

The Catholic Bible: First Book Ever Printed

(By REV. THOMAS F. COAKLEY, D.D., in *New York Truth*.)

To-day in the twentieth century, as in every past century since Christ was born, the Catholic Church proclaims the Bible to be the very Word of God. She was already in existence and had preached the Gospel to Jew and Gentile, and had converted a fairly respectable portion of the world, penetrating even into Caesar's household (Philippians 4, 22) before the New Testament was entirely written. She was present when it was born; she rocked its cradle; she was its nurse and guardian. It was she who told us officially what the Bible is, for the Canon of Holy Scripture was determined and promulgated by her supreme authority in several of the General Councils of the early Church. It was she who separated the divinely inspired from the false, apocryphal and disputed gospels; it was she who preserved the Sacred Text from corruption and from destruction, else the Bible would to-day be in the sad condition of most of the Greek and Latin classics that have perished from the earth. It was she who popularised the Bible. When printing was invented by Gutenberg, one of her children in 1445, the first book ever printed was a *Catholic Bible*, the Latin Vulgate (1453-1455), and she immediately set about printing the Bible in the language of the people. In addition to 13 Italian editions, 11 French editions, 2 Bohemian editions, 1 Dutch and 1 Spanish edition, there were 18 German editions of the Catholic Bible in existence before the Protestant version of Martin Luther appeared in 1534, some 91 years after printing was invented.

Many copies of these first editions in the language of the people are in the United States. For some of them very fabulous sums have been paid by wealthy collectors, such as Messrs. Huntington, Morgan, and Widener. I hold in my hand a catalogue of the Bible Exposition now being held in the New York Public Library, and which I, myself, have inspected along with thousands of others, where authentic copies of the first German and other editions of the Catholic Bible in the language of the people are on public view.

Mr. R. A. Peddie, in his *Index of Fifteenth Century Books*, published in 1910 in London, says that there were 177 editions of the whole Bible before 1500. The Bible was the fifteenth century best seller, and the most widely read book in that age of no mean culture and refinement. In the fifteenth century one book out of every 150 printed was a Bible, a far higher ratio than prevails to-day, in spite of the prodigious free distribution of Bibles that we witness. This is indicative of the then popular demand for the Word of God, the eagerness with which the Church supplied the demand, and her solicitude in encouraging printers to issue repeated editions, not merely in Latin, which for several hundred years after the invention of printing continued to be the

language of the educated, but also in the language of the ordinary people who know only their own tongue.

There are in existence to-day copies of 239 different Catholic editions of the whole Bible printed in nine different tongues, between 1450 and 1520. In the United States to-day there are several hundred copies of Catholic Bibles printed before the year 1500. Strange to say, Protestant theological seminaries possess 127 of these copies; Protestant individuals possess 83 copies; 17 Protestant universities possess 36 copies, and there are no less than 54 copies in the New York public library. One copy is in the Carnegie Library, Pittsburgh, and another one, the property of Father Lambing, of Pittsburgh, not long dead, is now in Seton Hill College for Women, Greensburg, Pa.

The Catholic Church is still tireless in her efforts to make better known and better loved the inspired Word of God. She has conferred many spiritual favors and privileges upon her children, who piously read and meditate upon Sacred Scripture every day; she insists under pain of grave sin that all of her clergy, from Pope to parish priest, shall read a fairly large portion of the Sacred Scripture day by day; she has founded Biblical academies and institutions in various parts of the world to train professors of Holy Scripture to staff her colleges, seminaries, and universities. Inexpensive copies of the Bible are sold in church vestibules; conferences and lectures are given frequently during the year in public halls and popular assemblies to illustrate and explain the Sacred Text, and in every Catholic church in the world, every Sunday of the year, the Gospel must be read and explained to the congregation, not in Latin, but in the language of the people, while all stand reverently, and listen to the Word of God. The superficial reading of any newspaper or review will reveal the solemn fact that it is not the Catholic Church that is countenancing or permitting to go unchallenged the attacks of atheists, materialists, or higher critics upon the inspired Word of God. She loves Holy Scripture with a love that amounts to a passion; with an affection that is stronger than death. And never until time shall be no more will she cease to defend and protect, reverence and cherish, proclaim and popularise it.

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Wedding Bells

EISING—CREAGH.

The wedding was solemnised at St. Patrick's Church, Greymouth, on December 30, of William George, second son of Mrs. C. Eising, Makomako, Pahiataua, and Eileen, third daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Craig, of Brunnerton. Rev. Father Long, assisted by Rev. Father Madden, officiated and celebrated Nuptial Mass. The congregation filled the church, the parents of the bride being well known West-Coasters. Miss Maurcen Griffin presided at the organ. The bride, who was escorted by her father, wore a charming gown of the daintiest shell pink georgette, over shadow lace, finished with cabochons of silver tissue. Her Limerick lace veil was an exquisite one, finely embroidered with true lovers' knots. With it she wore a coronet of silver leaves, matching her silver shoes. She carried a shower bouquet of palest pink roses, carnations, and fern, with pink and silver streamers. A pearl necklet completed the effect. The bridesmaid was Miss Kathleen Creagh, who was attired in a smart frock of silver novelty crepe-de-Chine shot with old rose. From the shoulders fell a capette edged with silver fringe. She wore also a large leghorn picture hat, underlined with rose and silver tissue, and finished with large flat flowers. She carried a posy in the same shades, and wore, like the bride, a pearl necklet. Mr. E. Craigou, of Nelson, was best man. After the ceremony Mr. and Mrs. Creagh entertained about sixty guests at a wedding breakfast, when the usual toasts were honored. The newly-wedded couple left for Pahiataua, travelling via Nelson, where the honeymoon was spent, the bride travelling in a French model of cinnamon gabardine, and a mushroom hat with multi-colored georgette swathe and floral wreath. As an evidence of the bride's popularity in the district the Catholic social committee and other friends assembled at the residence of her parents on Christmas Night to bid her farewell. Miss Creagh was presented by Rev. Father Madden with a set of stainless carvers as an appreciation of her work as secretary of the committee. Father Madden's graceful tribute was warmly endorsed by Rev. Father McMonigle. Mrs. Eising departs with the sincerest good wishes of many friends. She will be much missed, but the Coast's loss is Makomako's gain.

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