

**THE LIFE OF MARTIN
BOOS, A ROMAN
CATHOLIC CLERGYMAN
IN GERMANY**

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The life of Martin Boos, a Roman Catholic clergyman in Germany by Various

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THE LIFE

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MARTIN BOOS,

A ROMAN CATHOLIC CLERGYMAN IN GERMANY.

LONDON:

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:

Instituted 1799.

PREFACE.

THE existence of such a man as Martin Boos in the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church, may surprise some of our readers, and may, perhaps, require a few words of explanation.

During the latter half of the eighteenth century, the principle of the Gallican Church, which regards the Pope as subordinate to general Councils, had penetrated the Roman Catholic portions of Germany. The order of the Jesuits was suppressed. The archbishops of Vienna and Salzburg set themselves to oppose some of the abuses of their church; while the emperor of Austria, Joseph II. abolished, by secular ordinances, the use of Latin in public worship, diminished the number of altars and reduced their pomp, suppressed many processions, set limits to indulgences, closed the convents, and endeavoured to reform both elementary and higher education. At the same period Leopold, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, effected similar reforms in his States, by the assistance of the

bishop of Pistoja, Scipio Ricci. The Bible was translated into the vulgar tongue. Some eminent professors in the Universities, such as Jahn at Vienna, and Hug at Friburg, departed in various points from the opinions generally received in their church, and published works on the Bible, and different branches of theology: in these they availed themselves of the labours of Protestant authors; and the merits of which Protestants have not been backward to acknowledge.

Thus there was formed in Austria, and somewhat later in Bavaria, a class of Roman Catholics who, without leaving their church, adopted, and by their writings and preaching diffused, a modified and refined Roman Catholicism, of which the principal features are the following. They maintained that Divine and apostolic tradition is not to be confounded with the traditions of the church, which are only to be regarded as binding when they do not contradict the positive language of Scripture, nor its spirit, nor the first principles of sound reason: that transubstantiation forms no part of the Catholic system of doctrine, for it is not founded on Scripture, nor on tradition: that the Council of Trent only intended to establish the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and that it

has not expressed itself categorically as to the manner or mode of the mystery : that the scriptural sacraments must be distinguished from those which are only ecclesiastical and traditional : that indulgences, according to the example of the ancient church, are simply a dispensation from the punishments inflicted by the canon law : and that every prayer addressed to a saint necessarily implies a prayer to God, and is no more than such a request as we may make to a living friend to pray with us and for us. Further, the Roman catechism was made to give place to better books ; certain ceremonies were modified or abrogated ; and zealous attempts were made to amend the liturgy, and to introduce the German language.

Thus they sought, as the Jansenists had done in France, to reform the errors of Rome without absolutely rejecting and abjuring them. Fruitless attempt ! Rome declared in the days of Luther, and at the Council of Trent, that there was a mortal antipathy and war between herself and truth.

It was in Bavaria, more particularly, that persons holding these views were numerous. Religious awakenings, at different times, took place in that country, not only amongst the members of the congregations, but also amongst the

pastors ; and many distinguished men showed a sincere attachment to the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. Amongst these may be mentioned Feneburg and Winkelhofer, who lived near the close of the eighteenth century ; and subsequently Sailer, De Wessenburg, Jahn, Hug, and others. The instructions of Sailer appear to have exercised great influence upon the mind of Boos.

Through the labours of these, and other like-minded men, many were brought to a saving knowledge of Christ ; and by means of a Society established among the Roman Catholics in Bavaria for the purpose, the Bible, in the German language, was very widely circulated. Many of the people went beyond their teachers ; carrying out their views with more consistency and courage ; and having discovered the errors of Popery they rejected them entirely, and walked in the light and liberty of the gospel, though encompassed with persecutions and trials.

The following memoir is abridged from a Life of Martin Boos, by Johannes Gossner, of Berlin, who was formerly an intimate friend and a coadjutor of Boos ; and who, like him, suffered much persecution for the cause of Christ.