

Isaac Smith, the particulars of whose operations in holding meetings, forming various branch societies, and distributing the holy scriptures, would be detailed in the Report.

This year was a memorable year in the history of the Church: The third centenary was completed of an open Bible in our beloved mother country; for though the Bible was made partially accessible in the reign of Henry the 8th, and illumined the too brief period of his son and successor Edward the 6th, the bloody reign of Queen Mary had blotted out this good beginning; and from the glorious accession of Queen Elizabeth, in 1558, may we date the firm establishment of the Reformation, and the free circulation of the Bible in the language of the people—open to all; and never, never, we trust, to be again closed. It was also now about two hundred and fifty years since the commencement of the new translation in the reign of King James, styled the authorised version, conducted under very favorable circumstances, and ended to all our memories—the only English version which had been, and he trusted the only one that ever would be circulated by the Bible Society. But there was another round period to which he would invite particular attention, as what he would relate might be interesting to many present. In the year 1778—now just 80 years ago—a very memorable letter was written under high authority, addressed to an Ecclesiastic afterwards an Archbishop, who had made a translation of the Holy Bible in Italian, “for the purpose of shewing the benefit which the faithful might reap from their having the Holy Scriptures in the vulgar tongue.” This letter thus proceeds:—

“At a time that a vast number of bad books, which most grossly attack the Catholic religion, are circulated even among the unlearned, to the great destruction of souls, you judge exceedingly well, that the faithful should be excited to the reading of the Holy Scriptures: FOR THESE ARE THE MOST ABUNDANT SOURCES WHICH OUGHT TO BE LEFT OPEN TO EVERY ONE, TO DRAW FROM THEM PURITY OF MORALS AND OF DOCTRINE, TO ERADICATE THE ERRORS WHICH ARE SO WIDELY DISSEMINATED IN THOSE CORRUPT TIMES. This you have seasonably effected, as you declare, by publishing the sacred writings in the language of your country, suitable to every one's capacity.” Then follow words not giving a conditional sense to the previous ones, but marking the greater approbation of the writer at the mode of the publication. These he would read, for he wished neither to mis-state nor suppress anything, nor mis-represent the sense of the document. “Especially when you shew and set forth that you have added explanatory notes, which, being extracted from the holy Fathers, preclude every possible danger of abuse. Thus you have not swerved from the laws of the Congregation of the Index, or the Constitution of Benedict XIV., that immortal Pope, our predecessor in the Pontificate.”

From what I have last read, it will be perceived that this document emanated from no other source than that of the Pope—Pope Pius VI. That it has not been withdrawn, or become obsolete, is apparent from the fact, that it is published in the Boston edition of the Douay Bible, printed in 1852, under the express sanction of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Boston. This letter contains a distinct recognition of a great and growing evil—it is a distinct acknowledgment also of a great remedy—a preventive, or cure, or mitigation of that evil, which should be open to all, namely—the sacred writings in the language of their country, suitable to every one's capacity. What thoughts naturally arise in the mind on reading or hearing this?