



SELECT REMAINS

OF THE

REV. WILLIAM NEVINS. D. D.

WITH A MEMOIR.

THIRD EDITION, REVISED AND CORRECTED.

"He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God."—*John*

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WHY EVERY BODY SHOULD HAVE THE
BIBLE IN TWENTY YEARS.

[AN UNPUBLISHED TRACT.]

DATED MAY, 1834.

FELLOW CHRISTIANS; this small treatise which is put into your hands, and which you are affectionately requested not to put out of your hands till you have carefully read it, however extravagant and visionary, at first, the design of it may appear to you, avows the following object, viz., the supply of the accessible population of the "whole world" with the Word of God, within a definite period; and it intends to plead for the speedy adoption, by the American Bible Society, of a resolution to undertake, at least, its due share in the great work of the universal supply. Your approbation of the plan—your agreement in the resolution, and your co-operation in its execution are desired and needed. It is however neither expected nor desired that they should be given at our simple request. We therefore beg your serious consideration of some reasons in favor of the plan and resolution, which we will now respectfully submit.

The thing proposed is, that the whole world shall have the Bible; and that, to this end, we who have it, should rise in the spirit of our Master, and in his strength resolve that they shall have it

A *county* first resolved to search out and supply its destitute. Scarcely was it said, ere it was done; and every family in *Monroe* had a Bible. Emboldened by this success to a wider enterprize, a Bible Society met, and *dared* to resolve that a *state* should be supplied; and as by magic, the exploring agents appeared, the necessary funds were contributed, and the work was done. Then it was argued, that if one state could be supplied, twenty-four states could be. So the great American Union became the next object; and it was resolved by her, who having taken the name of American, was now acting in the true spirit of that name, that wide, as the banner of freedom waves over our land, the leaves that are for the healing of the nations shall be scattered. And that too has been done. The Bible, if it has not been welcomed into every family, has been offered at every door.

Now, this being done, the *county*, the *state*, the *country* supplied, what shall we next do? Shall we *rest* from our labors? Earth is not the *spot*, nor time the *space* for rest. Nor are we *wearied*, that we require rest. Our work hitherto has not been *exhausting toil*, but *refreshing exercise*. It has but prepared us for other and larger labors. We *cannot* rest now. We have given our great country the Bible, and we have derived such pleasure and profit from the benevolent work, that we covet more of the kind. The demand is now for a larger object—a wider field.

Accordingly it is proposed that we undertake the world; and since there is no Bible Society of the world, whose appropriate business it is to resolve for the world,

that *she*, who said, strong in the sense of her weakness, "The American Union shall have the Bible," should, as on her knees, and with eye lifted in imploring and confiding look to heaven, say, "We, in conjunction with our sisters of the other continent, resolve to attempt in the name and strength of our God, to give the Bible to the whole world?"

But will it do? Is it *safe* to venture on so large a resolution? Is it *the time*? It is true that great enterprises call forth great efforts; but will not the very magnitude of this undertaking, tend to defeat its accomplishment? Will it not enervate by alarming? Whether it be wise and prudent now to adopt the resolution, is matter of opinion. Appeal has already been made to this, and many voices from many quarters have responded affirmatively. The question has been submitted to numerous minds, and they have pondered on it, and prayed over it, and without an exception, so far as is known, the answer has been, "let the resolution be adopted." Numerous ecclesiastical bodies of different Christian denominations have consulted together on the subject, and they have said, "let it be adopted." *Local Bible Societies*, have not only approved the adoption, but have transmitted their resolutions, urging it, and pledging the co-operation of their prayers, efforts, and worldly treasures. So that there is more than a *consent* to the resolution. There is a *call* for it. Now what shall the American Bible Society respond to this call? How shall she treat these grave petitioners? She wants to know her duty. She would not engage in any rash enterprise. Neither could she decline

responsibility. Shall she wait until a louder and more general call reaches her ear? She will, if her constituents say so. She has waited one year, and twenty millions of Pagans have, meanwhile, gone, unlit by revelation's guiding and cheering light, to eternity. She will wait another year, if she must, while the same number of millions complete their career of darkness: for to the Pagan, the whole course of life lies through the valley of the shadow of death. Reluctant as she may be to wait, yet wait she will, and look about her, though already she sees what sickens her heart, if indeed *it will not do*. But will it not do? Christian reader, what say you? *Ought it not to be done?* I ask your attention to this topic. I ask, not whether the contemplated resolution, designating twenty years for the supply, ought not to be immediately adopted. But *ought not the world to have the Bible?* Is it not theirs already by *grant of God?*—and only not theirs in fact, through the most culpable keeping back of man? Here is a communication from God, *endorsed* “to the world.” “Unto you, O, men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man.” And ought not the world to have it? It is *directed* to them. Ought it not to be *delivered* to them? Are they not entitled to the privilege of opening and reading the communication, which their God has made to them?

Nothing can be more plain than that the *whole world* has God's warrant for possessing the Bible.” They have a *right* to it. They have a *property* in it. It is as much the Hindoo's and the Hottentot's Bible—as much the Turk's and the Tartar's, as it is your's and mine.

In it, God speaks as really, as directly, and as kindly to each of them, as to you or me. Why should we have it, and not they? Does it not strike you that God ought to be heard by as many as he speaks unto? That the publication of his love should go forth far, and be spread wide as that love's extent? If "God so loved *the world*," surely, surely the world should be informed of that stupendous and deeply interesting fact. And if he who is the propitiation for our sins, is also the propitiation for the sins of *the whole world*, certainly the intelligence of that death should be circulated far as its efficacy may extend, and "all the ends of the earth" should know who it is that says to them, "look unto me, and be ye saved."

But not only have *all* mankind the same right to the Bible, that *any* of mankind have; and not only is it reasonable that they should hear what God their Creator says to them, but they have all equal *need* of the Bible. It contemplates and provides for a case that is universal. Does *any* son or daughter of Adam need the Bible? Dost thou? Then, for the same reasons that thou dost, or any one does, each and every child of the apostacy needs it. And all *supremely, intensely* need it—need nothing so much—need nothing in comparison with this. It tells of the only balm for the universal and fatal disease of sin. Oh, if there was another balm of equal virtue, issuing from some other fissure, than the cleft of the rock of ages, or if the disease was not absolutely universal; or being universal, not uniformly fatal, but for the application of this one remedy, then the case would not be so strong and so urgent. I ask

then, ought not the world to have the Bible—to hear of Jesus—to be informed of the way of salvation?

Certainly it ought, all admit; but of this number, many ask, with more of doubt in their tone and manner than seems to befit intelligent and well informed Christians, “can it be done?” *Can it be done?* The idea of its *impracticability* seems to alarm them. It *ought* to be done. Oh, yes; but *can* it be done? There are several suggestions with which I would attack, and hope to dissipate this *phantom* of impracticability, for it is but a phantom.

1. The attempt to give the Bible to the whole world, ought to be made, if for no other reason, to put its practicability to the test. How are we ever to know whether it can or cannot be done, but by making the attempt to do it? Its impracticability can never be demonstrated by any process of reasoning. It cannot be shown to be *in the nature of things* impossible. If impracticable, that can only be known as the result of actual experiment. Let us then make the experiment. If it succeed, we shall not regret having made it; neither shall we, if it fail. If the thing cannot be done, it is desirable to know that it cannot. The experiment will perhaps inform us how far we may hope to extend the word of God. It may ascertain the limits of its possible diffusion, and of our privilege and duty in spreading it. We may learn, and we would like to know, to how many people we may hope to convey the “good tidings of great joy,” which the precentor of the angelic choir on the plains of Bethlehem, said should be “to *all* people.” If when we go forth with the word of God in our hands, we

must stop short of "the ends of the world," we want to know how far short we must stop,—into how much of the world it is possible to "go and preach the Gospel," and how many nations we may, without being visionary, hope to teach and disciple. Until this experiment is made, who has a right to pronounce our scheme impracticable? There exists no where, as yet, a particle of *proof* that it cannot be done.

2. Though the experiment to make the Bible universal has not been made, yet the experiment to make mankind universally acquainted with the Gospel by other means has been tried, and the result of that experiment is altogether in favor of the practicability of what we propose. The apostles and primitive Christians attempted the mighty enterprise of the world's conversion. They went forth with the whole human family as their object; and though their number was small, their resources limited, and their means of intercourse scanty, yet they succeeded in what they undertook. *Paul*, in writing to the Romans, makes this appeal, "Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." And in writing to the Colossians, he speaks of the Gospel as "in all the world," and as "preached to every creature which is under heaven." Nor was this any greater success than our Saviour had himself predicted, when he said, "And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." The testimony of the Pagan *Pliny*, to the extensive spread, and triumphant success of the Gospel, almost

rivals that of Paul. So then it appears that the experiment in one form, has been made, and has succeeded; and we are furnished with this argument, *it can be done, for it has been done*. I know it will be said, that the apostolic church had the gift of tongues, and the power of working miracles, to aid them in the prosecution of their enterprise. But their success was not mainly owing to these, and it has been contended that these, so far from giving them facilities superior to ours, were necessary to place their labors on a level with ours. If they possessed those *two* advantages which we have not, yet we possess *many* that they had not. One writer enumerates *ten* distinct particulars in which our facilities for conducting missionary operations exceed what theirs were. And as it respects their two, if we have not the immediate gift of tongues, yet we have the faculty of acquiring languages; and if we cannot work miracles, yet have we the benefit of the argument in favor of Christianity, which their miracles furnish.

3. I may as well remark in this place, that it would be strange indeed, if our Saviour has explicitly commanded us to do what *cannot be done*. Why said he, "Go ye into *all* the world," if we cannot go so far? Why "preach the Gospel to every creature," if it is impossible to reach every creature? Why "teach all nations," if only a part of the nations *can* be taught? Can that be impracticable, which he has made obligatory?

4. There is nothing in the *nature* of the enterprise to lead to the suspicion of impracticability. It proposes nothing *miraculous* or *preternatural*—nothing of a kind

different from what has already been done. We have supplied a whole country with the Bible. To supply the world, is but to do the same thing on a larger scale. We have found the nation's supply not impracticable. If we find the world's supply impracticable, it will be owing not to the *nature*, but to the *magnitude* and *extent* of the enterprise.

5. It should be remembered, that it is not proposed to attempt this thing in human strength, and in reliance on human resources alone. The question is not, if men can do it trusting entirely to their own wisdom and might, but *can it be done?* Is it *practicable* with that help which may be expected from another quarter? Are there means which we may expect, will prove "mighty through God," to the achievement of the enterprise?

6. If it cannot be done, *why* can it not? Some *reason* ought to be given. What is the insuperable obstacle? Hath not every nation and tribe of men a language?—and if it have not been already, can it not be reduced to a written language? Can we not arrest and fix "the flying sound"? Has not this been done recently, with respect to some, who, till missionaries visited them, had no written language?—and cannot the Bible be translated into these languages? Will any one say this *cannot* be? What! other books, and not the Bible; His book, who is the author of language! Already it is translated into the languages of six hundred and fifty millions of mankind. The *Chinese* translation alone, can be read by three hundred and fifty millions. The translations prepared by the Baptist missionaries and

others in the east, open the Bible to at least one hundred millions more. Then there is the *Arabic* translation, the *Persic* translation, and one for *Asiatic Siberia*, now in the press, by which about forty millions, not included in the six hundred and fifty, will be supplied; “so that there are probably not more than seventy or eighty millions without a translation, and perhaps not fifty who have a written or printed language, without a translation in part or in whole.” The Bible being translated, can be printed; and being printed, can be circulated. Why not? What is to hinder?—Ah, but the *expense!* where is the *money* ever to be obtained? The money exists—and it is all of it the Lord’s, whose the Bible is:—and the hearts of those who have it in trust, are in his hand. Which of us can He not incline, and, if the ability do not already exist, which of us can He not enable to give for the next twenty years ten times the amount, annually, to circulate the Bible, that we have given in years past? When the resolution to supply the Union was taken, the probable cost alarmed many, and whence the money was to come perplexed and distressed many. But it came. There was no lack. Christians increased their gifts. Are they now the poorer for it? and will they not make an exertion for the world? Will they not *earn*, will they not *save*, will they not exhaust their *income*, aye, and infringe upon their *principal*, to give the world the Word of Life? I I speak of Christians. I speak not of the men of the world, but of the men of Jesus Christ. I know they will—I *feel* that they will. My judgment and heart both tell me they will. Oh yes, when they shall be

appealed to as the followers, friends, representatives, and resemblances of Him, who being rich, became poor for their sakes, that he might by his poverty enrich them; and when it shall be announced to them that we have adopted the last and largest resolution which Christian benevolence can take; a resolution which proposes to bear the good tidings of great joy to all people, and which breathes the very sentiment of the song in which the multitude of the heavenly host united, "good will to men;" when we shall be able to tell them that now we have determined to go into all the world, to convey the Gospel to every creature, to pour the light on every land, and break the news of mercy and salvation in every ear; and that we mean to render the name, and translate the story of Jesus into every language of mortals, and to pass the cup of blessing round the entire circle of the earth, will there not be a feeling kindled in every redeemed bosom, such as never before warmed it, and will they not pledge us their prayers, their efforts, their resources, and their sacrifices? I am sure they will. How shall they not?

I cannot say how much the enterprise will *cost*. Millions of money, doubtless. But what if it does? Hath never any thing as yet cost millions? Do millions frighten men of the world? Doth it deter them from an undertaking, that it will cost millions? Are not some of them, aye, and some professed followers of the Saviour, themselves alone, worth millions? What if the universal spread of the Bible should cost as much as one year's interest of the national debt of England? What if our proportion of the work should cost as much

as the private fortunes of some four or five individuals? What if it should cost one fiftieth part of the value of the property in a single city? What if the expense of this enterprise of peace should amount to one twentieth part of the cost of one war? The last short conflict of America with England, cost us two hundred millions, and our antagonist, it is presumed, no less. Did it *break* the parties? Would it *ruin* them, if they were to spend as much, in united efforts under the Captain of salvation? Would it bankrupt these two nations if they should resolve in concert, to evangelize the world?

But what if the money be obtained, and the Bibles printed and paid for, how are they to be distributed? How can the destitute be reached? Who will act as agents? Where will you find your men? Some of them are already on the foreign field waiting for the Bible to follow them. Some have been distributing the blessed book, and now they call for more copies. There are native converts, and there will be more, who will gladly engage in the work of distribution. As one reads and obtains the blessing, he will pass the book to another, and recommend it to a third. The first ten years will create and diffuse a spirit, we may expect, which will render the labor of the last ten comparatively easy. The diffusion of the Bible creates a demand for the Bible. Besides, the work will not require so very large a number of agents. See in the instance of Gutzlaff, in China, how much one agent can accomplish—how much space, even in *one* year, he can travel over, and how many Bibles judiciously distribute. Consider also, how much one man, Dr. Patterson, has done

in the circulation of the Scriptures in the north of Europe, and around the Baltic. But how are the heathen in the heart of Asia, and in central Africa to be reached? If they cannot be reached, they fall not within the proposed resolution. It contemplates only the supply of the *accessible* population of the world. There is an immense population already accessible, and some of these have but recently become accessible. God is opening the world to his word. Enough is accessible to begin with, and who can doubt that as we go on, the openings will be multiplied? May not the essayists of the world's conversion, calculate on the countenance and co-operation of the God of Providence, as they move forward in the work to which he has called them? Is not our Jesus, at whose command we proceed, head over all things to the Church? And shall he not reign till he hath put all things under his feet?

Oh, it can be done. There is no doubt about it. Even *reason* pronounces it possible. I do not say that it *will* be done, though the resolution to do it should be adopted. Twenty years may pass away, aye, forty, sixty, and the work not be done; and the Church may have to look back with blushes and tears on her neglected, broken resolution. The work is not to be done by a simple resolution to do it, but by the consentaneous, appropriate, and persevering action of those who agree to the resolution, this action commencing immediately on the adoption of the resolution, and proceeding vigorously from year to year.

The position I am now endeavoring to establish, is, that it *can* be done, and if another argument be needed

for the conviction of any mind, I have it—it is derived from prophecy. I argue its practicability from its certain futurity. It *can* be done, because it *shall* be done. - Yes, it *shall* be done. All people shall be accessible to the word of God, and it shall be conveyed to all. Every family shall one day possess in its own native tongue, a copy of the Bible, and this book of light and love shall be brought within the reach of every hand. Every breeze that blows, shall waft the name of Jesus, every valley shall be vocal with it—echo from every hill shall reverberate it. It shall fall soft and soothing on every ear of man; and I trust this name, “That calms *our* fears, and bids *our* sorrows cease,” shall even be precious and peaceful to every heart, while every mother shall sit and hush her babe to slumber with the hymn that tells of his love and sorrows. Yes, it shall be. “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” It shall be done. This settles the question of practicability.

Now I would observe, that whenever it is done, there is every reason to believe that its beginning will be such as is now proposed. *How* is it to be done, by what agency we know. If men are not to do it, why have they received a command to do it? If the nations are to be taught Christianity in some other way, it is marvellous that those who are not to do it, have received instructions to do it. If, as some affirm, God will do this work in his own time and way, is it not strange that he should have set men to do *his* work, and directed them

to go about it immediately? Had not this work been made to depend in a measure on men's agency, no reason can be given why it should not have been done ere this. Had God designed to effect it without employing subordinate agents, why has he not done it? Why has not something at least been accomplished without human agency? Or if he meant to employ other agents than men, why has he not before this, sent them to the world, and set them to their task. But it is plain *men* are to do it. And they are to do it in their usual way of doing things. They are to *go* and *teach* and *preach*; and since the art of *printing* has been invented, they are to avail themselves of that wonderful facility for extending and perpetuating knowledge. They are to make the Bible universal as they would make any other book universal. The only difference is, that in the case of the Bible, they have encouragements and advantages which, in giving circulation to any other book, they could not have. They have the command of God to give it to the world. They have his promise that he will be with them in the work; and he assures them of ultimate success.

Men are to do it, and in no mysterious manner, but in this plain way. And when the work is undertaken, there will be no new and extraordinary call to engage in it; but it will be done in obedience to the well known and long neglected command. The obligation which has always existed, will only then begin to be felt. Again, when the great work is undertaken, it is not at all probable that there will be any thing in the aspect of Providence more inviting or more auspicious

than there is now. It will be attempted under discouragements, we presume, as great as any that are felt at present. And whenever the resolution is adopted, however late, it will appear to many extravagant and rash. It will alarm some. It will excite the derision of others; and many a prudent counsellor will advise to further delay. Was there ever unanimity and extensive co-operation, in the beginning of a great enterprise? There will not be in this. It must not be waited for. The thing has commenced precisely as it should have commenced. It has commenced as the American revolution commenced, and as the effort for the abolition of the slave trade commenced—small, still, and among a few. It was conceived in one mind. That mind communicated it to others. They considered and concurred in it. It passed to others, and they approved. Then in their associated capacities, they expressed their approbation and recorded their pledges—ecclesiastical bodies, and subordinate Bible Societies. here the matter stands. We are waiting now for the great Bible Societies to resolve and act. *And they will do it.* Yes, they will frame and pass resolutions comprehending the world.

The British and Foreign Bible Society will resolve to do her part, and other Societies will agree to take their proportion. On some second Thursday of May, a resolution will be introduced before the assembled American Bible Society, and unanimously carried, to engage forthwith with others, in the too long neglected work of furnishing the world with the word of life. It may not be in 1835, nor in 1836, but *it will be.* And I

think it nearly certain that the American Bible Society will be foremost in the resolution; but not because she is first in strength, and in zeal, for she delights to honor another as her superior in both these respects, and she *would* not be first in this enterprise, if she thought her act could justly be attributed to the ambition of precedence. But God put the conception first into her heart, and why should not she move first, whom he first moved? There are reasons of weight why she should lead in the resolution; and it is presumed that no *jealousy* can be felt any where. She has done already, what *courtesy* required. She has opened her mind to her sisters across the water, and they have the opportunity, if they please, of acting simultaneously with her. Let them now act as their judgment shall dictate, and let us feel that it is our privilege and duty to do the same.

I have said that the resolution will sometime be adopted. The enterprise *must* commence with a declaration of united determination to do it. The only question is, whether the resolution shall be adopted now, or some three, five, ten, or twenty years hence. Now for the delay of this number of years, some very good reasons ought to be assigned. The advantages of waiting ought to be very decided and obvious. What are they? Will more *information* be obtained? But is it needed? Already we are informed that the world lieth in wickedness, and that there is salvation in no other than Christ; and we know *what* is to be done, and *how* it is to be done, and *who* are to do it. Our own duty is obvious. I see not why we should wait for

more *information*. Shall we wait to see what others will do? And why should not they wait to see what we will do? And what if we all wait for each other? Others may wait with more propriety than we, for we are committed to act *first*. But it is said, "This is a great undertaking. It should be entered upon with deliberation. Let the Church have a little more time to think of it and pray over it." She has or ought to have been long thinking of it. I know not why she wants more time for thought. Is not her duty manifest? Is not the mode of accomplishing it manifest? And as for *prayer*, if she has prayed as her Lord has taught her, she has always been praying for the very thing which the proposed resolution contemplates. Daily have her children been saying, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done *on earth*, (the whole earth) as in heaven," where it is done *universally*. It is time she had resolved to do in the strength of God, what she has so long been expressing her desire to have done. It is time her resolutions, her aims, and her efforts were as comprehensive, and as far-reaching as her prayers. I know not why she should pray that God's will may be known and done more extensively, than she is laboring in dependance on him, to make it known and to cause it to be done. Is she instructed to *pray* for the conversion of the world?—she is also directed to *labor* for it. She may as well limit her prayers as her labors. If she prays for the whole, she should act for the whole; and let it be remembered, that the most effectual prayer is not that which *precedes*, but that which *attends* action. We have prayed for the world, without acting for the

world, long enough. Now let us pray and act. Will any one say, the thing has been put off so long, that now the delay of a few years is not worthy of consideration? It may not be to us who have the Bible; but to those who have it not, the delay may be of great consideration. Fifteen or twenty millions of Pagans have died since the initiatory resolution of last year. *Death* did not suspend his operations while we enquired and corresponded. He went on with his work, though we thought it prudent to pause in ours. And he will go on this year. He will not wait with us.

A question affects us differently, as we vary the statement of it. "Shall we wait another year or two?"—is the form in which it presents itself to one; and he thinks we had better wait. But in the thoughts of another, the question takes this shape, "Shall we let twenty or forty millions more go to eternity, before we resolve to arise and go to them?" I must acknowledge, that I, for one, feel a pity for the present generation of heathen. I feel as if we ought to attempt something for the world that now is. If those who are groping their way through darkness to the darker grave, knew the value of the Bible, and could overhear us deliberating whether to enter on the work of its universal diffusion now, or some years hence, how would their hearts sink within them, when they should find the weight of opinion inclining to delay?

But what will be the effect of adopting the proposed resolution? Does any one doubt that this, if nothing else, will be the effect;—that Christians in America, will do more, much more in spreading the Scriptures,

than they have hitherto done, though they should not accomplish their resolution to the letter? And is it not both possible and desirable that they should do more? But, it may be asked, would not a narrower resolution lead to this increase of contribution and effort?—why not, if the object is, that Christians should do more, just resolve that we will do more? But did ever a resolution so indefinite accomplish any thing? Does any one suppose, that a resolution so general and pointless, could ever reach and rouse the energies of the Christian Church? When was any thing great ever achieved without a distinct aim and definite object?

But why at once propose and present so large an object? Can we not give it definiteness without making it the whole world? Why not resolve to supply America, or Africa, or some one of the great empires of Asia? Why the whole world? I answer, that the latter is a more *scriptural* object than the others. Our first duty was to *provide for our own*. That we have done; and having done that—having passed the limits which patriotism defines, it now behooves us to go forth in the spirit of philanthropy, whose object is man, and her limits only the ends of the earth. Next to our country, stands the world. The transition from the one to the other should be immediate. And why should this phrase, *the world, the whole world*, surprise us as if it were a novelty? Why should its magnitude alarm us? What phrase is more familiar to the Bible? It is no modern conception. I find it in the proclamation of the Father's love. I find it designating the extent of the Saviour's sacrifice. The forerunner of Christ, in

pointing him out as the Lamb of God, uses it. I find it in the angelic anthem. I find it in connexion with the *command* of Christ, which constitutes our commission. That which bids us go out at all, bids us go into all the world ; and we have no promise of the Saviour that he will go any distance with us, but one which assures of his company through all the length and breadth of the earth. And finally, a phrase of corresponding import is incorporated into our directory for prayer. And now shall we be afraid to incorporate this most scriptural phrase into an humble resolution ? Shall it stand in connexion with every thing but our aims and efforts ? Really we ought not to be so frightened at the suggestion of the whole world, as a field and object. If any thing should alarm us, it is the command, so long neglected by us, and not the resolution now to attempt obedience to it. What do we in undertaking this great enterprise, but turn Christ's command into a resolution ? He has said, " Go ye into all the world ; " and we unite in saying, " Resolved, that we will go ; " and we may add, " Resolved, that we are confident the author of the command, will be with us always, even unto the end of the world." Is it unreasonable or dangerous to agree to make the attempt to do, so far as the known plan of God contemplates the use of our agency, what we are explicitly commanded to do, and directed to pray that it may be done ? We do not resolve to open the way—to make the population of the world accessible, but to move forward in the path which Providence has opened and is opening ; and to reach what he has rendered accessible. We do not resolve that our lives

shall be prolonged, or that our zeal shall hold out, and burn pure, and high, and constant. For that we depend on him, in whom, both as men and as Christians, we live, move, and have our being. We do not resolve that we will stir up the hearts of other Christians, and engage them to feel and act with us. Our confidence for sympathy and co-operation is in Him, who has all hearts in his hand. We expect his assistance and countenance at every step and turn. We count upon his smile and blessing. We do not expect a welcome from the heathen, except as he shall give it. Is it presumption to rely on him for so much? Has he not invited such confidence? Will he ever disappoint it?

Why then should we hesitate to frame and adopt a resolution embracing the world—that definite object which the Lord Jesus himself *defined*?

The history of the progress of the Bible seems to me to call for some such resolution. That history has been most interesting and indeed astonishing. It is nearly eighteen hundred years since the Bible was completed. It is four hundred years since the art of printing was invented. And yet in 1782, more than seventeen hundred years after the canon of inspiration was closed, and three hundred and fifty years after that art was known, by which the word of God is capable of indefinite multiplication; in 1782, only about fifty years ago, the following fact occurred: Robert Aitken, a bookseller of Philadelphia, having obtained a long preamble and resolution from the Congress of the United States, setting forth the difficulties of printing the Bible in the United States, and pledging the national treasury for a

certain amount, ventured to publish an edition of the Holy Scriptures. *Now* there is no undertaking which requires less daring. There is no book which it is so profitable to publish. It was predicted that Bible Societies would injure private booksellers. But just the contrary has been the result. The *sales* from the book-stores have kept even pace with the *issues* from the Bible Societies. It was mentioned at the meeting of the American Bible Society, last year, that one house had, in the space of a few months, sold twelve thousand Bibles. I asked a bookseller how many he had sold of a particular edition. He told me the astounding number, but begged me not to repeat it. I suppose he felt that he was reaping a rich harvest, which he did not care that others should come in to share with him. We see here how private enterprise and public charity go along together in the circulation of the Scriptures. And private enterprise may be relied on to supply the nations to some extent; perhaps to the extent of one third of the Bibles wanted. You may resolve to do the work, but you will not have to do it all. You will not be permitted to engross it. It is but to create a demand by benevolence, and selfishness will be sure to aid in supplying it. The principal progress that has been made in the sale and distribution of the Scriptures, has occurred not in the last fifty, but in the last twenty or thirty years. Now the question is whether this progress shall continue—whether there shall be any thing like a corresponding advance in the next twenty years. I see not how there can be, unless some such resolution is adopted, as that we propose.

We are not going *forward* now. We are going backward. We have no great resolution now to fulfil. That is the reason of it. We have no high aim.

During the year 1830, the American Bible Society expended \$166,036,48, the next year \$142,658,81, and last year \$86,362,25. Now ought there not to be some existing resolution to keep up the annual income and expenditure to that amount which it has once reached, and indeed to carry it greatly beyond that? Is not the *number* of Christians increasing every year, and their *wealth* too, every year increasing? Ought not their contributions to be augmented also?

Will it be said that the year referred to was a year of *exigency*—that a great work had been undertaken and was going on, and it was necessary to sustain it by extraordinary contribution?—and ought not every year to be felt to be a year of exigency, while the world is not supplied with the Bible? And is not the exigency created by the world's want, greater than that created by our country's? Not only because the destitute are more numerous, but because the destitution is deeper and more entire. Then we were supplying those who were not altogether without the means of knowing what Christianity is. But they who remain to be supplied, not only know not what Christianity is, but are without the means of informing themselves. Does not this create a case of *exigency*?

Was a great work going on when that large amount was paid in? And ought not a *greater* work to be going on now? Why was that work undertaken? Was it done in obedience to any more distinct call of God, than

that which now summons us to the supply of the world? Ought that amount of contribution which was made during the two years in which we were occupied with the country's supply, to be extraordinary? Can it not be borne by the Church and by the country, as an *ordinary* thing? Cannot either bear much more? It could be borne, and much more, even if the money were all transported in specie. But this is not the case. Much of it will pay for labor done at home. Can it be borne? What a question to ask! A single city of our country, and she but the fourth in wealth, has been able to bear the expenditure of millions on a public work, from which as yet, but very small returns have been made; and she finds no difficulty in bearing it. She hardly knows that she has expended it, and could bear to lose it all.

There is an *impression*, not only existing on the minds of men of the world, but far from being effaced from the minds of the disciples of Jesus, that men cannot afford to *give* in any proportion to what they can afford to *spend*. They who feel that they can afford to spend *thousands*, and not for the necessaries and common comforts of life, but in perilous adventure—in uncertain speculation, feel that they cannot afford to give even *tens*. It is a mistake that must be corrected. If they can make such large and daring expenditures, they can *give* in some proportion to it. And men feel that they can afford to sustain great *losses*, otherwise they would not run such large risks, but to make large *donations* they are too poor. I know one who recently lost five thousand dollars, and he said, "I care nothing for it,"

and he spoke the truth. Now that man could have afforded to give that amount to a Bible Society. But his impression was, that to that cause he could not afford to give more than about fifty dollars. The truth is, there is nothing we can afford to do more largely and liberally than to give into the treasury of the God of providence.

Our blessed Master and model left an example of giving, which his disciples have been slow to imitate. What proportion gave he? A *hundredth*? A *tenth*? One *half*? He gave *all*. He reserved nothing. He was rich, and became poor for our sakes—gave till he had given all. And what was the consequence? Why, the very consequence which the prudent now predict and deprecate—personal poverty. He had not where to lay his head. He parted with all his accommodations, in order to give the world salvation.

I do verily believe that Christians could, without any inconvenient economy, *save* what would purchase Bibles for the world in a very few years. I believe, that without any additional labor, that would be injurious to them, they could *earn* what would do it. Give us what is lost in lotteries. Give us what is consumed in wines. Give us but a part of what is appropriated to make and keep men drunkards. There are a hundred sources from any one of which we might get funds for the world's supply with the word of God. And shall it be said, "it cannot be done—it ought not to be undertaken"? *It can be done*. Can every thing else be done, and not this? Can a war be waged, a canal be dug, a railroad constructed?—and cannot the world be

supplied with the Bible? Secularize the statement of the object. Then propose it to the men of the world, and ask them if it cannot be done. It can be done; and it *must* be done. If necessity ever existed, it exists in this case.

But why resolve to accomplish the work in twenty years? Why designate any number of years? And if any, why twenty? Why not give time enough, and say forty or sixty?

There are several reasons in favor of twenty. There is, in the first place, a greater agreement on that number, than could probably be obtained for any other. Besides, we propose to resolve what *we* will do, not what our successors shall. If we say forty years, the great majority of us will not be here to act on the resolution, the last moiety of those years. Again, our object is to do something for the existing generation of heathen, and if that is done, it must be done within twenty years. Moreover, we find that much may be achieved in twenty years by *human enterprise* alone; and may not much more by *faith* which "overcometh the world?" See how much the *men of the world* can do in twenty years—what magnificent works construct—what important conquests make—how change the physical and political aspect of things in a whole nation—and cannot the *men of God* do as much?

We scarcely need do more the next twenty years, to accomplish our object, than was done the last twenty, in comparison with the twenty which preceded. Is it impossible for us to do as much more the next twenty years, than we did the last, as in the last, we did

more than in the twenty which preceded? Cannot we keep up this ratio of increase? It is only necessary to do so, and our part of the great work is done.

But there is another consideration which pleads, if not for twenty years, yet for a shorter term. It is that after the adoption of this resolution, we may calculate, as I allow myself to think, on a more abundant blessing from God, than the world has ever yet experienced. Since my thoughts have been turned to this great subject, it hath occurred to me that probably some such movement as that which is now contemplated, is all that is wanting on the part of the Church, to that full *proving* of God, which is to be followed by the opening of the windows of heaven, and the pouring out of a blessing upon her, such, that, she not having room to receive it, it shall flow forth to the world. The Church has never yet *fully* proved God. She has always proposed and attempted less than he has required. She has never taken the Bible, and gone out with it, intending to go into all the world, and that may be the reason why Christ has been no more with her. How can we expect the fulfilment of the promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," unless we attempt obedience to the command to which that promise stands annexed? That promise was intended to encourage those who should make the conversion of the world their object. And we may well suppose that its most glorious fulfilment is reserved for the period when Christians shall resolve on the conversion of the world.

Does any one doubt, that if we adopt this resolution, and act in the spirit of it, its object will be accomplish-

ed, provided the divine influence which attends our labors be as abundant as was that which attended and gave efficacy to the labors of the apostolic age? With our men, and means, and facilities, and *their* humble sense of dependance on God, and looking to him for his blessing, would not all which is proposed, be accomplished in twenty years? Well, why should not we cherish a similar sense of dependance on God?—and expect as large a blessing to crown our efforts, as attended theirs? Will never again the Gospel come in such power to the hearts of men, and the arm of the Lord never again be so gloriously revealed for salvation? Has the Gospel achieved its greatest victories already? In the process of becoming universal in its dominion and influence, will not a more wonderful power attend it, than has ever attended it hitherto? Will not God hereafter make a *short work* on the earth? Does not that prophecy, which declares that a nation shall be born in a day, yet remain to be fulfilled? Who knows but the period of its fulfillment may fall within the next twenty years? And if it shall, twenty years will be ample for the accomplishment of our resolution?

Does any one fear that if the resolution be adopted, we shall not be able to answer for it to God? Will the remembrance of it be a new terror to us in the prospect of going to the judgment seat? I think not. But if we decline to adopt it, I am by no means so sure that we shall stand acquitted.

If the resolution, on the speedy adoption of which so many hearts are set, is adopted, and fails of accomplishment, it will be the first great resolution of benevolence

that has ever failed. All our resolutions up to this, have been accomplished. Shall that which proposes the truly Christian object of the world fail? It *may* fail. God will not be wanting to us; but we may be wanting to ourselves. We may pass the resolution in the spirit of pride. We may forget where our strength lies. We may go forward in the confidence of our own resources. But we shall be in equal danger of doing this, any number of years hence. I confidently trust, that He, whose Spirit suggested the resolution, will give us grace to adopt it, if at all, in the true spirit of dependence on him. In that case it cannot fail.

But if it fail, I contend that it is more glorious to undertake such an enterprise and fail, than to decline undertaking for fear of failing. Perhaps, however, Christians of America, are not prepared for this resolution. Perhaps, should it be adopted, there would be no great accession to your annual income; and, peradventure, it would be found at the end of two or three years, that Christians of this age have not that love for Christ, and that faith in God, and that good will to men, which alone can secure the sacrifices, the efforts and the treasures necessary to the success of the enterprise. But shall it be so? Friends of Jesus, shall it be so? Christian philanthropist, shall this fear be realized? I lay the cause at your feet—the cause of the world—the cause of bleeding, dying humanity. I am sure you will not *trample* on it. I hope you will take it up and lift it high, and bear it on to victory, speedy, complete, and glorious, through the blood of the Lamb, and the grace of the Spirit of God.