

of praise,—if I may venture to say so, it is an additional satisfaction that we meet in this Hall for this great purpose, under the presidency of one who through a long life has made the Bible the guide of his political and public career. By his adherence to it, as the guide of his own heart, he has been able in all his public dealings to win the confidence of his fellow countrymen, even of those who at one time were most opposed to the efforts which he has made for the good of man. Now I believe that the work in which we are engaged, of circulating the Scriptures of Truth, is the best mode of preserving the human race from the degradation which since the fall has been pressing it down. Philosophers say they desire to elevate the human race, but we know a more excellent way than they of accomplishing this great object, and we turn to those Scriptures which we desire to circulate as the best mode of elevating and improving mankind. A great cry has gone up in this generation for the unity of Christendom. We hear a great deal about it on all sides of us, and we all pray for it, though there may be different views of how that unity is to be attained. This unity of Christendom which men yearn for is, I say, better to be attained by the circulation of the Scriptures than by any other means. How is an outward body to be given to those who are animated by one spirit? God only knows. In His own good time He will bring all good Christians together. But meanwhile the best practical step which is being taken throughout the world to make Christendom one is the circulation of the Holy Scriptures, which we are endeavouring to promote by coming here to-day. And then it is not enough we are told—and we gladly recognise that—it is not enough that there should be a mere circulation of the letter. We desire to have the spirit, but through the letter and through the blessing of God upon our prayerful efforts, we trust that the Spirit will descend. After all, it is in the circulation of this written Word of God and this statement of primitive truth which the written word of God contains, that we have the best hope of attaining the spirit of Christianity. That spirit will not be found merely in the dry bones of old institutions. No doubt the outward form of it, when blessed by the Spirit of God, has in all ages been found most useful for the preservation and the advancement of God's truth. But there is something better than the outward form. I dare say many of you here may have heard an anecdote of Merle d'Aubigné, the great historian of the Reformation. Within a few months of his death he told a friend of mine that he had been at Rome, and had had an interesting conversation with a priest, and that the priest had shown him the relics, in which they gloried, of St. Peter; D'Aubigné said to him, "Most interesting they are, but we, for our part, have also most interesting relics. We have relics of St. Paul." The priest was interested to hear that there were other relics besides the relics he had shown. "Our relics of St. Paul," said D'Aubigné, "are the relics of his writings, and in these writings of his we think that we have more of his spirit than if we had the relics of his dead body." Let us be thankful therefore, that we have these relics of St. Paul, and that we are trying to spread them throughout the habitable globe. They will do much for the unity of Christendom; more than that, they will do much for the unity of the human race. I was looking yesterday at the *Life of Henry Venn*, a man whose name in this hall and in all England will be ever venerated, who, from his office in Salisbury Square, controlled the missionary efforts of the Church of England throughout the whole world to their great advantage for so many years. In his life you will find a speech which he delivered before this Society in this hall, and you will find him testifying that the work of the British and Foreign Bible Society was the great pattern of the work of Missions throughout the world; that it is not right merely to regard the Bible Society as being the handmaid of the missionary societies, but that the dispersion of the Scriptures of truth throughout the world gives them a power for the conversion of the whole world to the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, such as could be attained by no other means. That God may prosper this work in His own time, bring us all together, and prepare