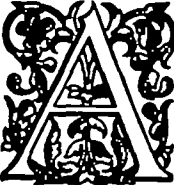


ALBRECHT PFISTER OF BAMBERG.<sup>1</sup>

 ALBRECHT PFISTER, of Bamberg, like Gutenberg and other patriarchs of early printing, has for centuries continued to be *magni nominis umbra*, although he has a double claim to attention as being the first printer both of illustrated books and of books in the German vernacular. It was, therefore, a happy thought of Dr. Zedler's to devote himself to the task of lightening the darkness that surrounds this figure, and all students of incunabula have reason to be grateful to him for the volume under review. It contains 113 pages of text, and 23 plates of facsimiles, besides other illustrations, and displays as conspicuously as ever the author's extreme thoroughness and capacity for taking pains.

The bulk of Dr. Zedler's monograph is devoted to a detailed examination, first from the typographic and then from the linguistic point of view, of the nine editions known to have issued from Pfister's press. Only two of these are dated (in 1461 and 1462), and only two signed with the printer's name; but Dr. Zedler's analysis of the internal

<sup>1</sup> 'Die Bamberger Pfisterdrucke und die 36zeilige Bibel,' von Prof. Dr. Gottfried Zedler. (Veröffentlichungen der Gutenberg-Gesellschaft, nos. x., xi.)

evidence has enabled him to arrange all the nine with sufficient certainty in chronological order. The sequence starts with an issue of the Ackermann von Böhmen, which survives only in a single copy now at Wolfenbüttel, and which shows many shortcomings in the presswork and setting up, such as can only be due to the printer's inexperience. Then follow in order the 'Wolfenbüttel' issue of Boner's Edelstein (February, 1461), the Vier Historien (May, 1462), a German and a Latin Biblia Pauperum, a second issue of the Ackermann, a second German Biblia Pauperum, the 'Berlin' issue of the Edelstein (published in facsimile by the Graphische Gesellschaft some years ago, with an introduction by Dr. Kristeller), and finally a German Belial, the only one of the series which contains no illustrations. Dr. Zedler's industry has brought together an extraordinary number of minute points of typographical evidence in support of his conclusions, and he has been fortunate enough to find among them no serious contradictions, such as too often stultify attempts to fix the sequence of undated incunabula. It is, however, worth remarking that, by taking but three salient facts out of the mass of Dr. Zedler's data—viz. (1) the irregular presswork of the first Ackermann, (2) the evident priority of the Wolfenbüttel over the Berlin Boner shown by the woodcuts, and already suggested in the 'LIBRARY'S' notice of the Berlin facsimile, combined with (3) the distribution of watermarks in each book—we have already sufficient evidence to deduce the same order for the books as Dr. Zedler arrives at.

In this case, at any rate, therefore, the half is not so very much less than the whole—a comforting reflection to those who are conscious of not possessing Dr. Zedler's patience in marshalling multitudes of impalpable details. As to Pfister's presswork generally, Dr. Zedler shows that it was constantly improving, and that he managed to get very satisfactory results out of type that had lost its sharpness even before the 36-line Bible was completed. Incidentally, the theory formerly put forward that Pfister was himself the printer of the Bible is here definitely disposed of by the evidence of the first Ackermann. Although this book was certainly printed later than the Bible, the multifarious 'sorts' of the type are used in it more or less at random, and prove that Pfister was as yet a novice in their manipulation. Dr. Zedler illustrates his contentions by a series of facsimiles which include specimens of every book of the series except the Berlin Edelstein. The reproductions seem very satisfactory, with the exception of plate xxi., where for some unexplained reason 20 lines of the type measure fully 3-5 mm. more than elsewhere. There is also an inaccuracy on p. 3 of the text, where the first edition of the Ackermann is described as containing 18, instead of 24, leaves.

The examination of Pfister's orthography and dialect makes its chief appeal to students of German literature. Dr. Zedler maintains that Pfister edited his texts with more than ordinary care, developing his orthography systematically, and here and there making emendations of his own. There seems, however, to be a not inconsiderable

number of inconsistencies and variations which Dr. Zedler himself admits, and accident or the idiosyncrasies of composers may perhaps play a more important part in the matter than he would allow. Certainly it is not quite easy to believe that a man who could write such straightforward, if quaint, verse as the rhyming colophon of the *Vier Historien* was really doing his editorial best in the astonishing 'explanation' of Latin law terms on the second page of the *Belial* (p. 39); but this is perhaps scarcely a fair argument, since Dr. Zedler holds on other grounds that the *Belial* shows evident signs of haste and negligence.

The second main section of Dr. Zedler's work, although it comprises only twelve pages, is in point of fact of paramount interest and importance, inasmuch as the information contained in it was hitherto entirely unknown to students of the subject. The point of departure is a notice in the fourth volume, published in 1900, of Looshorn's 'History of the Diocese of Bamberg,' which tells us how in the year 1448 the Chapter of Bamberg Cathedral was about to elect a 'Dompropst' in the room of one Martin von Liechtenstein, who had been incapacitated by illness for several years. A protest against this proceeding, as being contrary to a decree of the Lateran Council, was made by the precentor, Georg von Schaumburg, who had acted as *locum tenens* for Liechtenstein during his illness, and this protest was formally lodged with the Bishop, on behalf of Schaumburg, by his procurator, 'Albertus Pfister, clericus coniugatus Bambergensis diocesis.' Twelve years later, in a

document dated 2nd September, 1460, the name of Pfister occurs once more as that of the secretary of Schaumburg, who had lately himself become Bishop of Bamberg. To these references in Loos-horn Dr. Zedler, by assiduous researches among the Bamberg archives, has been able to add some others. Two of them merely supply a few further details of Pfister's appearance as Schaumburg's procurator on 10th September and 28th September, 1448. The rest, however, are of much greater importance, as they concern the very period during which printing was going on at Bamberg. In looking through the book containing the records of feudal grants made by Bishop Georg, Dr. Zedler came upon two marginal references to a certain quire in another part of the book, which both describe this quire as fairly written by 'the late Albrecht Pfister' (ettwan Albertus Pfister, Albrecht Pfister selig). The second of the marginal references is concerned with a grant made on 13th April, 1466, and according to Dr. Zedler has every appearance of having been written about the same time. If this is correct (and there seems no reason to doubt it), we have conclusive evidence that Pfister was already dead by that date. Further, on examining the portion of the book proved by the marginal notes to be written by Pfister, it was found that his handwriting covers sixteen leaves, comprising records of grants made between 8th January and 11th November, 1460, and occurs nowhere else in the volume. Dr. Zedler suggests that the increasing preoccupation of Pfister with his printing

office, which according to him began its activity about the middle of 1460, caused him to give up his secretarial duties at the end of this year, and this seems probable enough in itself. At the same time, it is a little difficult to reconcile with the calculations made elsewhere in the book as to the time taken by Pfister to print each of his issues. We know from the dates in the respective colophons that fifteen months elapsed between the completion of the *Wolfenbüttel Boner* (February, 1461) and that of the *Vier Historien* (May, 1462), and Dr. Zedler inclines to think (p. 43) that the latter book was the only product of the press during that period. But if (as Dr. Zedler says, no doubt correctly) it was the preparation of the woodcuts, rather than the actual printing, which took up most of the time, then the *Wolfenbüttel Boner*, which contains 101 cuts as compared with 50 (61 with repeats) in the *Vier Historien*, ought to have taken about two years and a half to complete, and the date of the first *Ackermann* (and incidentally that of the 36-line Bible) would be thrown as far back as 1458. It is surely more probable that Pfister was not occupied during fifteen months solely with a comparatively small book like the *Vier Historien*, but produced besides some other book, now lost. Such a total loss would not be very surprising, considering that even of the extant Pfister books none have survived in more than three copies. But be this as it may, there can be no sort of reasonable doubt that Dr. Zedler is right in his identification of Albrecht Pfister the printer with

## 236 ALBRECHT PFISTER OF BAMBERG.

Albrecht Pfister the married cleric and secretary to the Bishop of Bamberg, and he is heartily to be congratulated on the happy results of his labours.

More debatable ground is reached in the last section of the monograph, in which Dr. Zedler elaborates his theory that Gutenberg himself, whose finances had by 1457 become hopelessly embarrassed, fled in that year from Mainz to Bamberg, where he printed the 36-line Bible; and this having also proved a disastrous speculation, that he abandoned his type and press and fled back again to Mainz, where he was somehow put in a position to make a fresh start with the Catholicon in 1460. All this is, of course, highly controversial, and it will be sufficient here to mention one or two pieces of evidence given by Dr. Zedler in support of Bamberg as the Bible's place of origin: (1) Of the ten different watermarks found in the Bible none are known to occur in contemporary manuscripts of Mainz origin, while several have been discovered by the author among local manuscripts at Bamberg; (2) all copies of the Bible which bear a mark of ownership came either from Bamberg itself or from some Bavarian monastery; the fragments also were mostly found in monasteries of the Bamberg district; (3) fragments of a printed quire register of the Bible, previously unknown, were discovered by Dr. Zedler and Dr. Freys in Bamberg and the neighbourhood.

J. VICTOR SCHOLDERER.