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The Bible:
its Study and Use
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From Pres. Angell

THE BIBLE:
ITS STUDY AND USE.

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BY

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The Bible: Its Study and Use.

OUR subject assumes the inspiration of the Bible, its canonicity and its miraculous preservation through the ages. It recognizes the Scriptures as God's book—his letter of instruction to men ; and that it is such, appears,

I. *From its adaptation to the wants of the human soul.* Certain great questions arise in every mind: From whence did I come, and whither am I going? What is sin, and what its consequences? What is the price of our redemption from it? What is wrong with my heart that it is as natural for me to sin as for the bee to sting or serpent to bite? What will be the difference between the lot of the righteous and that of the wicked in the future life? These inquiries force themselves upon our attention. You propose them to the wise men of earth, the philosophers, the scientists, the historians, the statesmen, the poets, or the orators, and they will with one accord confess, We can not tell. But the Bible answers these questions satisfactorily. Then, upon the principle of adaptation, the Bible must be from God. Adaptation proves divinity of origin. Light is

adapted to the eye and the eye to light ; sound to the ear and the ear to sound ; food to the stomach and the stomach to food ; birds to the air and the air to birds ; fish to water and water to fish. God made it so. The Bible is adapted to the wants of the human soul and the human soul is adapted to its revelations. It must be from God.

Dr. Pierson relates that while he was *pastor in Detroit, Michigan, one Sabbath evening, at the close of the service, he announced that he would be glad to meet any one in his study who was desirous of talking about the interests of his soul. When he went back he found a young man there, perhaps thirty years old. "Are you here in the interests of your soul?" "Yes, if I have one." "Do you believe there is a God?" "I do not know whether there is or not." The doctor thought he was trifling and said, sharply : "I am not here to be trifled with. I am a physician of souls ; if you wish my services, I shall be glad to give them. What are your symptoms?" "I was raised in a Christian home. Some years since, I came here to study medicine. Surrounded by skeptical companions, I drifted away. This evening I was walking along the street and heard the music in your church, and turned in to hear it. After that I concluded to stay and hear you preach. Listening to your sermon, I was convinced that you are a man who believes something." "You are quite right there." "And your belief does you a great deal of good." "You are very right about that." "Well, I believe nothing at all, and I am the most miserable man in

the world." "I should think you would be." "Can you give me any relief?" "Will you take four texts and go home and study them until you are sure you know their meaning?" "I will do it." These four verses were given: "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy father which is in secret; and thy father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matt. 6:6). "If any man will do his will, he shall know the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17). "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). Through this word he found the Christ, and for the last seven years has been a successful preacher of his gospel. Besides the five senses of the body, there are two additional—the sense of the intellect, which is reason, and the sense of the soul, which is conscience. Follow the teachings of these two senses, and you will be led into the kingdom. "We have a more sure word of prophecy, whereto we do well that we take heed, *until* the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts."

A colporteur was one day making his way up a narrow street in London, when he came to a house where the stairs ran up outside. Making his way to the landing, he knocked, and the door was opened by a rough-looking man. While talking with him he heard a faint voice from within: "Have you that book that tells of

the blood that cleanseth from all sin?" Entering, he found this man's wife lying on a bed of straw, in the last stages of consumption. She repeated her question, "Have you that book?" etc. Talking with her he soon found that this was all she knew about the Bible. One day she had heard a street preacher announce those words as his text, and that was all she knew. He took his Bible and read 1 John i. and then Isaiah liii. When finished, she lifted up her hands and faintly cried: "Oh, salvation has come to this house. I take him; I take him as he is offered by his faithful ambassador."

A returned missionary, in London one Sabbath morning, said to his friend: "I am going to Rag Fair to-day." "This is the Sabbath, you should not go." "I am going to Rag Fair to-day." "They will kill you." "I am going to Rag Fair to-day." "I will go also." Now, Rag Fair is a section of London having one hundred and fifty thousand people. In the midst is an open area, surrounded by a high inclosure. Into this twenty-five thousand of the roughest people in the city go Sabbath morning; the policemen shut the gate, and they spend the day in carousing. When these two men presented themselves at the gate, the policemen said: "If you button up your coats and keep your lips hermetically sealed, you may come out alive." They entered and began preaching Jesus, and before the day closed many were changed and sat at the feet of Jesus clothed and in their right minds.

A few years ago a section in New York City was known as the Five Points. It was so low that peo-

ple said it was like the infernal pit—the bottom had fallen out of it. The city missionaries went there and preached Christ. As a result, it is to-day a garden of righteousness; a peaceful and pleasant dwelling-place.

Dr. Alexander, of Princeton, was troubled as to how he should preach to suit his hearers. In the front pew was the greatest theologian in America, Dr. Charles Hodge, and in the gallery a poor man who could not read. He determined to preach the simple word of God. Both were satisfied. The great master found an heartfelt in the message, and the ignorant and unlearned man found an heartfelt in it.

The Bible is adapted to the human soul. It must be from God.

II. *From the unity of the book.* Here is a volume made up of sixty-six different books, divided just like the book of Isaiah. The first thirty-nine chapters of that book are historical, the last twenty-seven are prophetic. The first thirty-nine books are Old Testament, the last twenty-seven are New Testament. The Bible was written by some forty-two different writers. They lived over a period of fifteen hundred years. They were in different localities. They used at least three different languages—Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Some wrote in poetry, others in prose. Some wrote history, others biography, and others didactic statement. Some wrote gospels, others epistles, psalms, proverbs, prophesies. Some were educated, others were ignorant and unlearned. They represented every different occupation. Some were prophets, others priests, and others kings.

There were herdsmen and shepherds and fishermen and mechanics and physicians and lawyers among them. And yet with all this variety of circumstances, when you come to put their writings together in a volume called the Bible, they make a perfect unit. These facts can not be explained only on the supposition that a Divine mind operated through these men so that they wrote in harmony. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Suppose you determine to put up a building. You employ forty-two different carpenters. You say to them: "You must go to your shops and work for a year. No one must know the plan the other is working upon, or the material the other is using, or the part of the building the other is preparing. There must be no collusion. And at the end of a year, without any consultation, you must come and put your work together, and it must make a well-proportioned house." Does any sane man suppose it would go together? Not one. And yet the Bible—the grand temple of truth—was built upon those conditions, and it went together, making a beautiful, symmetrical temple, the habitation of our God. This can only be explained on the supposition that a Divine Architect executed his plan through these men. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." Nathaniel Hawthorne says: "The Bible is a grand cathedral, with divinely pictured windows; standing without, you can see no beauty nor possibly can imagine any; standing within, every ray of light reveals a harmony of unspeakable splendor." The infidel stands outside and criticises.

He does not know what he is talking about. The Bible contains a remedial scheme, and only those who have tried it are qualified to bear testimony. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit, neither can he know them; but he that is spiritual judgeth all things." A man is brought into court charged with murder. Some one comes forward to give testimony against him. The judge says: "Are you acquainted with this man charged with crime?" "No, I am not." "Did you see him commit murder?" "No, I did not." "Have you any knowledge of the offense charged against him?" "I know nothing about it." "Well, why are you here as a witness against him?" "Why, I *feel* that he is guilty." "Oh, you go away. You are no witness." That is the infidel giving testimony against the Bible. He is exposing his own ignorance, and making a spectacle of himself.

You make a chart of the Atlantic Coast, marking all the sandbars, rocks and shoals. A man from the interior—from beyond the Mississippi—who never saw the ocean, comes forward to criticise it. He says: "I know that is not a true chart, because I see the name of Samuel Jones written on one corner, and I can prove that he did not make it." "Well, what's the difference who made it? the question is, Is it a true chart?" "I am sure it is not a true chart, because 1884 is written on another corner, and I can prove that it was not made until 1887." "Well, what's the difference when it was made? Is it a true chart? Do you know? Did you ever see the ocean?" "No, I never saw the ocean; I

know nothing of the localities and objects marked." "Well, you had better go back beyond the Mississippi. You do not know what you are talking about." That is the infidel criticising the Bible. He talks about the "Mistakes of Moses," and picks flaws in names and dates, while he is totally ignorant of the facts in the case. On the other hand, an old sailor comes forward and says: "That is a true chart. I have been all along the coast hundreds of times. I have seen those rocks and sandbars and they are just as marked on the chart." You are ready to listen to him. He understands what he is talking about. That is the Christian giving testimony concerning the Bible. Who ever heard of a mother, on her death-bed, calling her sons and daughters about her and saying: "Thirty years ago I accepted of the Bible as God's word. But I was deceived. Its promises are false. And, with my dying breath, I wish to warn you against it." Where can you find a single case like that in all history? But how many thousands can be produced on the other side?

Infidels say: "Christians are divided. They all accept the Bible; therefore, the Bible must contradict itself." Christians are divided as to their man-made creeds. They are one as to their heaven-born experiences in the divine life. Toplady and Wesley had a debate about the decrees. The discussion was heated, and they used harsh terms in designating each other. In the midst of that debate, Toplady sat down and wrote:

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee."

About the same time, Wesley sat down and wrote :

“ Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly.”

Don't you see? their sentiments were the same. They were divided as to their intellectual views of a certain doctrine. But their heaven-born experiences were precisely alike.

Just after the war, a colored boy down near New Orleans was converted. He tried to give expression to his joy. “ Oh, it is sweeter, it is sweeter, it is sweeter than molasses.” You say that is crude. Twenty-five hundred years before David wrote, yonder in Judeah : “ It is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.” Their sentiments were precisely alike. The only difference is, David lived in a honey country and the poor colored boy lived in a molasses country.

III. *From its majesty and purity.* The grandest imagery of the poet, the greatest flights of the orator, and the deepest conceptions of the philosopher, bear no comparison to what is found in the Bible. It is written upon a plane so far above the human that the changing views of men in no way disturb our faith. Our fathers believed that the sun revolved around the earth. We know that the earth revolves around the sun. And the faith of neither was shocked or disturbed. It is the same sun that you see from the summit of the mountain or the deepest valley. So it is the same Sun of righteousness that we see in the firmament of the Word, whether seen from the mountain-top of learning, or in

the deep vale of ignorance. To illustrate: In the first chapter of Genesis you have an account of creation. The waters covered the face of the deep. Then the waters above the firmament divided from those beneath. Then dry land appeared. Next vegetable life; followed by animal life. And last of all, man—the crown of creation. This is precisely the order followed by the most approved works on geology. Moses was a heaven-taught geologist. Isaiah says the stars of heaven are innumerable, like the sand of the sea. Now we know that with the naked eye not more than two thousand stars can be seen at once. In the whole sweep of the heavens, not more than six thousand stars can be discerned with the unaided eye. They are not innumerable to the unhelped observer. But, with a powerful telescope, we can see sixty millions of stars, and we have the clearest evidence that this is only the border of “the vast interminable universe.” So that it is literally true that the stars of heaven are innumerable as the sand of the sea. Isaiah was a God-instructed astronomer. Scientists tell us that light is simply vibration. Sound is vibration. Increase the vibrations and they cease to be audible. Then they become visible, first in the seven colors of the rainbow, and at last in the white light. So that light is the result of vibration. Job says: “The morning stars *sang* together.” The word sing means “to vibrate.” “The morning stars vibrated together.” Job anticipated our modern scientists by four thousand years. The Bible anticipates the human, because it is divine.

Its purity indicates its divinity. No code of morals will compare with that of the Bible. When Girard left his vast property to maintain a college for orphans in Philadelphia, he had this provision in the will that the best code of morals shall be taught. The Trustees decided that the Bible contains the best code, and so the Bible is taught. Every morning at eight o'clock and every evening at five o'clock those fourteen hundred boys are gathered in the chapel, and for an hour the Bible is read and expounded to them. Only one charge has been brought against the Bible code—it contains dark pictures of vice and crime. That is its special excellence. A Jew once laid a plot to assassinate Martin Luther. A friend of Luther sent him a picture of the Jew and warned him of the danger. At the designated time and place the Jew appeared on the scene, Luther recognized him and avoided out of his presence, and so saved his life. The Bible has given us the photograph of vice, and warned us of the snares it has laid for our souls. We recognize our foe when we meet it and escape its toils. These dark pictures, instead of being an objection, are a recommendation to the Bible; they are signal-lamps hung out in the night to warn us against a pitfall; they are the light-houses in the midst of the angry breakers to save us from the rocks. "Thy word is a lamp to my feet." I remember on the farm we carried a lantern when it was necessary to go out at night. It did not illuminate the whole field, only a small space about us; but we could take the next step in safety. As we advanced the light

moved, and we could put down our foot in the light every time for ten miles. "Thy word is a lamp to my feet." Use the light you have and you will get additional light. The Savior met Saul on his way to Damascus. Then, if ever, we would expect a revelation of the future course to be pursued. But, no; this was all: "Go into Damascus and it shall there be told thee what thou shalt do." It was essential to obey the command to go into the city before he would get any further information. Do what you know and God will give additional knowledge. "If any man will do his will, he shall know the doctrine."

IV. *From the fulfillment of prophecy.* Joseph Gourney argued before the mechanics of Manchester in this way: If you had a very complicated lock, like in some of our money safes, and you find a key that fits it perfectly, you conclude that that key was made for that lock. Now the correspondence between that lock and key is not so perfect as the correspondence between Old Testament prophecy and New Testament history respecting Christ. The prophets foretold where he would be born, "In Bethlehem of Judeah;" how he would be received, "A byword and laughing stock;" how he would be betrayed by one of his disciples for "thirty pieces of silver;" how he would be condemned without a shadow of justice, "his judgment is taken away;" how his raiment would be divided among the soldiers and upon his vesture they would cast lots; how he would die of a broken heart, be laid in a rich man's new tomb, be raised the third day, ascend to heaven and sit down

on the right hand of God. In the prophecies, you have a complete biography ; in the gospels, you have another. They are as much alike as my two hands, and yet a thousand years between them. These facts can not be explained unless you admit that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Dr. Pierson states that in the Old Testament there are six hundred and sixty-six prophecies, three hundred and thirty-three of these pertain to Christ. In the third chapter of Genesis we have the germ of prophecy : "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." From this has grown a great tree. Follow its branches. Take his genealogy. From the branch Seth, Enoch, branch Noah, branch Abraham, branch Isaac, branch Jacob, branch Judah, branch David, on to the Christ. Take the time when he was to appear. Daniel says, from the time of the decree of Darius to lift the captivity until the Messiah shall be seventy weeks, or four hundred and ninety years. From the decree of Darius to the birth of Christ was three hundred and fifty-seven years. Adding the thirty-three years of his life and you have four hundred and ninety years. Another branch in the prophetic tree. Take the place of his birth. Among all the nations, Israel was chosen ; among the tribes, Judah was taken ; among the cities of Judah, Bethlehem was taken ; of the two Bethlehems, "Bethlehem Ephrata" was taken. Another branch in the prophetic tree. And so we might go on, until the tree of prophesy was completed. This is the "plant of renown." Standing before it, it is enswathed with fire

like the burning bush. You put off your shoes, for you feel that you are standing upon holy ground.

Take the city of Babylon. It was sixty miles in circumference, surrounded by a wall, according to Heroditus, three hundred and fifty feet high—wide enough for six chariots to go abreast upon its summit. There were fifteen hundred towers, two hundred feet higher than the wall. It had gates of brass and bars of steel. It did seem to be impregnable. Isaiah declares that Babylon shall fall; Cyrus shall take it. One hundred and fifty years after Isaiah had spoken, Cyrus appears with his Persian hosts; but he can not break those walls. The river Euphrates ran under the walls through the center of the city. Cyrus digs great canals and draws off the water of the Euphrates into them, and in the dead hour of night marches his men down the bed of the river into the heart of the city. But there is a wall along either bank. On that night the sentinels were drunk and the gates were left open. Isaiah had said it would be so. The city is engaged in a drunken revel and falls an easy prey. By the way, that was the night when Belshazzar and his princes were drinking in his palace, using the golden vessels which his father had taken from the temple at Jerusalem. The hand-writing upon the wall appeared. Daniel was called in to interpret the writing, and the prophet adds, "In that night was the king slain." Cyrus took possession. The glory of Babylon departed. Later, the king removed the capitol to the banks of the Tigris, the wealthy followed, then the

middle classes and last the lower classes. So that the city was deserted. The prophet said, "Babylon shall be left without an inhabitant." The king made a hunting park of it. He brought all kinds of animals there. But growing tired of the enterprise, he left it. Ever since, it has been an infested place. The prophet said, "Babylon shall be the habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit, the cage of every mean and hateful bird. The bittern, the cocatrice, the asp, shall be there. The lion shall make his lair there." The river Euphrates overflowed its banks and a portion of the old site of Babylon has ever since been covered with water. The prophet said, "Babylon shall become pools of water." Dr. Smith was there searching for relics. He hired some Arabs to help him. At sunset they left him and went to the plain to pitch their tent for the night. He asked why they did not stay with him. "There are evil spirits here; we would not stay for any consideration." The prophet said, "The Arab shall never pitch his tent there." He noticed that the shepherds never brought their flocks there, although there were good pastures. He inquired the reason. They said, "There are serpents that bite the sheep." The prophet said, "The shepherd shall not lead his flock there and shall never make his fold there." And he will not. Now you have here a line of historical facts running back two thousand five hundred years, and a corresponding line of prophetic declarations, and they are parallel. The retrospective view of the historian and the prospective view of the prophet exactly coincide. The only

explanation is, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." I once placed these facts before an infidel and asked him to explain them. He said it was guess-work. Any one could predict that a great city would reach its climax and fall into ruin. Yes, but could he go into particulars. Suppose you guess about me. You say, I will die. You can not miss in that. But specify particulars. You say, "I will die in two weeks from to-night, at half-past twelve, of apoplexy, away from home, and no one will see me die." Now you have specified five particulars, and if you miss it in a single one you have destroyed your character as a prophet. Are you willing to venture upon particulars? "No, it would not be safe. I would be sure to miss in some of them and very likely in all." Well the prophet specified particulars, not only five, but five hundred, and they all came true to the very letter. Will that not establish his character as the messenger of God? In the same connection to which we have referred, he says: "Come now and let us reason together: though your sins be as crimson, they shall be as wool." "Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God and besides me there is no Savior." "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was wounded for our iniquity." The prophesy respecting Tyre, "like the top of a rock whereon fishermen spread their nets;" respecting Egypt, "the basest of kingdoms," and respecting Jerusalem, "ploughed with a plough and sowed with salt," were literally accomplished to every jot and tittle. Only two

men have attempted to break the argument from prophecy—Celsus in the early Christian centuries and Renan in the later. Their answer was, that the prophecy is so much like the event that it must have been written after the event transpired. But the least tyro in Christian evidences knows that that is simply childish.

V. *From its effects.* “By their fruit ye shall know them.” An Indian prince who had spent five years in London studying English institutions, was asked what he thought of the Bible. “I think it is a book from God, for I find all the good people believe it and all the bad people disbelieve it.” In the early days two men were traveling in Pennsylvania, one an infidel the other a Christian. At night they came to a cabin in the woods occupied by a large, rough-looking man. He cordially granted them the privilege of staying with him over night. They were afraid, and determined to keep watch. When they retired it was agreed that the infidel should lie awake the first half of the night, and then wake the Christian, who would keep watch until morning. The Christian immediately fell asleep. By and by the old man went to the corner, took down a large book from the shelf, read a chapter and kneeled down to pray. That satisfied the infidel, and he fell asleep. The next morning the Christian took him to task for not waking him as he had promised. Well, he said, when I saw that man read his Bible and pray, I knew we were safe. There was no need of watching. “Their rock is not as our rock, our enemies themselves being judges.” Take the city of Cincinnati, where I reside.

Remove all the churches, all the Bibles and all who read and study and practice the Bible, and leave the city to the saloons, low dives, thieves, libertines, and drunkards. All the policemen in the State of Ohio could not keep order. It would be a perfect pandemonium. On the other hand, take away all the saloons and low dives, all the thieves, drunkards, Sabbath-breakers and libertines, and leave it to the churches, Bibles and those who honor the book. You would need no policeman. The people would be a law unto themselves. The Queen of England was asked the secret of England's greatness. She handed her distinguished visitor a Bible and said: "That Book." Three hundred years with the Bible has converted the rocky island of Scotland into a beautiful garden; while Spain, with far greater natural resources, without the Bible, has in that time become a wilderness and an effete kingdom. Take the map of the world and mark those countries where the Bible is known and believed and practiced, and compare them with those countries where it is unknown or repudiated. You compare England with China, America with Turkey, the North of Ireland with the South, New England with New Mexico. In the one case there is liberty, in the other tyranny. The one faces the light and moves forward, the other faces the darkness and feasts upon the dust and ashes of the past. The poet, Tennyson, contrasting England with China, says ;

“Through the shadow of the globe we sweep into the brighter day,
Better fifty years in Europe than a cycle in Cathay.”

In conclusion, 1. Study the Bible by books. Each book has a central thought, and all the facts and truths are crystallized about it. And until you get that central thought in your mental grasp, you can not read the book with great profit. Take the book of Ruth. Some say that is only a love story and should not have a place in the Bible. A superficial reader says that. The central thought is a redemption. We are taught that the redeemer must be of the same family with the debtor a kinsman, and yet belong to another order and be possessed of the means to procure the redemption. Christ is our elder brother and likewise the Son of God, and possessed of the resources of infinity. Take Esther. The name of God is not in that book. But the absence of the name is essential to the purpose of the book. It sets forth the hand of God in providence, even in the most ordinary incidents of our lives. You see the scenes on the stage move; you do not see the hand that moves them. You see the scenes of providence changing; you do not see God's hand moving them. He hides himself. Even his name is not mentioned in the book, and yet his hand moves the wheels of Providence until Mordecai is exalted among the princes and Haman is brought to the gallows. God works in providence. His government makes for righteousness and against wickedness. Take Ecclesiastes. You are perplexed as you read. Its philosophy seems doubtful.

The expression "Under the sun," occurs twenty-six times. That is the key of the book. It is the philosophy of a skeptic who looks not above the earth. But at last Solomon's faith triumphs. "Hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." Once more, take Philemon. That is only Paul's letter to a slaveholder. The central thought is intercession. Onesimus was the slave of Philemon. He ran away from home and stole from his master. By and by he goes to Paul and confesses. Paul acts as intercessor. He sends Onesimus back to Philemon and this letter with him. He asks Philemon to receive Onesimus as his own son; whatever he does for Onesimus will be regarded as done for him, and if "he have wronged thee in anything set that to my account." That illustrates the intercession of Christ. We have run away from our heavenly Father and robbed him of his glory. Christ says, Receive them as my children; whatever is done for them will be done for me, and in whatever they have wronged you set it to my account. 2. Study the Bible as one book. When I was a lad nine years old our pastor came to our house in his annual round to catechise. He asked me if I had read the Bible through. I confessed I had not. Well, said he, begin to-morrow morning, read a chapter every morning and evening, and several on Sabbath. And by the time I come back next year see if you can not have read the Bible through. We began the next morning at the first of Genesis. We were so intent on reading the Bible through that our

mother could get little help from us. By and by we grew careless ; but our mother became more interested, and what with her interest, by the end of the year we had read the Bible through. It is a privilege and duty I have tried to avail myself of ever since, and I can bear this testimony : It pays—it pays compound interest.

3. Give the Bible to others. The British and Foreign Bible Society was organized in 1802. Since that time they have distributed one hundred million copies of the Word of God and translated it into two hundred and sixty different languages. In 1816 the American Bible Society was organized. In the last ten years they have given out over eleven million copies of God's word and translated it into at least twenty different languages. These two great societies are the two hands by which the Church is scattering the leaves of the tree of life which are for the healing of the nations ; and by and by "the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea."