

## CHAPTER VI.

### LUTHER AND THE BIBLE.

**D**URING the last three hundred years and more it has been widely and persistently proclaimed that Luther was the discoverer, the first translator and the only correct interpreter of the Bible. Ever since the so-called reformer threw off the authority of the one true Church of Christ and set himself up in its place, the story went the rounds, that when he was appointed librarian of his convent he "discovered among the dangerous and prohibited books" a copy of the Sacred Scriptures, carried it off to his cell, devoured it and was "converted." The story was first put into circulation by Mathesius, Luther's pupil and a boarder in his house. It fascinated the simple, and many, ignorant of the facts, came to believe that Luther exhumed and dragged into the light of day the Holy Book that had lain for many dark ages in the dungeons and lumber rooms of Popery. Had Luther really accomplished such a notable feat, we should have just reason to sound his praises and offer him the expression of our deepest gratitude. We are constrained, however disappointing it may be to his admirers, to declare in the interests of truth that the tale bearing on Luther and his discovery of the Bible has no foundation in historic fact and is entirely unworthy of credence. It is a fabrication pure and simple. It was invented to throw dust into the eyes of the illiterate and to fan the flames of senseless bigotry. Whenever and wherever it is repeated, it has only one object in view, viz., to mislead the unwary into the belief that Rome hated the Bible, that she did her best to destroy it and that she concealed it from her people lest it should enlighten their supposed blindness.

Of all the accusations laid at the door of the Church this one must appear to any person who does not wilfully shut his eyes to facts as the most ludicrous,



and the truth is, it is ridiculed and put down by the learned as too silly to deny. It has been refuted and repudiated hundreds of times, and yet so venomous or ignorant are the propagators of error that they continue with brazen effrontery to keep it in continual circulation. The story will not down. It is difficult to convince the ignorant of its preposterous falsity and it continues to be repeated in hostile circles for the vile purpose of catering to the low susceptibilities of those who never question the veracity of the false teacher. Although the story continues to be told, the truth is that the Church never hated the Bible, never persecuted it, never tried to blot it out of existence and never kept it from her people. The contrary is the fact. She has been the parent, the author and maker under God of the Bible; she has always been the only effective and consistent preserver of the Bible; she guarded it through the ages from error and destruction; she has ever held it in highest veneration and esteem, and has ever grounded her doctrines upon it; *she alone* has the *right* to call it *her book* and *she alone* possesses the Bible in all its fulness and integrity.

This proud claim is not an idle boast. It is a fact which cannot be controverted. Serious and impartial students of the question are all in agreement on this point, and so true is this that no scholar of repute would to-day dare risk his reputation by giving to the public the silly and groundless stories circulated concerning the Church in her relation to the Bible and the inferences the unwary draw therefrom. To prove that Luther and his followers had little or no reverence for the Bible, that they changed and falsified it, that they tampered with it, and deliberately mistranslated numerous passages to buttress the new religion of Protestantism, is a much easier task than to show that the Catholic Church was ever afraid of the Bible, that she ever tried to keep the Scriptures away from the people and that there ever was a time in her history when she was not most anxious to copy, print and put



editions of the Holy Book in the hands of the faithful.

That Luther did not discover and was not the first to give the Bible to the people in the latter's own language is easily proved.

Fr. Lucian Johnston, in an able review of Grisar's Work, says: "Luther as well as every other man of education of his day was accustomed to the Scriptures from his youth. Like thousands of others in any other schools, he was a regularly appointed professor of Scripture. It was precisely this position as teacher of Scripture in his monastery that gave the outlet to his peculiar views. Had the Bible been as unknown as the popular biography supposes, Luther might not have developed as he did along Scriptural lines. Here again Luther's maturer memory played him tricks. He fell back for excuses upon the supposed lack of Scriptures just as he did upon the presence of abuses, when, as a matter of fact, there is no evidence from his own earlier works to prove that these things exercised any material effect upon his early mental development."

"Luther's studies," according to McGiffert, a non-Catholic writer, in his biography of the Reformer published in 1912, "embraced the writings of the Church Fathers and particularly the Bible, to which he was becoming more and more attached. It was in his twentieth year, he tells us, that he first saw a complete copy of the Scriptures in the university library of Erfurt. He had hitherto supposed they embraced only the lessons read in the public services and was delighted to find much that was quite unfamiliar to him. His ignorance, it may be remarked, though not exceptional, was his own fault. The notion that Bible reading was frowned upon by the ecclesiastical authorities of the age is quite unfounded." The Scriptures "were read regularly in church and their study was no more prohibited to university students of that day than of this."

Professor Vedder of Crozer Theological Seminary, a non-Catholic author, in his work on the Reforma-



tion published in 1914, says: "The most recent writers are inclined to discredit the story of his (Luther's) finding the Bible—as inherently incredible. They point out the facts regarding the circulation of the Bible, both Latin and vernacular, and tell us that Luther must have taken great pains to keep himself in a state of ignorance, if he knew no more about the Bible than this anecdote implies." . . . "The real difficulty is not so much with the incident as with the inferences that have been drawn from it. Protestant writers have often seized on the occurrence as proof of the darkness of the times, of the indifference of the Church to the instruction of the people in the Scriptures and have by comparison exalted the work of the reformers in their translation and circulation of the Scriptures. What the incident actually proves is merely Luther's own personal ignorance. If he did not know that the passages which he had heard in church did not constitute the whole Bible, there were nevertheless in Germany many who did know this." (Vedder, pp. 5, 6.)

The notion that people before the Reformation did not possess the Scriptures and that Luther was the first to translate them into the common language of the country, is not only a mistake, but a stupid blunder. Every layman who has read history knows that the Church in the olden days translated the Scriptures from the Hebrew and Greek into Latin for the benefit of her children. Latin was not then a dead language and an unknown tongue. It was a common language among the educated and was known, spoken and written almost universally in Europe. In those days reading was a sign of a certain degree of scholarship and erudition and it would have been hard to have found any man capable of reading, who was not also capable of understanding Latin. The groundwork of all school learning was the knowledge of the Latin language. Dr. Peter Bayne, a Protestant, says in the *Literary World*, Oct., 1894: "Latin was then the language of all men of culture and to an extent prob-



ably far beyond what we at present realize, the common language of Europe: in those days tens of thousands of lads, many of them poor, studied at the universities and learned to talk Latin. The records of the proceedings in the courts of law were in those days in Latin and the wills of dying persons were commonly in the same tongue. As Latin was the prevailing language of the time, most people who knew it would certainly prefer to use the authorized Vulgate to any vernacular version."

The Rev. Charles Buck, a virulent Protestant, says: "Both old and new Testaments were translated into Latin by the primitive Christians: and while the Roman Empire subsisted in Europe, the reading of the Scriptures in the Latin tongue, which was the universal language of that Empire, prevailed everywhere." ("Bible" in *Theological Dictionary*, by Rev. Charles Buck.)

"No book," says *The Cambridge Modern History*, p. 639, "was more frequently republished than the Latin Vulgate, of which ninety-eight distinct and full editions appeared prior to 1500, besides twelve others which contained the *Glossa Ordinaria* or the Postils of Lyranus. From 1475, when the first Venetian issue is dated, twenty-two complete impressions have been found in the city of St. Mark alone. Half a dozen folio editions came forth before a single Latin classic had been printed. This Latin text, constantly produced or translated, was accessible to all scholars: it did not undergo a critical recension." In fact the Bible in its Latin dress, observes Mons. Vaughan, "was just as accessible to the people as it would have been if it had been in English. Neither more nor less. Lay this fact to heart, namely: Those who could read Latin could read the Bible and those who could not read Latin could not read anything."

Whilst the Vulgate was in general use we know that translations into the vernacular of the various peoples were also made and read. In Germany, not to mention Italy, France, Spain, Denmark, Holland, Norway,



Poland, Bavaria, Hungary and other countries, before the days of printing, we know that Raban Maur, born in Mantz in 776, translated the Old and New Testament into the Teutonic or old German tongue. Some time later, Valafrid Strabon made a new translation of the whole Bible. Huges of Fleury also translated the Scriptures into German and the monk Ottfried of Wissemburg rendered it into verse. In Germany prior to the issue of Luther's New Testament in 1522, no authority enumerates fewer than fourteen editions in High German and three in Low German. "Those in High German," says Vedder, "are apparently reprints of a single MS. version, of which two copies are still preserved, one in a monastery of Tepl, Bohemia, the other in the library of the University at Freiburg in the Breisgau. The former, known as the Codex Teplensis, has recently been printed and is accessible to all scholars." The library of the Paulist Fathers of New York City contains, at present, a copy of the ninth edition of a German Bible profusely illustrated with colored wood engravings and printed by A. Coburger at Nuremberg in 1483, the very year in which Luther was born. In the year 1892 the Protestant historian Wilhelm Walther published in Brunswick a book under the title, "The German Translation of the Bible in the Middle Ages," in which he proves that previous to the year 1521, before Luther ever thought of translating the Bible into the German language, there existed seventeen editions of the whole Bible in German, besides an almost countless number of German versions of the New Testament, the Psalms, and other parts of the Bible. He gives the following list of pre-Lutheran editions of the whole Bible in German, viz: Edition Mentel, Strassburg, A. D. 1466; edit. Eggenstein, Strassburg, 1470; edit. Pflanzmann, Augsburg, 1473; edit. Zainer, Augsburg, 1473; edit. Sorg, Augsburg, 1480; two editions of Koeln (Cologne) by Quentel, 1480; edit. Koburger, Nuernberg, 1483; edit. Grueninger, Strassburg, 1485; edit. Schoensperger, Augsburg, 1487; edit. Schoen-



sperger, Augsburg, 1490; edit. Arndes, Luebeck, 1494; edit. H. Otmar, Augsburg, 1507; the Swiss Bible, Basel, about 1474; edit. Zainer, Augsburg, 1477; and edit. S. Otmar, Augsburg, 1513.

The Protestant historian, Ludwig Hain, enumerates in his work, "Repertorium Bibliographicum," Stuttgart, 1826, ninety-eight editions of the whole Bible in Latin, which appeared in print before the year 1501.

Sixty copies of as many different editions of Latin and vernacular Bibles, all printed before 1503, were to be seen at the Caxton Exhibition in London, 1877; and seeing is believing. The *Church Times*, a Protestant journal, under date of July 26, 1878, writing of the list of Bibles in the catalogue of the Caxton Celebration, 1877, published by H. Stevens, says: "This Catalogue will be very useful for one thing at any rate, as disproving the popular lie about Luther *finding* the Bible for the first time at Erfurt about 1507. Not only are there very many editions of the Latin Vulgate long anterior to that time, but there were actually nine *German editions* of the Bible in the Caxton Exhibition earlier than 1483, the year of Luther's birth and at least three more before the end of the century." Mr. H. Stevens writes in the *Athenaeum* of October 6, 1883, p. 434: "By 1507 more than one hundred Latin Bibles had been printed, some of them small and cheap pocket editions. There had been besides *thirteen editions of a translation of the Vulgate into German*, and others into other modern languages. . . . Among the most interesting additions latest made (to the Grenville Library in the British Museum) is a nearly complete set of fourteen grand old pre-Luther German Bibles, 1460-1518, all in huge folios except the twelfth, which is in quarto form." These facts any student can verify by a visit to the British Museum, where most of the Bibles alluded to are to be seen.

The *Athenaeum* of December 22, 1883, contains an article on "The German Bible before Luther" in which it is shown that what Geffeken calls "the Ger-



man Vulgate" was in common use among the people long before Luther's time; that Luther had evidently the old Catholic German Bible of 1483 before him, when making his translation; and that consequently it is time we should hear no more of Luther as the first German Bible translator and of his translation as an independent work from the original Greek.

The Protestant Professor Lindsay in his partisan work on the Reformation published in Edinburgh in 1908 admits that "other translations of the Bible into the German language had been made long before Luther began his work." He says moreover: "It is a mistake to believe that the mediæval Church attempted to keep the Bible from the people."

Hallam, the non-Catholic historian, in his work on the "Middle Ages," chap. ix. part 2, says: "In the eighth and ninth centuries, when the Vulgate had ceased to be generally intelligible, there is no reason to suspect any intention in the Church to deprive the laity of the Scriptures. Translations were freely made into the vernacular languages, and, perhaps, read in churches. . . . Louis the Debonair is said to have caused a German version of the New Testament to be made. Otfrid, in the same century, rendered the Gospels, or, rather, abridged them, into German verse. This work is still extant."

The well-known Anglican writer, Dr. Blunt, in his "History of the Reformation" (Vol. I. pp. 501-502) tells us that "there has been much wild and foolish writing about the scarcity of the Bible in the ages preceding the Reformation. It has been taken for granted that the Holy Scripture was almost a sealed book until it was printed in English by Tyndale and Coverdale, and that the only source of knowledge respecting it before then was the translation made by Wyckliffe. The facts are. . . that all laymen who could read were, as a rule, provided with their Gospels, their Psalter, or other devotional portions of the Bible. Men did, in fact, take a vast amount of personal trouble with respect to the productions of the Holy



Scriptures; and accomplished by head, hand and heart what is now chiefly done by paid workmen and machinery. The clergy studied the Word of God and made it known to the laity; and those few among the laity who could read had abundant opportunity of reading the Bible either in Latin or English, up to the Reformation period."

Long before the art of printing was invented, about 1450, the monks, friars, clergy, and even the nuns of the Catholic Church spent their lives in making copies of the Bible in vellum, so that it might be preserved, multiplied and scattered far and wide for the benefit of all readers. Their labors in this direction were constant, unceasing, and tireless. Through their industry and perseverance in reproducing the Sacred pages from century to century every church and monastery and university was put in possession of copies of the Bible. The Bishops and Abbots of those days encouraged the work and were zealous propagators of the Scriptures. They required, moreover, all their priests to know, read, and study the Inspired Word. Councils like that of Toledo held in 835 issued decrees insisting that Bishops were bound to inquire throughout their dioceses whether the clergy were sufficiently instructed in the Bible. In some cases the clergy were obliged to know by heart not only the whole Psalter but, as under the rule of St. Pachomius, the New Testament as well. From time immemorial the Church always used a great portion of the Bible in the celebration of the Mass, in the Epistles and Gospels for 365 days of the year and in the Breviary which she enjoined her priests to recite daily.

The Sacred Scriptures were always a favorite subject of study among the clergy; and a popular occupation was the writing of commentaries upon them, as all priests are aware from having to recite a great many of them every day, ranging from the time of St. Leo the Great and St. Gregory down to St. Bernard and St. Anselm. The Scriptures besides were read regularly to the people and explained frequently



both in church and school, through sermons, instructions, and addresses, so that the faithful were steeped in, and permeated through and through with the inspired Word of God. Paintings and statuary and frescoes and stained glass windows were used in the churches to depict Biblical subjects and fix on the people's memories and understandings the doctrines of faith and the great events in God's dealings with His creatures since the beginning of the world. Through these and other means, all, from the king down to the humblest peasant, came to know and understand the great and saving truths of religion as found in the Bible. The Scriptures were made so familiar that the people could repeat considerable portions from memory, and their frequent reference thereto by way of passing allusion is considered now very puzzling to those who are unacquainted with the phraseology of the Vulgate. Their ideas seemed to fall naturally into the words of Scripture and the language of the Bible passed into the current tongue of the people.

One of the best evidences of the mediæval attitude and practise in the matter of Bible-reading is furnished in the "Imitation of Christ" by Thomas à Kempis, published about the year 1425. A Kempis, who was a monk in the archdiocese of Cologne, had himself made a *MS.* copy of the Bible. In the first book, chapter I, of the "Imitation," there are some useful directions about reading the Holy Scriptures:

"All Holy Scripture should be read in the spirit in which it was written. Our curiosity is often a hindrance to us in reading the Scriptures, when we wish to understand and to discuss, where we ought to pass on in simplicity. . . .If thou wilt derive profit, read with humility, with simplicity, with faith, and never wish to have the name of learning."

In the eleventh chapter of the fourth book he says: "I shall have moreover for my consolation and a mirror of life Thy Holy Books, and above all Thy Most Holy Body for my especial remedy and refuge.



. . . Whilst detained in the prison of this body I acknowledge that I need two things, food and light. Thou hast therefore given to me, weak as I am, Thy Sacred Body for the nourishment of my soul and body, and Thou hast set Thy word as a light to my feet. Without these two I could not live; for the word of God is the light of my soul and Thy Sacrament is the bread of life. These also may be called the two tables set on either side in the storehouse of Thy Holy Church."

"The mediæval mind, as here laid down in the greatest work of the Middle Ages, does not," as Desmond remarks, "seem to raise any questions as to whether it is wise to read the Bible or as to whether the Bible is difficult to procure. These matters are evidently not even contemplated as possible issues: on the contrary, the excellence of Scripture reading and its necessity as 'the light of the soul' are dwelt upon. Be it remembered, too, that this manual of A Kempis came at once into the hands of the laity as well as the clergy, for it went into the vernaculars of every nation in Europe only a few years after its first publication."

An enlightened Protestant writer, the Rev. Doctor Cutts, in a work published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, observes: "There is a good deal of popular misapprehension about the way in which the Bible was regarded in the Middle Ages. Some people think that it was very little read, even by the clergy: whereas the fact is that the sermons of the mediæval preachers are more full of Scripture quotations and allusions than any sermons in these days and the writers on other subjects are so full of Scriptural allusion that it is evident their minds were saturated with Scriptural diction, which they used as commonly and sometimes with as great an absence of good taste, as a Puritan of the Commonwealth."

The *Quarterly Review* for Oct., 1879, dealing with Goulburn's Life of Bp. Herbert de Losinga, says: "The notion that people in the Middle Ages did not read



their Bibles is probably exploded, except among the more ignorant of controversialists. But a glance at this volume is enough to show that the notion is not simply a mistake, that it is one of the most ludicrous and grotesque of blunders. If having the Bible at their finger's ends could have saved the Middle Ages teachers from abuses and false doctrine, they were certainly well-equipped. They were not merely accomplished textuaries. They had their minds as saturated with the language and associations of the Sacred Text as the Puritans of the seventeenth century."

Another Protestant writer, Dr. Maitland, in his valuable work "The Dark Ages," page 220, says: "To come, however, to the question, Did the people in the Dark Ages know anything of the Bible? Certainly, it was not as commonly known and as generally in the hands of men as it is now, and has been almost ever since the invention of printing—the reader must not suspect me of wishing to maintain any such absurd opinion; but I do think that there is sufficient evidence (1) that during that period the Scriptures were more accessible to those who could use them, (2) were, in fact, more used, and (3) by a greater number of persons, than some modern writers would lead us to suppose."

On page 470 the same author observes: "The writings of the Dark Ages are, if I may use the expression, made of the Scriptures. I do not merely mean that the writers constantly quoted the Scriptures, and appealed to them as authorities on all occasions, though they did this and it is a strong proof of their familiarity with them; but I mean that they thought and spoke and wrote the thoughts and words and phrases of the Bible, and that they did this constantly and habitually, as the natural mode of expressing themselves." And again, he says: "I have not found anything about the arts and engines of hostility, the blind hatred of half barbarian kings, the fanatical fury of their subjects, or the reckless antipathy of the Popes. . . . I know of nothing which should lead me to suspect that *any*



human craft or power was exercised to prevent the reading, the multiplication, the diffusion of the Word of God." (I. 6, pp. 220-1.)

Dr. Maitland in his work, p. 506, discounts the absurd story as told by D'Aubigné of Luther "discovering" a Bible for the first time when he was twenty years old. He says: "Before Luther was born the Bible had been printed in Rome, and the printers had the assurance to memorialize his Holiness, praying that he would help them off with some copies. It had been printed, too, at Naples, Florence, and Piacenza; and Venice alone had furnished eleven editions. No doubt, we should be within the truth if we were to say that beside the multitude of manuscript copies, not yet fallen into disuse, the press had issued fifty different editions of the whole Latin Bible, to say nothing of Psalters, New Testaments, or other parts. And yet, more than twenty years after, we find a young man who had received a 'very liberal education,' who 'had made great proficiency in his studies at Magdeburg, Eisenach, and Erfurt,' and who, nevertheless, did not know what a Bible was, simply because 'the Bible was unknown in those days.'

Proofs without number might easily be adduced to show that the Bible was known, read and distributed with the sanction and authority of the Church in the common language of the people from the seventh to the fourteenth century. Enough, however, have been given, and we hope these will carry some weight with intelligent and well disposed non-Catholics. The contention of the ignorant and bigoted who would have the simple and unlettered believe that Rome hated the Bible and did her best to keep it a locked and sealed book, is so utterly absurd and stupid that all honest and patient researches of distinguished scholars flatly and openly oppose it by accumulating evidence from the simplest facts of history. Instead of misrepresenting the Church, it would be more consistent with honor and truth to proclaim from the house-tops the debt all owe to the pious and



untiring labors of the monks and nuns and clergy of the Middle Ages who saved the written Word of God from extinction and without whose precious and distinguished services the world to-day would not rejoice in its possession. When will our dissenting brethren see things as they are? When will they be candid enough to read history aright? When will they, in the presence of the Church's jealous guardianship of the Bible from the beginning, rid themselves of the silly mouthings of anti-Catholic bigots in declaring that Luther was the very first to give his poor languishing countrymen the Bible in their own tongue, a book which as a student in Erfurt he knew was held in high esteem and which as a monk and priest he was obliged by rule to have known, studied and recited for years? To maintain that Luther knew and could not find any Bibles except the one he was supposed to discover as librarian of his convent, is to brand him as a liar. It is interesting now to recall what Zwingle, the Swiss Reformer, who made many false boasts for himself, once said to Luther: "You are unjust in putting forth the boastful claim of dragging the Bible from beneath the dusty benches of the schools. You forget that we have gained a knowledge of the Scriptures through the translations of others. You are very well aware, with all your blustering, that previously to your time there existed a host of scholars who, in Biblical knowledge and philological attainments, were incomparably your superiors." (Alzog. III, 49.)

The Catholic Church reigned supreme for more than fifteen hundred years before Luther introduced his special conception of the Bible. During this long period the Church had it in her power to do with the Bible what she pleased. Had she hated it she could easily have dragged into the light of day every copy then in existence, and were she so disposed could have destroyed and reduced all to ashes. But did she do this? The truth is that the Catholic Church, ruled by the Pope, instead of getting rid of the Bible,



saved, preserved, and guarded it all through the centuries from its institution and formation into one volume in 397 A. D., to the sixteenth century. All along she employed her clergy to multiply it in the Greek and Hebrew languages, and to translate it into Latin and the common tongues of every Christian nation that all might read and learn and know the Word of God. She and she alone, by her care and loving watchfulness, saved and protected it from total extinction and destruction. Where was Protestantism when the Roman Emperor Diocletian issued a decree to burn the churches and destroy the copies of the Scriptures? Where was Protestantism when the Huns, the Vandals, the Turks and Saracens invaded the Christian countries and threatened to wipe out every vestige of Christian culture and civilization? Protestantism began with Luther about the year 1520, some 1200 years after the promulgation of Emperor Diocletian's decree. Had the Catholic Church not carefully guarded, transcribed and preserved copies of the Bible in the olden days, there would have been nothing left for Luther or any others to translate.

The Catholic Church alone from the beginning defended the Blessed Word of her Divine Founder and her inspired writers. This fact is entirely ignored in the mendacious chatter of ranting spouters and ignorant writers whose tongues and pens are steeped in gall and vinegar when they deal with matters Catholic. In spite of modern education and the findings of history, this particular class from bigoted motives continue to impose on their dupes and insist without warrant that the Church and her rulers made war, long and persistent, upon the Bible, and that, were it not for "the Founder of Protestantism," the good Book would still be chained to church and monastery walls as directories are seen to-day in hotels and other public places. Of course, Martin Luther must be glorified for his supposed achievement. He translated the Bible or what pretended to be the Bible. His mutilation of the Holy Book and the amputation of



several of its members make little or no difference to his admirers. It was a great work, one of the chief and most important labors of his life, and according to them deserves a distinguished place on the roll of immortal achievements. With this and similar inaccuracies and misstatements, they forthwith hail him as "the hero of the Bible." The title pleases the multitude and fascinates all who are ignorant of the facts. It is amazing how easily most of the people are most of the time deceived. To tell these benighted souls that Luther was not "the hero of the Bible" would astonish, alarm and shock. The truth is, however, he has no claim to such honorable distinction, for, as every scholar knows, he docked and amended and added to the Bible, as he would, so that he made the Word of God become the word of man by making it the word of Dr. Luther. He sacrificed accuracy and mistranslated the Bible with deliberate purport and intention, in order to fit it to his false theories, and to make it serve to buttress his heresies. His "evangelical preaching," denouncing the time-honored spiritual order, abolition of ecclesiastical science and the rejection of the sacraments, required a substitute for the "undefiled Word of God." He produced the needed substitute in his false and mutilated version, and for the sacrilegious achievement his followers call him a "hero." All the heroes of the Bible we know of were never guilty of the liberties he took with the Word of God. They revered and respected every word and thought of the Bible. They neither took from nor added thereto—as was befitting God's message to mankind. To call Luther's version, which is a monstrous forgery, the Word of God is nothing less than criminal and blasphemous.

Luther began his version of the Scriptures in German during his residence at the Wartburg. He had just been ordered by Charles V., who saw it was impossible to convince him of his errors, to leave Worms under an imperial safeguard. After going some distance from Worms, the imperial protector



was dismissed and then, according to a previous arrangement, a party of friends, not a band of hostile armed men, as is ignorantly told, appeared upon the scene, took him from his wagon, mounted him on a horse and conducted him in the silence of the night to the ancient and historic castle of Wartburg. To ensure his incognito in this place selected for his retirement, he put aside his monk's habit, donned the dress of a country gentleman, allowed his hair and beard to grow and was introduced to those about not as Martin Luther, but as Squire George. This was the second time he changed his name. The first time as we have seen, was about 1512, long after he entered the University of Erfurt, where he was enrolled among the students not as Luther but as Lüder, by which name his family was known in the community from time immemorial. The change was perhaps pardonable, for Lüder has a vile signification, conveying the idea of "carrion," "beast," "low scoundrel." The second assumed name, Squire George, was a decided improvement on Lüder.

The Castle of Wartburg, where Luther spent ten months in retirement, unknown except to some friends who were in the secret, was full of historic and inspiring memories. It was once the residence of the gentle and amiable St. Elizabeth and was on this account suggestive of the holiest recollections. To live within such precincts might be considered a privilege and one well calculated to stimulate to holiness and sanctity of behavior. The place, however, was little to the liking of the so-called "courageous apostle," who was designedly seized upon by pre-arrangement with the Elector of Saxony and who was constantly protected by his friends whilst disguised as a country magnate under the assumed name of Squire George. He would have much preferred to be out in the open to continue his revolutionary movement publicly and among the masses, but his intimates decreed he should remain in solitude in the hope that the storm which his wild teachings provoked might after a while



blow over. His stay in the Wartburg from May, 1521, to March, 1522, was, according to his own account, a time of idleness, despair and temptation. Remorse of conscience tormented him. "It is a dangerous thing," he says, "to change all spiritual and human order against common sense." (De Wette 2.2 10 q.) On November 25th, 1521, he wrote to the Augustinians in Wittenberg: "With how much pain and labor did I scarcely justify my conscience that I alone should proceed against the Pope, hold him for Antichrist and the bishops for his apostles. How often did my heart punish me and reproach me with this strong argument: 'Art thou alone wise?' Could all the others err and have erred for a long time? How if thou errest and leadest into error so many people who would all be damned forever?" (De Wette 2-107.) He often tried to rid himself of these anxieties, but they always returned. Even in his old age, a voice within, which he believed to be the voice of the devil, asked him if he were called to preach the Gospel in such a manner "as for many centuries no bishop or saint had dared to do." (Sammtliche Werke, 59, 286: 60. 6. 45.) Not only was he tormented by remorse of conscience in regard to his revolutionary work but he was sorely tried by the devil whom he thought he saw in every shape and form. Writing to his personal friend, Nicholas Gerbel, he says: "You can believe that I am exposed to a thousand devils in this indolent place." He told another friend, Myconius, that in the Castle of Wartburg, "the devil in the form of a dog came twice to kill him." (Myconius, Hist. Reform. 42.) "Throughout life," Vedder remarks, "he was accustomed to refer whatever displeased or vexed him or seemed to hinder his work to the direct agency of the devil, in whom he believed with rather more energy than he believed in God. So now, instead of blaming his mode of life and changing it, he ascribes all his troubles to Satan. He even seems to have imagined that he had personal interviews with the devil." (Vedder p. 169.) From his hiding place



he writes to Melanchthon, who of course was in the secret of his retreat, to inform him of his doings and says: "It is now eight days that I neither write anything nor pray, nor study, partly by reason of temptations of the flesh, partly because vexed by other cares. I sit here in idleness and pray, alas! little, and sigh not for the Church of God. Much more am I consumed by the fires of my unbridled flesh. In a word, I who should burn of the spirit, am consumed by the flesh and by lasciviousness." (De Wette, 2:22.) His was a most lamentable state whilst confined at the Wartburg. No wonder he produced a Bible full of malicious translations. A victim of fleshly lust and one in constant contact with Satan could hardly be expected to treat the undefiled Word of God with reverence. What reliance can be placed in a translation of the Bible made under such unfavorable circumstances?

Luther, in a letter to his friend Lange, dated December 18, 1521, announces his intention to translate the New Testament into German. On March 30, 1522, he writes to Spalatin, another friend, to tell that he has completed the work and placed it in the care of a few intimates for inspection. This leaves little more than ten weeks for the completion of what he hoped would "prove a worthy work." After some revision, the translation was ready for the press and given to the public September 22, 1522. The whole work was done in great haste and as might be expected suffered in consequence. The faults and imperfections everywhere in evidence are numerous and unpardonable. The rapidity with which the work was produced by both author and publisher borders on the marvelous. "It would be difficult," observes Vedder, "to believe that a complete translation would have been made by a man of Luther's limited attainments in Greek and with the imperfect apparatus that he possessed in the short space of ten weeks. . . . Any minister to-day who has had the Greek course of a college and seminary, is a far better scholar than Luther. Let such a man, if he thinks Luther's achieve-



ment possible, attempt the accurate translation of a single chapter of the New Testament—such a translation as he would be willing to print under his own name—and multiply the time consumed by the two hundred and sixty pages. He will be speedily convinced that the feat attributed to Luther is an impossible one. What then? Is the whole story false? That too is impossible—the main facts are too well attested. The solution of an apparently insoluble contradiction is a very simple one: Luther did not make an independent translation: he never claimed that he did: none of his contemporaries made the claim for him. It is only his later admirers who have made this statement to enhance his glory, just as they have unduly exaggerated for the same purpose the paucity of the Scriptures and the popular ignorance of them before Luther's day. We now know that both these assertions are untrue to historic fact and have misled many unwary persons into inferences far indeed from the truth. The two assertions are so intimately connected that in showing either to be unfounded the other is also and necessarily controverted." (Vedder, p. 170.)

The same Protestant Professor tells us that "the version, Codex Teplensis, was certainly in the possession of Luther and was as certainly used by him in the preparation of his translation. This fact, once entirely unsuspected and then hotly denied, has been proved by the 'deadly parallel.' It appears by a verse by verse comparison that this old German Bible was in fact so industriously used by Luther, that the only accurate description of Luther's version is to call it a careful revision of the older text. . . . He had a better text than had been available to former translators. . . . The old German Bible had been translated from the Vulgate and had followed it slavishly. Luther proposed to use the original Greek and Hebrew Scriptures as the basis of his work. For the New Testament he had the second Basel edition, 1519, of Erasmus, in which many of the misprints of the first edi-



tion had been corrected. He did not fail to consult the Vulgate and sometimes followed that version, which in some passages was made from an older text than that of Erasmus."

When Luther finished the translation of the New Testament, he, with the assistance of many friends such as Melanchthon, Spalatin, Sturtz, Brughenhagen, Cruciger, Justin Jonas and others, undertook the completion of the entire Bible, which was published in German in 1534. This work, which occupied so many years, was not entirely to his liking. It needed to be altered still more and fitted more exactly to suit his new teachings and more especially his main doctrine, that nothing could be required to be believed that is not explicitly laid down in the Bible. It never occurred to him that this much cherished dogma, if accepted, must be rejected, for it is not itself explicitly laid down anywhere in the Bible. This inconsistency did not, however, trouble him. Intent only on urging his false views, he never stopped in his work but went on changing and altering the original translation until his death. No fewer than five editions of the complete work were issued during his lifetime. After 1545, when the final text was published, numerous unauthorized reprints, abounding in more changes, were given to the public, so that, as Vedder says, "a critical recension finally became necessary. This was accomplished about 1700 by the Canstein Bible Institute, and that edition became the *textus receptus* of the German Bible, until its recent revision by a committee of distinguished German scholars. This revision is now published at the Francke Orphanage, Halle, and is rapidly superseding the original 'Luther Bible.'" We wonder were poor Luther alive to-day what epithet the master of vituperation would fling at the "distinguished German scholars" who had the boldness to give their revision and not his Bible to the world.

Luther's translation was genuinely German in style and spirit. He wanted to make it thoroughly German



and to make the sacred authors read as though they had been written in German. In this he had no little difficulty. "Great God," he writes, "what a labor to employ force to make the Hebrew poets express themselves in German." To attain his end he often sacrificed accuracy and "allowed himself," as McGiffert says, "many liberties with the text, to the great scandal of his critics." He boasted that his version was better as a translation than the Vulgate or Septuagint. The earlier translations were faithful to a nicety and much more literally correct, but their German, being in a formative state, was harsh and crude and occasionally somewhat obscure." At that time dialects were many and various, so that people living only a short distance apart could scarcely understand one another. Though Luther did not create the German language he labored in conjunction with the Saxon Chancery to reform, modify, and enrich it. His efforts were not without results. He had a large, full and flexible vocabulary which he used with force in his translation, where is displayed the whole wealth, power and beauty of the German language. He wished to make his Bible really a German book and understood by all alike. He did not want the people, as he said, "to get their German from the Latin as these asses," alluding to his predecessors, "do." He gave them German, simple, idiomatic, racy, colloquial, classical, and as his Bible sold for a trifle, it was purchased by many, read widely and exercised a decided influence in giving the whole country a common tongue. We cannot deny that his translation surpasses those which had been published before him in the perfection of language, but while we admit this, we cannot but regret that he failed with all his beauty of diction to give what his predecessors valued more than all else, a correct, faithful and true rendition of "the undefiled Word of God." His work is praised as the first classic of German literature, but the distinction can never blind the scholar to its many and serious imperfections and faults and its arbitrary addi-



tions and changes maliciously introduced to favor his individual and fanciful teachings as against those of the Church sacredly held and constantly adhered to from the beginning of Christianity.

Jerome Emser, a learned doctor of Leipsic, made a critical examination of Luther's translation when it first appeared and detected no less than a thousand glaring faults. He was the first who undertook to show the falseness of the translation and to correct its errors; he published a very faithful version, in which all the passages that had been falsified in the other may be easily seen. Luther did not like this exposure of his work by his learned antagonist and the only reply he made was to launch out his usual volley of insulting and abusive epithets. "These popish asses," said he, "are not able to appreciate my labors." (Sackendorf, *Comm. L. I. sect. 52.*) Yet even Sackendorf gives us to understand that, in his cooler moments, the reformer availed himself of Emser's corrections and made many further changes in his version.

Martin Bucer, a brother Reformer, says that Luther's "falls in translating and explaining the Scriptures were manifest and not a few." (Bucer, *Dial. contra Melanchthon.*) Zwingle, another leading Reformer, after examining his translation, openly pronounced it "a corruption of the Word of God." (*Amicable Discussion, Trevern, I, 129—note.*) Hallam says: "The translation of the Old and the New Testament by Luther is more renowned for the purity of its German idiom than for its adherence to the original text. Simon has charged him with ignorance of Hebrew; and when we consider how late he came to the knowledge of that or the Greek language, it may be believed that his acquaintance with them was far from extensive." (Hallam, *Historical Literature I. 201.*) "It has been as ill-spoken of among Calvinists as by the Catholics themselves" (Note *ibid*). It is now, as might be expected, grown almost obsolete, even in Germany itself. It is viewed as faulty and insufficient in many



respects. In 1836, many Lutheran consistories called for its entire revision.

The errors in Luther's version were not those of ignorance, but were a wilful perversion of the Scriptures to suit his own views. A few examples will suffice to prove our contention. In St. Matthew III, 2, he renders the word, "repent, or do penance," by the expression "mend, or do better."

Acts XIX, 18, "Many of them that believed came confessing and declaring their deeds." Lest this should confirm the practice of confession, he refers the *deeds* to the apostles, and renders "they acknowledge the miracles of the apostles." These errors were afterwards corrected by his followers. The expression "full of grace" in the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin, he renders "Thou gracious one." Romans IV, 15; "the law worketh wrath," he translates, "the law worketh *only* wrath," thus adding a word to the text and changing its sense.

Romans III, 28, "We account a man to be justified by faith without the works of the law" he renders by the interpolating of a word, "We hold that a man is justified without works of the law by faith *alone*." His answer to Emser's exposition of his perversion of the text was: "If your Papist annoys you with the word (*alone*), tell him straightway: Dr. Martin Luther will have it so: Papist and ass are one and the same thing. Whoever will not have my translation, let him give it the go-by: the devil's thanks to him who censures it without my will and knowledge. Luther will have it so and he is a doctor above all the doctors in Popedom." (Amic. Discussion I, 127.) Thus Luther defends his perversion of Scripture and makes himself the supreme judge of the Bible. His work, faulty and erroneous, places the true Lutheran in a serious dilemma. He needs the Bible for his salvation and yet he cannot be sure that Luther has given him a version possessing any binding force.

Luther translated and altered the Sacred Word by the freedom of his opinions. His irreverent work



did not stop here. As he rejected the authority of the teaching Church, he had no guide but his own whim and took upon himself to expunge from the canon of Inspired Writings those of the Old Testament, known as deuterocanonical books, although they had always been received by the Oriental churches and especially by those who occupied the Holy Land, and who, consequently, had preserved the books continuously. In his prefaces to these books he gives at length his opinion as to their character and authority. The result was that they were published as "Apocrypha," or books profitable for pious reading, but no part of the Sacred Text, because not inspired by the Holy Ghost. The catalogue in the edition of 1534 gives as "Apocrypha," Judith, Wisdom, Tobias, Ecclesiasticus, the two books of Maccabees, parts of Esther, parts of Daniel and the prayer of Manasses.

But even for the books he chose to retain, he showed little or no respect. Here are some examples of his judgments on them. Of the Pentateuch he says: "We have no wish either to see or hear Moses." "Judith is a good, serious, brave tragedy." "Tobias is an elegant, pleasing, godly comedy." "Ecclesiasticus is a profitable book for an ordinary man." "Of very little worth is the book of Baruch, whoever the worthy Baruch may be." "Esdras I would not translate, because there is nothing in it which you might not find better in Aesop." "Job spoke not as it stands written in his book; but only had such thoughts. It is merely the argument of a fable. It is probable that Solomon wrote and made this book." "The book entitled 'Ecclesiastes' ought to have been more complete. There is too much incoherent matter in it. It has neither boots nor spurs; but rides only in socks as I myself did when an inmate of the cloister. Solomon did not, therefore, write this book, which was made in the days of the Maccabees of Sirach. It is like a Talmud, compiled from many books, perhaps in Egypt at the desire of King Evergetes." "The book of Esther I toss into the Elbe. I am such an



enemy to the book of Esther that I wish it did not exist, for it Judaizes too much and has in it a great deal of heathenish naughtiness." "The history of Jonah is so monstrous that it is absolutely incredible." "The first book of the Maccabees might have been taken into the Scriptures, but the second is rightly cast out, though there is some good in it."

The books of the New Testament fared no better. He rejected from the Canon the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistle of St. James, the Epistle of St. Jude and the Apocalypse. These he placed at the end of his translation, after the others which he called "the true and certain capital books of the New Testament." He says: "The first three (Gospels) speak of the works of Our Lord rather than of his oral teachings: that of St. John is the only sympathetic, the only true Gospel and should be undoubtedly preferred to the others. In like manner the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Paul are superior to the first three Gospels." The Epistle to the Hebrews did not suit him. "It need not surprise one to find here," he says, "bits of wood, hay and straw." The Epistle of St. James, Luther denounced as "an epistle of straw." "I do not hold it," he said, "to be his writing, and I cannot place it among the capital books." He did this because it proclaimed the necessity of good works contrary to his heresy. "There are many things objectionable in this book," he says of the Apocalypse; "to my mind it bears upon it no marks of an apostolic or prophetic character. . . . Every one may form his own judgment of this book; as for myself, I feel an aversion to it, and to me this is sufficient reason for rejecting it." (*Sammtliche Werke*, 63, 169-170.) At the present day and for a long time previously, the Lutherans, ashamed of these excesses, have replaced the two Epistles and the Apocalypse in the Canon of the Sacred Scriptures.

Luther declared time and again that he looked upon the Bible "as if God himself spoke therein." "Yet," as Gigot says, "inconsistently with this statement, he



freely charges the sacred writers with inaccurate statements, unsound reasonings, the use of imperfect materials and even urges the authority of Christ against that of Holy Writ." In a word, as is admitted by a recent Protestant writer: "Luther has no fixed theory of inspiration: if all his works suppose the inspiration of the Sacred Writings, all his conduct shows that he makes himself the supreme judge of it." (Rabaud, p. 42.) His pride was intense. He conceived himself directly illuminated by the Holy Ghost and second only to the Godhead. In this spirit of arrogance and blasphemy, he did as he willed with the Sacred Volume, which had been handed down through the centuries in integrity, truth, and authority. The old and accepted Bible he knew in his professorial days was an awkward book for him, when in the period of his religious vertigo he rebelled against the Church which had preserved, guarded and protected it during the previous fifteen hundred years. It went straight against his heresies and he would not have it as it had been handed down in integrity and completeness. He twisted, distorted, and mutilated it. He changed it, added to and took from it, to make it fit his newly found teaching. He feels abundantly competent, by his own interior and spiritual instinct, to pronounce dogmatically which books in the Canon of Scripture are inspired and which are not. Nothing embarrasses him. To make his Testament more Lutheran, though less Scriptural, was his object. Reverent scholars decried his arbitrary handling of the Sacred Volume. He, however, cared little for their protests. In his usual characteristic raving, he cries out:—"Papists and asses are synonymous terms." ...He will have his changes in the sacred text right or wrong. "Here one must yield not a nail's breadth to any, neither to the angels of Heaven, nor to the gates of Hell, nor to St. Paul, nor to a hundred Emperors, nor to a thousand Popes, nor to the whole world; and this be my watchword and sign:—*tessera et symbolum.*"

The Inspired Word of God was nothing to Luther



when it could not be made to square with Lutheranism. He is prepared to assume the whole responsibility for the changes he made and believes he has the faculty of judging the Bible without danger of error. He believes he is infallible. "My word," says he, in an exhortation to his followers, "is the word of Christ: my mouth is the mouth of Christ." And to prove this, he indulges in a prophecy: he proclaims that "if his Gospel is preached but for two years, then, Pope, bishops, cardinals, priests, monks, nuns, bells, bell-towers, masses—rules, statues and all the vermin and riff-raff of the Papal government, will have vanished like smoke." Luther with all this flourish of trumpets proved himself a false prophet. The Church that he thought would "vanish like smoke" is still in existence and now as ever cries out in the words of her Founder: "There will rise up false Christs and false prophets and they shall show signs and wonders to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. Take ye heed, therefore: behold I have foretold you all things." St. Mark XIII, 22, 23.

Not only did Luther knowingly make additions to the text and expunge from the Canon some of the Inspired Books, but, he distorted the meaning of several passages by interpretations that were erroneous and nothing short of blasphemous. He even went so far as to accuse the Divine Author of *playful mendacity*, of *irony*, when no other sense of the Inspired Words would suit the Lutheran cause. "This champion of *free inquiry*," says Alzog, the historian, "was obliged to go whither the logical deductions of his system would lead him: and he did not halt at difficulties. There were Scripture texts plainly against his theory of the inherent slavery of the human will: but even these he set aside by an *ipse dixit*, distorting them from their natural sense and obvious meaning, by blasphemously asserting that God in inspiring the passages in question, was *playfully mendacious*, secretly meaning just the reverse of what He openly revealed; and that the Apostles, when speak-



ing of the human will and actions, gave way to an impulse of unseemly levity and used words in an ironical sense." (Alzog. Vol. III, p. 227.)

"To do," said Luther, "means to *believe*—to keep the law by *faith*. The passage in Matthew: Do this and thou shalt live, signifies *Believe this* and thou shalt live. The words, *Do this* have an ironical sense, as if our Lord should say: Thou wilt do it to-morrow, but not to-day; only make an attempt to keep the commandments, and the trial will teach thee the ignominy of thy failure."

This illustration, one out of many, shows Luther's unscrupulous method of distorting the plain and evident meaning of the Inspired Word of God. What he did with this text, he did with hundreds of others. In the most reckless and unblushing manner this self-appointed expositor twisted backwards and forwards the Sacred Word at will to force it to conform to his special whims and fancies. When he had shorn the Bible of its proportions and changed it in the direction of his new religious theories, he had the daring and boldness to call his work the work of God. Like all other heretics he made himself an infallible authority, and as such insisted that his special version be received as the work of God. He knew full well that he had mutilated, distorted, and perverted the Bible, but what cared he when, in his folly, he wanted his word to be taken for the Word of God. His new religious system was formulated and based exclusively on the Scriptures, not however on the Scriptures known to the world for so many centuries before, but the Scriptures as translated, interpreted and understood by the "Founder of Lutheranism."

This travesty of the Divine Revelation, falsified in most of its lines and stripped of its Divine character, he gave to the people on his own authority to be henceforward their sole means of salvation and their guide in judging for themselves in all matters of faith. To spite the authority of the Church and advance his destructive theories, he constituted everybody, man



or woman, young or old, learned or unlearned, wise or foolish, absolute judges of the meaning of the Bible. This arbitrary act pleased the unthinking multitudes, who now with lamentable folly began like himself to reject the authority of the Church established by God and to substitute therefor the authority of man, human, fallible, blasphemous and bent on the destruction of the Christian Creed and of Divine faith. Through the fluctuations of passion and the inconsistencies of the human intellect, divisions and parties and sects began to abound on all sides as a result of widely different interpretations until the Inspired Word of God, made the text-book of party strife, lost all its Divine character and sank to the level of the human mind.

The work begun by Luther was followed up with ardor by those whom he led into rebellion against the Church. Beza, Zwingle, Calvin and a host of other malcontents claimed the same power and authority as Luther, to be supreme judges of the interpretation and meaning of the Scriptures. In their hands the Bible, without note or comment, without an infallible voice to which men may listen, became the fruitful source of disunion, the foundation of enormous and conflicting errors, and the destroyer one by one of nearly all the principal truths of revealed religion. It is really painful to read the lamentations of the Protestant writers of those days over the utter and inextricable confusion in which nearly every doctrinal subject had been involved by the disputes and contentions consequent upon the introduction of the individual interpretation of the Bible. "So great" writes the learned Christopher Fischer, superintendent of Smalkald, "are the corruptions, falsifications and scandalous contentions, which, like a fearful deluge, overspread the land, and afflict, disturb, mislead and perplex poor, simple, common men not deeply read in Scriptures, that one is completely bewildered as to what side is right and to which he should give his adhesion." An equally unimpeachable witness of the



same period admits that "so great, on the part of most people, is the contempt of religion, the neglect of piety and the trampling down of virtue, that they would seem not to be Christians, nothing but downright savage barbarians."

Luther sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind. He saw the miseries of the distracted Reformation he brought into life and was plunged into the deepest despair. Losing all control of himself, he would at times berate with severest, even unbecoming language, all who dared to put into practice the principle of private judgment. In one of his frequent exhibitions of temper he cried out: "How many doctors have I made by preaching and writing! Now they say, Be off with you. Go off with you. Go to the devil. Thus it must be. When we preach they laugh. . . . When we get angry and threaten them, they mock us, snap their fingers at us and laugh in their sleeves." (Walch VII. 2,10.) What other treatment could he expect? He taught them to decide for themselves the meaning of the Bible, and as his teaching led to the creation of as many creeds as there were individuals, he had none to blame but himself. According to his own principle the opinions of any of the rabble were as good as his in finding out their faith and in the interpretation of the Scripture. When he did away with Divine authority and rejected a Divine witness in dealing with the Bible, it ill became him to lecture his own children for imitating his example.

"There is no smearer," he said, "but when he has heard a sermon or can read a chapter in German, makes a doctor of himself and crowns his ass and convinces himself that he knows everything better than all who teach him." (Walch V. 1652.) "When we have heard or learned a few things about Holy Scripture, we think we are already doctors and have swallowed the Holy Ghost, feathers and all." (Walch V. 472.) Mark how this erratic man speaks of the third person of the Blessed and Adorable Trinity. Will the Bible Christian approve the blasphemous language?



Does this show his mouth was the mouth of Christ? We will not wait for an answer as we would learn more from Luther concerning the failure of his cherished teaching. "This one," he says, "will not hear of baptism, that one denies the sacrament, another puts a world between this and the last day: some teach that Christ is not God, some say this, some say that: there are about as many sects and creeds as there are heads. No yokel is so rude, but when he has dreams and fancies, he thinks himself inspired by the Holy Ghost and must be a prophet." (De Wette III, 61.) Seeing his power and authority to control the masses gone, he now in a spirit of disappointment sarcastically remarks: "Noblemen, townsmen, peasants, all classes understand the Evangelium *better than I or St. Paul*; they are now wise and think themselves more learned than all the ministers." (Walch XIV, 1560.) Thus Luther himself testifies to the utter failure of the cardinal principle of his so-called Reformation.

As early as 1523, when Carl von Bodmann heard that Luther declared the Bible's authority is to be recognized as far only as it agrees with one's "spirit," he asked the very pertinent question: "What will be the consequences of the Reformer's principle about the interpretation and value of the Sacred Scriptures? He rejects this book and that as not apostolic, as spurious, because it does not agree with his spirit. Other people will reject other books for the same reasons and finally they will not believe in the Bible at all and will treat like any profane book."

Von Bodmann's words seemed to have in them the ring of prophecy. The outlook for the honor, dignity and authority of the Bible among the followers of the Reformer was indeed gloomy. Luther saw the injurious results of his principle of private interpretation. Depressed by the thoughts of what the future would unfold, he said to Melancthon one day whilst at table: "There will be the greatest confusion. Nobody will allow himself to be led by another man's doctrine or authority. Everybody will be his own



rabbi: hence the greatest scandals." (Lauterb. 91.) Just so. He opened the floodgates of infidelity and nothing but ruin and disaster to countless souls might be expected in consequence.

Luther's system contained in itself the germs of infidelity and paved the way for the Rationalists who in Germany, hardly surpass their master. Every one knows what the general influence of the Reformation on Biblical studies in Germany has been. The Rationalism which it generated prevails still to an alarming extent throughout almost the whole of the first theatre of Protestantism and is daily working havoc amongst all classes. "This system," as Spalding says, "which is little better than downright Deism, has frittered away the very substance of Christianity. The inspiration of the Bible itself, the integrity of its canon, the truth of its numerous and clearly attested miracles, the Divinity and even the resurrection of Christ and the existence of grace, and everything supernatural in religion have all fallen before the Juggernaut-car like of modern German Protestant *exegesis* or system of interpretation. The Rationalists of Germany have left nothing of Christianity, scarcely even its lifeless skeleton. They boldly and unblushingly proclaim their infidel principles through the press, from the professor's chair and from the pulpit. And the most learned and distinguished among the present German Protestant clergy have openly embraced this infidel system. Whoever doubts the entire accuracy of this picture of modern German Protestantism, needs only open the works of Semmler, Damon, Paulus, Strauss, Eichorn, Michaelis, Teuerbach, Bretschneider, Woltman, and others."

The following extract from the sermons of the Rev. Dr. Rose, a learned divine of the Church of England, presents a graphic sketch of these German Rationalists: "They are bound by no law, but their own fancies; some are more and some are less extravagant; but I do them no injustice after this declaration in saying, that the general inclination and tendency of their



opinions (more or less forcibly acted on) is this: That in the New Testament, we shall find only the *opinions* of Christ and the Apostles adapted to the age in which they lived, and not eternal truths: that Christ Himself had neither the design nor the power of teaching any system which was to endure; that when He taught any enduring truth, as He occasionally did, it was without being aware of its nature; that the Apostles understood still less of real religion; that the whole doctrine both of Christ and the Apostles, as it was directed to the Jews alone, so it was gathered from no other source than the Jewish philosophy; that Christ Himself erred (!) and His Apostles spread His errors, and that consequently not one of His doctrines is to be received on their authority; but that, without regard to the authority of the books of Scripture and their asserted Divine origin, each doctrine is to be examined according to the principles of right reason, before it is allowed to be Divine."

Since these words were written some forty or more years ago the Higher Critics have multiplied to an alarming extent and the boldness of the extravagancies in which they constantly indulge in regard to the treatment of the Inspired Word is a scandal to all lovers of the Bible. The Scriptures in their estimation are no more sacred than any other writings. They not only subject them to the most unreasoning criticism but strive by every means known to erratic and unscientific minds to question their inspiration, undermine their authority and underestimate their saving teachings. Too proud to "stand in the old paths" designated by Mother Church, they take to the "new one struck out by Luther" and with *private judgment* for guide and under the guise of liberty of thought, they attack the "open Bible," now exposed to the vagaries, passions and humors of individual readers, and not only abuse but despoil and strip it of its ancient beauty, sacredness and authority. How could an "open Bible," with a perception of it hermetically sealed, and an erring "private judgment" meet with other than de-



struction and lead to "perdition?" as St. Peter declares. From a book of life, they make it a book of death. They vaunt their zeal for it only to compass in its rejection.

As we recall the extraordinary and almost incredible developments of the principle of private judgment, which supports a hundred contradictory systems of religion, we are forcibly reminded of what St. Paul writes of the ancient philosophers, that they "became vain in their thoughts" and "thinking themselves wise became fools." The sad aberrations of the so-called learned bibliomaniacs of the various countries furnish palpable evidence of the necessity of a Divinely appointed guide in religious matters.

The Bible manifestly contains and teaches but one religion. Truth is but one. There is but one revelation and, therefore, but one true interpretation of that volume which is its record. The Catholic Church, which existed before the Bible, which made the Bible, which selected the books and settled and closed the Canon of Holy Scriptures, has alone in her possession the key to the true meaning of the Sacred Oracles of which she was the guardian in all ages and under all circumstances. The same Holy Spirit which founded the Church and inspired the Scriptures, made her the authorized interpreter of the Divine Word and the same Holy Spirit, as He promised, has ever abided in her to guard and protect from all possibility of error in penetrating and expounding the book of life and salvation. God could not do less than safeguard His work. He would not have His children "tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, in the wickedness of men, in craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive." Ephes. IV., 14. God therefore established the Church to be a witness to His revelation. He made her the external and infallible authority to declare that the Bible is His Word and is inspired by Him. With the Church the Bible is a book of life. Her infallible interpretation guarantees unhesitating certainty in all matters



of faith and morals, that peace and not dissension, certainty and not confusion, unity and not division may prevail amongst men of good will. Without this Church there is no witness to the revelation or redemption of Christ and no other Divinely constituted teacher of the Word of God.

To-day there are outside the Catholic Church numbers of good, plain, intelligent men who love Divine truth and are anxious to know it as it was announced in the beginning by the Master in all fullness and perfection. They love the Bible, but have grown tired of being tossed about by every wind of doctrine as set in motion by any new fledged divine with a superficial education who imagines that he has received a call from heaven to inaugurate a new religion. They know that in the Scriptures there "are some things hard to understand," "that many wrest them to their own perdition" and that they do not contain all the truths necessary for salvation. They feel that the Scriptures *alone* cannot be a sufficient guide and rule of faith, because they cannot, at any time, be within the reach of every inquirer. They know it is impossible for any one to learn his faith from the Bible alone. The feeling grows on them that their edition of the Bible has been mutilated, that it has been tampered with, that it has rejected what the Holy Ghost has dictated, that it has deliberately cut out what God had put in. Then they recall the solemn warning contained in the closing words of the Apocalypse: "If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life and out of the Holy City and from these things that are written in this book." The arbitrary act of the reformers in changing the Word of God fills them, as well it might, with horror and distrust. They must not, however, be discouraged. They must learn to put aside their old time prejudices and arouse their perceptions to see that what they call "the Church of Rome," which they were taught hated the Bible, is indeed the Church of



Jesus of Nazareth and holds sacred and uncorrupted every verse of the Gospel. They must be taught that all who would know God, and who would learn what God is, in all His beauty and His truth, must know Him in His Incarnate Son and humbly follow the solemn command "to hear the Church," which He made "the pillar and ground of truth," under the awful penalty of being reckoned "with heathens and publicans."

Once this Voice is recognized, as right reason and faith demand, men of good-will, earnest and sincere, will become filled with the sure knowledge of God and His revelation, as it is in Christ and His Church, and peace shall possess their souls. They will return to the Church of their fathers whence they were beguiled by the false teachings of unscrupulous and crafty men, and discover that whilst she fearlessly leaves the whole Scriptures as they were given her in the beginning in their original, untouched majesty, yet she pours upon them a full stream of light which draws out into life and beauty and salvation their minutest shades of meaning—a light which they have sought in vain to draw from Luther and his erroneous principles of Biblical interpretation.

