

1526 and 1547, the year of Henry the Eighth's death, there were issued fourteen editions of the Bible, and eighteen of the New Testament. The contradictory proceedings of the arbitrary monarch just named are well known. At one time, he prohibited and punished the perusal of the Scriptures; at another, he encouraged the practice, and even made provision for its observance. It is only necessary to state in this place that, whenever the people were allowed to read the word of God, they gladly availed themselves of the permission, much to the annoyance of the Popish priesthood, and greatly to the advancement of the Reformation. Proclamations were several times issued, enjoining the clergy or parochial authorities to place copies of the Bible in the churches, for the benefit of those who could not possess them, and who might read them there; and Strype says that "it was wonderful to see with what joy the book of God was received, not only among the learned sort, and those that were noted for lovers of the reformation, but generally all England over, among all the vulgar and common people, and with what greediness God's word was read, and what resort to places where the reading of it was." After many hard struggles, popery was finally suppressed in England as the national and dominant faith; and it may be safely affirmed that the spread of Protestantism in this country is to be mainly ascribed to the circulation of the Scriptures, aided by the efforts of faithful preachers of the gospel. The labours of those preachers would have been productive of little good if they had not been able to confirm their doctrine by constant appeals to the infallible standard of truth, the possession of which by the people prepared them to profit more largely by the instructions they received, and furnished them with the

means of distinguishing truth from error.

James le Fèvre, a learned Frenchman, and a professor in the university of Paris, published an edition of the New Testament, in the French language, in the year 1523. He was a member of the Romish church, and continued in that church till his death, but his opinions accorded so nearly with Protestantism, and he was accustomed to express himself so warmly against the gross superstitions of the papacy, that he excited the enmity of the bigoted, and at one time suffered a short exile from his country. His translation of the New Testament, together with Clement Marot's versification of the Psalms, powerfully aided the progress of evangelical principles in France. The first Protestant translation of the Bible, executed by Olivetan, was published in 1535; other versions were afterwards made, and great numbers of copies circulated.

When the improving effects of knowledge began to be felt, and revived learning shed its blessings on society, the monstrous impostures and exactions of the church of Rome, which had been quietly endured in the times of ignorance, were seen in their true colours. Disgusted with the avarice and licentiousness of the priesthood, and thirsting for the truth, men turned from the alleged abuses of the system to the system itself, and ventured to inquire whether its claims possessed a Divine sanction. That inquiry would have terminated unfavorably to the interests of scriptural religion, had it not been for the publication of the word of God, especially in the vernacular tongues. Authority would have silenced, or sophistry deceived the seeker after truth. But when the reformers gave to the nations the sacred oracles in their own languages, boldly asserting the right of every man to search and judge for himself, and abjuring all