitted to come here, and to find that the cause retains all its energy, and the attachment of the friends of the cause all its freshness, and that there are no symptoms that the combined assaults which have been made upon our common faith have tended in anywise to cause us to put away one jot of heart or hope in reference to the enterprise that we have undertaken, and in reference to the issue of the strife in which we are engaged. The noble lord who spoke last assured us that it was perfectly impossible to do anything with the Resolution after the exhaustive speech of his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury. If my Resolution, therefore, is to be regarded as my parish, my speech on this occasion must necessarily be extra-parochial. I do not purpose, knowing how many there are to follow me, to enlarge at any length on this occasion, if I can help it; but the theme is somewhat tempting, and although I will try to exercise a proper and handsome self-control, there may be some difficulty, perhaps, in just coming to a conclusion exactly at the time I should desire. I am rejoiced to hear the sentiments that have been expressed more than once this morning as to the opportunity that is afforded by the British and Foreign Bible Society—I would fain hope not by the British and Foreign Bible Society only—for ministers and adherents of all Protestant denominations to gather together without any outside uniformity, and without any compromise of dignity and distinctive principle, to uphold that which is common, and dear, and let me add, threatened in the age in which we live. I suppose, after the speeches of the noble chairman and the Archbishop of Canterbury, I am put up here as a Nonconformist to furnish the illustration. A sentence of Archbishop Trench has been ringing in my ears repeatedly this morning. In one of his Hulsean Lectures, I think, he says something like this: ‘That it was observed by one wise man of another that his questions taught more than other people’s answers;’ and he refers this, if I remember rightly, to the Scriptures in this aspect of it: ‘That the silence of Scripture is often more instructive than the teaching of other books.’ Now that silence, as it appears to me, may not be inaptly quoted as an evidence of the Scriptures’ inspiration. It is silent, not by inadvertence; it is silent by design. The same Spirit which prompted the writers to write withheld the writers from writing when the Lord did not will the revelation. And so it is true, as Boyle says, that the Scripture is like a dial, in which we are informed by the shadow as well as the light; and, again, in the words of the lamented Archer Butler, ‘What we see is holy, but what we see not is holier still.’ It is the glory of God, we are told, to conceal a matter. And, sometimes to repress unhallowed curiosity, and sometimes to exercise His people’s faith, and sometimes to vindicate His own prerogative, and sometimes—nay, always—to evolve His own plans into clearer and grander harmony, God mingles obscurity and brightness in the revelation of His will. There is no obscurity, mark you, upon the matters that concern salvation. They are all as clear as the morning. There is no theorizing upon Truth. In the Scripture Truth is dogmatically asserted. We do not get hold of the processes by which the results are arrived at; we do not see the reasons of