

Bible/Whale

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The Revision of the Latin
version of the Bible
AEK1388

The Revision
of the Latin Version of the
Bible



ENTRUSTED BY POPE PIUS X TO
AN INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION
UNDER THE PRESIDENCY OF
ABBOT GASQUET, O. S. B.

EXTRACTS OF LETTERS RECEIVED BY DOM GASQUET
REGARDING HIS AMERICAN LECTURE TOUR.



THE PAPAL BLESSING.

To our beloved children who, by their offerings or by their studies, coöperate in the holy work of the Revision of the Vulgate, with the prayer that God may reward them bountifully, and in token of our gratitude and special good-will, we impart our Apostolic Blessing.

PIUS X.



FROM MOST REV. ARCHBISHOP BONZANO, APOSTOLIC
DELEGATE TO THE UNITED STATES:

I hasten to welcome you and to thank you for the benevolent sentiments you express and which have been warmly appreciated by me. I hope and pray fervently that the great work entrusted to you by the Holy Father may be crowned with the greatest success, and while I renew the expression of my profoundest esteem I look forward to the pleasure and honor of entertaining you at this delegation.



FROM HIS EMINENCE, CARDINAL GIBBONS:

I hasten to assure you that you may rely upon my fullest sympathy and coöperation. I shall do all in my power to assist you. I look forward with keen pleasure to your coming to visit me, on which occasion we shall be able to discuss at length your projects and your hopes.



FROM HIS EMINENCE, CARDINAL FARLEY:

I will be most happy to welcome Abbot Gasquet to America, and I give my warmest approval to the Knights of Columbus in their efforts to assist him.

Revision of the Bible

IN May, 1907, it was announced in the public press that the Pope had determined to prepare for a critical revision of the Latin Bible, and had entrusted the difficult and arduous undertaking to an international commission of Benedictines. The Holy Father appointed Abbot Gasquet, the renowned historian, as its head and to him addressed the following letter:

We value so highly the work entrusted to the Benedictine Order of research and study preliminary to a new edition of the Latin Bible called the Vulgate, that We feel constrained to congratulate most warmly not only yourself but the whole Benedictine Order, and particularly those who are associated with you in this great undertaking. You have before you a difficult and arduous task, in which men renowned for their learning and among them even some Supreme Pontiffs have coöperated, though as yet without complete success. Now, however, that you have put your hand to the work, there can be no doubt that you will achieve the end entrusted to you, viz., the restoration of the primitive text of St. Jerome's own version, which in the course of centuries has become considerably corrupted.

The recognized learning of the Benedictine Monks in the field of paleography and history, their admitted perseverance in critical research, give Us a sure guarantee that you will thoroughly examine every ancient codex of the Latin

Letter
of
Pope
Pius X

Scriptures known to exist to-day in the libraries of Europe, and that you will not fail to seek out and bring to light codices hitherto unknown. You must be allowed to carry on these investigations with the least possible trouble, and therefore We strongly recommend your work to the heads of archives and libraries, not doubting that their own reverence for the sacred doctrines and the Sacred Book will move them to show you every possible favor.

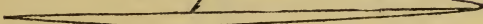
**A Royal
Task**

The extraordinary importance of this undertaking and the great hopes placed in you by the whole Church; the spirit also of the age, in this altogether praiseworthy, which requires such researches to be so thorough as to leave no room for criticism or complaint; all this makes it imperative that the work should be brought to a perfect conclusion in accordance with the recognized canons of critical and historical methods. We fully understand the length of time necessary for such an achievement, for We have here in hand a work that cannot be hampered by haste or anxiety. Nor is it less clear to Us what a large amount of money will be required for this vast undertaking, and for this reason We feel confident that there will not be wanting benefactors who out of the riches which God has given to them will be ready to assist in this imperishable work, thus deserving well of the Sacred Scriptures and of the Christian faith.

Therefore, We exhort them as well as yourself at the outset of Our undertaking that they come to Our help, for surely those who give their lives to the work have every claim to be supported by the generosity of others. Invoking the heavenly light and grace, and as a pledge of Our special affection, We most lovingly impart the Apostolic Blessing to yourself and to each

and all who will assist in this excellent work, either by study or by material aid.

Very Resp. X



The Commission fixed its headquarters at the great College of St. Anselm in Rome, and at once set to work. For the purpose of comparison and correction, 5000 copies of the present (Clementine) Latin Bible were specially printed, each page to the extent of two-thirds of its surface being left blank. With this text the revisers set out for the principal libraries of Europe to search out, investigate, and compare the old MSS. preserved there. Besides the textual comparison, photography has been used to reproduce the old Codices entirely, and already more than 40,000 photographs have been collected and bound into large folio volumes. The foundations of an extensive reference library have been laid. The work has so far developed as to make it imperative for the Commission to find more ample and suitable accommodations. In view of this the Cardinal Secretary of State wrote to Abbot Gasquet in the Pope's name, as follows:

**Progress
of the
Work**

MY DEAR LORD ABBOT:

I am happy to be able to inform you that the Holy Father has heard with great pleasure of your project to procure suitable accommodation for the Commission engaged in the Revision of

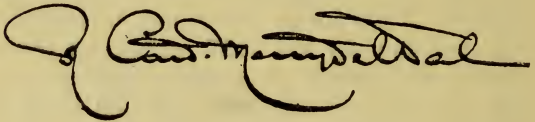
the Vulgate and over which you so worthily preside.

The need for such accommodation has been keenly felt for some time, and the Holy Father is concerned that it be procured as soon as possible so that the Commission may have the necessary quiet and convenience to prosecute its labors in a fitting manner.

The realization of your project will entail considerable expense, but His Holiness feels confident that the necessary funds will be forthcoming, as nobody can fail to realise the great advantages that will accrue to the cause of Religion from the work of the Commission.

I am,

Affectionately yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Montini', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above a horizontal red line.

**Importance
of the
Bible**

Religiously, as God's revelation to man; socially, as a great moral code of humanity; and from a literary point of view, as the oldest and best read text, the Bible is the most important book in the world; and since Christianity became centered in Western Europe, the Latin Bible or Vulgate has been the pivot of all religious literature.

The Fathers of the Church are full of extracts from it; early Christian literature is permeated with it; the charters, chronicles, deeds of the Middle Ages are based on it, and in many cases consist of whole phrases and

passages taken from it; and, further, several languages of modern Europe are founded on it. The Catholic Church has made of the Latin Bible its authentic and official text; as such she uses it in her prayers (in the Mass and the Breviary), and in the teaching of theology. All translations of the Bible into other languages are made from the Latin Vulgate.

If the learned world is so keen in establishing the pure and original text of classical authors, the Latin Bible, preëminent among all texts, should surely have the best possible care expended on it.

Toward the end of the fourth century ^{St.} Divine Providence raised up a great scholar ^{Jerome's} and Saint, Jerome, to produce an accurate text ^{Transla-} of the Latin Bible to take the place of the numerous versions then current. Scholars agree as to his competence for the work given him by Pope Damasus. Moreover, he had access to Greek and other MSS., even then considered ancient, now unknown to us. He had the ability and means of testing the value of his authorities which are denied to us. It is obvious that the possession of the pure text of St. Jerome's version is essential as a basis for any critical edition of the present authentic and official Latin Bible.

St. Jerome's own handiwork perished, along with countless other treasures, in the barbaric invasions of Europe, so that the only MSS. extant to-day are of a considerably later date

than St. Jerome's time. The examination and comparison of these later documents, in order to establish St. Jerome's original text, is "the difficult and arduous task" assigned to the Commission by Pope Pius X.

**A Vast
Enter-
prise**

The difficulty cannot be exaggerated. Before the invention of printing, when books were reproduced by copyists and scribes, numerous errors, omissions, transpositions, crept into the text. This is not surprising, for though God has guaranteed us from any substantial error in the transmission of His written word through the Church, this does not imply immunity from the consequences of frailty in the human instruments engaged on it.

In the course of time these irregularities grew and multiplied, and we find Revision constantly advocated by the Church. The great Council of Trent urged it, and the result was the "Clementine" version now in use. But, hastily prepared under pressing circumstances, it was never meant to be final. Since then, although private individuals have labored on the MSS., nothing official was undertaken until Pope Pius X put his hand to this "imperishable work" and entrusted it to a Religious Order renowned for its paleographical, historical and critical work.

Abbot Gasquet, the Chairman of the Commission, is now in this country, at the wish of the Holy Father, in order to collect funds for the continuance and completion of this gigantic undertaking, from which the Holy Father

anticipates that "the greatest advantages will accrue to the cause of Religion."

We are accustomed to speak of the Catholic Bible, the Protestant Bible, and the rest. There is and can be only one Bible, and any success in establishing the earliest, purest wording of it must necessarily be a great step toward that Christian Unity we all so devoutly hope and pray for. The establishment of the most correct possible text of the official and authentic Latin Bible will have the most far-reaching consequences in the Church's Liturgy and in the clearness and exactness of all the versions into modern tongues in use to-day.

But One Bible

America, on account of its youth, has not been able until recently to take a leading part in intellectual and literary movements; but, conscious of its responsibility for the vast material resources given to it by Divine Providence, it has initiated, supported and carried to successful conclusion some of the grandest works for humanity and Religion. Here is a work of which the Pope realizes the extraordinary importance, and declares that the whole Church entertains the greatest hopes from those who have undertaken it.

America's Opportunity

The undertaking must be carried through in accord with the best modern critical methods, for the Church's credit for learning and its reverence for the Sacred Book are on trial. The Holy Father feels confident that benefactors will not be wanting to assist in this imperishable work and thus deserve well

of the Sacred Scriptures and of Religion. And at his bidding and with his blessing, an appeal is now made to the American people.

Of Interest to All

It is an undertaking worthy of a great Mæcenas, who would thus immortalize his name in the annals of history as a great benefactor of Christianity and of sound learning. But if that is too much to hope for, there may be found generous persons who, by a gift of \$1000, will become "Founders," or, by a donation of \$500, will become "Benefactors" of the work—whose names will be singly presented to the Great Shepherd of Christendom, and then immortalized on marble at the headquarters of the Commission, under the shadow of the Vatican. Smaller contributions, too, will be gratefully received and acknowledged on an artistic certificate, signed and sealed by the Chairman of the Commission, and communicating to them the special blessing of the Holy Father.

The heartiest welcome has been extended to Abbot Gasquet by the Hierarchy of the United States.

Abbot Gasquet hopes to visit several cities in the United States, but even so it will be impossible for him to reach personally all those whose interest has been awakened in the undertaking and who may desire to assist it. He begs to say that any contribution sent to

ST. MARY'S ABBEY,

528 High Street, Newark, N. J.

will be thankfully received.

FROM HIS EMINENCE, CARDINAL O'CONNELL:

I am very glad to hear that you have arrived in America, and I shall be happy to see you and do all that I can for you.



FROM MOST REV. ARCHBISHOP IRELAND, ST. PAUL, MINN.:

I am very glad to know that you are again in America. Certainly it will be a great pleasure for me to meet you again when, in the course of your wanderings through the continent, it will be convenient for you to come to St. Paul. You have a difficult task before you. I hope your work will meet with the success which it deserves.



FROM MOST REV. ARCHBISHOP PRENDERGAST, PHILADELPHIA, PA.:

I beg to acknowledge with thanks the receipt of your letter in reference to your tour of the United States, in the interest of revising the text of the Vulgate. I trust that your visit to our city will not only be cordial and pleasant, but also remunerative for the work in which you are engaged.



FROM MOST REV. ARCHBISHOP RIORDAN, SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.:

I need not assure you that we have this great work of yours at heart, and whatever can be done will be done most cheerfully. At all events, your presence will always be most welcome, and my house will have a room for you.



FROM MOST REV. ARCHBISHOP KEANE, DUBUQUE, IOWA:

I beg to assure you that Dubuque would be glad to welcome you. If you cannot reach us, I shall do what I can to arouse some of our people to an interest in the cause for which you are come to plead.



LIBRARY



OF THE

SAN FRANCISCO COLLEGE FOR WOMEN