

Catholic Church Preserved, Handed On Bible To World For 19 Centuries

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Through the courtesy of St. Bernard's Seminary, collections of Bibles are currently on display at the following Rochester religious goods stores: Tucker's, Trant's, Brennan's, and Predmore's.

These collections, presented in connection with Catholic Bible Week (Sept. 28-Oct. 5), illustrate the history of the Bible as it has been preserved and handed down through 19 centuries by the Catholic Church.

The largest collection, at Tucker's, 300 E. Main St., serves best to indicate the course of the transmission of the Bible and the debt which the world owes to the Catholic Church for her exact fidelity and solicitude in keeping God's Sacred Word free, not only from destruction, but even from any substantial alteration.

In the center of the display is a large Hebrew Scroll, beautifully hand-copied in parchment in the Hebrew language. It contains the first five books of the Old Testament, and consists of parchment pages sewn together and then wound on two wooden rods which were unwound for reading in the synagogue according to the custom prevalent in the time of Christ.

After the 4th century B.C. Hebrew was no longer a common spoken language. So, about two centuries before Christ the Jews

translated their Old Testament books into the Greek language which was then a common tongue.

This Greek translation of the Old Testament is called the Septuagint Version. It was this



ST. JEROME

Greek translation of the Old Testament which the Apostles and their successors in the Cath-

olic Church used during the first few centuries of the Christian era.

A famous copy of this Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament is the Vatican Codex. This hand-copied book of 734 parchment pages is perhaps the oldest and most valuable Bible in the world. It dates from the 4th century A.D. and is preserved in the Vatican Library at Vatican City.

A photographic copy of a sample page of this precious book is found in the collection at Tucker's, and by its side is a modern reprint of the whole Old Testament Vatican Codex.

FROM THE VERY beginning, when the group of New Testament inspired books was complete, about 95 A.D., the Church fostered the desire among different nations for translations of the Bible into their native tongues. So for the Old Testa-

ment there was a translation of it into the Syriac language in the 2nd century, and one into the Latin and into the Coptic (Egyptian) in the 3rd century. The New Testament writings

were translated into Latin already in the 2nd century, into Syriac and Coptic in the 3rd, into Gothic in the 4th, into Ethiopian in the 5th, Arabic in the 8th and Slavonic in the 9th. Printed copies of the Ancient Latin, the Syriac and the Coptic are displayed in the present collection.

IN THE 4th century Pope St. Damasus I requested the most learned St. Jerome to undertake a new translation of the Bible.

The translation which St. Jerome produced is known as the Vulgate or common Latin Translation. It is called Vulgate or "common" because within a century or two after its completion it was recognized both by the Church and individual scholars to such an extent that it was adopted almost universally as the Bible of the Catholic world.

From the first centuries even up to and well into the 15th and 16th centuries Latin was a language which most all educated people understood, wrote and often spoke regardless of the country of their origin. Literally thousands of hand-

500th Anniversary The Gutenberg Bible

CATHOLIC BIBLE WEEK SEPT. 28-OCT. 5



copies of this Latin Vulgate Bible, in whole or in part, were made from the 5th to the 15th century by the monks, consecrated men of Holy Mother the Church who dedicated their lives to this labor of love in copying God's Sacred Books. The world forgets too often and too easily the debt which it owes to these patient men of the Catholic Church.

Those who live in Corning, N. Y., or have the opportunity of journeying there may see an actual copy of the Gutenberg Bible which is on loan-exhibition at the Permanent Corning Glass Exposition.

Withing 75 years after the invention of printing about 150 editions of the Latin Bible had been printed. One of these very old Latin Bibles (dated 1529) is shown in the present collection. It was published at Lyons, France.

However the Latin Bible was not the only one to be printed. Translations into the native languages of various countries were also printed. Between 1452 and 1522 (when Martin Luther began his translation) there were 14 complete editions of the Bible: 4 in High German; 3 in Low German; 1 in Hebrew; 11 in Italian; 6 in French; 2 in Bohemian; and one each in Flemish, Limousine and Russian. Almost all of these were sponsored and approved by the Catholic Church.

In 1582 at Rheims, English Catholics exiled by religious persecution produced the now celebrated Rheims English Translation of the New Testament. In 1609 at Douay the Old Testament translation was published. A copy of this first edition is shown in the collection. This Douay-Rheims translation served English-speaking Catholics well for a century and a half.

In 1750 Bishop Challoner revised this translation, correcting it in places and substituting new, more modern words for the older ones no longer in use.

After Bishop Challoner, many other Catholic scholars undertook revisions of the Douay-Rheims Translation, noteworthy among them the learned American Archbishop Kenrick between 1849-1861.

WITHIN MORE recent times, with the encouragement and one might almost say at the request of the recent Popes, Catholic scholars in practically every country of the world have produced excellent new translations of the Bible, trying to render the meaning of the inspired author ever more clearly in the idiom and style of modern vernaculars. In English, therefore, we have the new translation known as the Westminster Version, produced by Catholic scholars of England under the editorship of Father Lattey, S.J. The New Testament of this translation was completed in 1935 and the Old Testament is now nearing completion.

Here in America we have the Confraternity Edition of the New Testament which was a revision



The first printing press: Superimposed on a page of the famous Gutenberg Bible is a facsimile of the first printing press constructed by Johann Gutenberg. A poster in honor of the Fifth Centennial of Printing and the first printed book—the Gutenberg Bible—was made from this composite picture for the observance of National Bible Week at St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, N. Y. (NCWO).

of the Challoner text and was published in 1941.

THEN WE HAVE the excellent translation of Father Spencer, O.P., published in 1937, which, for general accuracy of sense, rendition and excellence in the use of correct and rhythmic English is unmatched by any present



translation of the New Testament. Finally we have the translation which is now being published by the members of the Catholic Biblical Society.

The Psalms and the book of Genesis have been published separately, and this month the first complete volume of Old Testament books will be issued. This

is a new translation from the original languages of the Bible and promises to be precise and accurate as well as reverently modern.

We must remind ourselves that Bibles are translated and published, not to be put on exhibition nor even to be reverently laid to rest on an isolated shelf, but to be taken familiarly in hand and read as intellectual food for our mind and soul.

It is the hope of the American Catholic Bishops who proclaimed Catholic Bible Week with Papal Approval and Blessing that the Bible will become more and more common, better known, and cherished more and read more often by Catholics everywhere.

Capuchin Returns London — (NC) — After 30 years' preaching and lecturing in the United States, the Rev. Nicholas Higgins, O.F.M. Cap., has returned permanently to London. He was last stationed at the Capuchin Franciscan Friary at Providence, R. I.

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