

“The following sentences from what remains of the preface to the Bible will show the animus which prompted its publication.

“Börner assures us that in the Library of Paris, opened in 1708, there may be seen four and twenty different editions of the German Bible, published before the year 1534, when Martin Luther published his. We may therefore justly wonder that persons are still found who pretend that his Bible was the first German translation;’ and again, ‘All translations are not sanctioned indiscriminately, least of all such as are made by persons whom the Church with justice suspects a preliminary examination of the translation is necessary on the part of the Bishops whom God has appointed to rule the Church, to secure to the people ignorant of the learned tongues the genuine Word of God.’ The preface ends in these words, ‘For the greater convenience of the reader, many passages which contain clear proofs of Catholic doctrine are printed in larger type and marked with an asterisk.’

“In the introduction to the Catechism, the Priests of the Teutonic Commandery explain their reason for appending a Roman Catholic Catechism to the Holy Scriptures. They are two. They wish, first, to guard Roman Catholics from the false interpretation of Scripture; and secondly, to show, beyond all power of controversy, to the Protestant, that Romish doctrine is concordant to the Word of God.

“If ever a translation of the Scriptures was provided with safeguards to prevent the possibility of its leading Catholic readers to believe in Protestant Truth, surely this was one.

“The story of one copy of this edition, from a period dating about twenty-five years after its publication down to the present time, we are able to follow, and this story I will endeavour to tell.

“In the heart of Suabia, enclosed on all sides by the territories of the sovereigns of Wurtemberg and Baden, lies the little principality of Hohenzollern. It extends from the slopes of the Black Forest across the Neckar, the Danube, and the Stockach, nearly as far as the shores of the Lake of Constance. It is a tiny state, covering not more than twenty-one geographical square miles, and embracing a population of 64,000 souls. At the beginning of the century, Spain was not more Popish than Hohenzollern. The ‘unity of the faith’ was perfect.

“In Hohenzollern there is a little village called Bietinghausen. The priest of the village occupied himself, it seems, with the study of prophecy. One Sunday, when the first Napoleon was at the height of his power, he preached from this text, ‘And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that which is determined shall be done.’ This king, said the priest, is Napoleon, and God’s decree concerning him has gone forth.

“Xavier Ruhn, the village schoolmaster, was in church, and was wonderfully impressed by the text. But he had no Bible. He determined, if possible, to get one, and after a long time waiting and searching, he induced an acquaintance, in whose house he found one, to sell him his. It cost him eleven florins (18. 4d.), a large sum at that time, and for a man in his position; but the book had in his estimation a higher value, and became, for him and many others, as we shall presently see, ‘a pearl of great price.’ The Bible which Xavier Ruhn bought was a copy of the edition described above, and this identical copy I have now before me.

“The spirit in which Ruhn, and those who joined him, entered on the study of the Scriptures may be judged from the following pencil jottings found on the cover and fly leaf of the volume. One of them writes, ‘This is the Holy Bible of the Old and New Testament, but mark well, the Catholic, i.e. the unadulterated Bible.’ And again, ‘Grace and Peace, Spirit and Life are to be found in this Bible.’ And again, ‘The letters are, it is true, dead things;