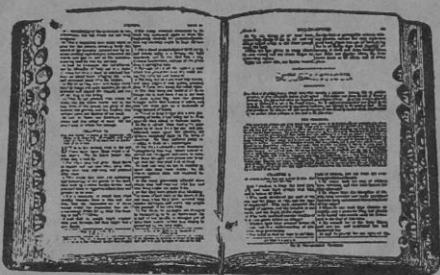


The Bible in the
Middle Ages
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THE BIBLE IN THE MIDDLE AGES



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THE BIBLE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

There can be no valid argument against facts; and facts are abundant in every Christian country to convince fair-minded people that during the so-called Dark Ages, the centuries of the "chained Bible," most people were more familiar with Holy Scripture than today.

Books were scarce, because the printing press was unknown. They would be scarce today without the printing house, for how many persons would take the trouble to create books of their own by copying by hand in their entirety the books of their neighbor prepared in the same way?

What are the facts which should convince? The existence of manuscript Bibles or parts of Bibles written between the eighth and fifteenth centuries? They can be found in libraries in every country of Europe and many of them have found their way to the United States.

Ignorant or malicious writers have depicted the Middle Ages as eras of intellectual darkness and spiritual abasement; and especially have they widely disseminated a delusive belief that during those ages the laity were debarred from the study of the Bible.

The records of authentic history (Protestant as well as Catholic) present a multitude of facts proving that the Catholic Church—then sole guardian and expositor of the Sacred Writings—during the epoch of her highest power and glory, labored unceasingly to impart to the people a knowledge of the Scriptures. Her councils and her clergy, as we shall show, strenuously inculcated upon the laity the studious reading of Scripture as the surest aid to pious living. The laity, in the Middle Ages, did not commonly possess Bibles simply because one Bible then cost as much as hundreds would in our day. The Church had not then at her service either movable types or printing presses, and each copy

of the Bible required for its production a multitude of parchment skins and the continuous labor for months of a scribe.

For instance, the Catholic Canon of Scripture contains 35,877 verses, making 12,783 folios, which would cover, on both sides, 427 skins of parchment, costing \$412.25; the cost of copying would be \$644.65. The cost at the present time, therefore, of a single copy of the Bible, made after the fashion of the Middle Ages, would be \$1,056.90; and this without binding or illumination.

Some notion may be had of the estimation in which the Scriptures were held by the Church in the Middle Ages from a few facts here gathered from various sources: The eighth Council of Toledo, in 835, decreed that no one should be admitted to the priesthood who did not know by heart the whole of the Psalms as well as the Hymns of the Church, etc.; the Council of Pavia, in the ninth century, issued decrees of a like character, and it was directed

that in the ordination of a deacon the bishop, having delivered into his hands the Book of the Gospels, should say "Receive this volume of the Gospels, read and understand it, teach it to others, and in thine own actions fulfil all its precepts;" in the "Capitula data Presbyteris," of 804, we read, "First, that a priest of God should be learned in Holy Scripture, and rightly believe and teach to others the faith of the Trinity," etc.; the Canons of Ælfric, about 950, decree that "every priest before he is ordained must have the arms belonging to his spiritual work—i. e., the Psalter, Book of Epistles, Book of Gospels, Missal," etc., "for these books a priest requires and cannot well do without," and each priest must be able to "well expound the Epistles and Gospels."

St. Jerome says, "Cultivate with diligent affection a knowledge of the Scriptures." St. Anthony referred his monks to the same sacred source. "The monks," says Trithemius, "taught and explained the whole

Scriptures." St. Benedict avows that "those who aspire to the highest excellence must learn the means of attaining to it in the Bible." The Rule of St. Benedict provided that the whole of the Psalms be gone through every week. Among the precepts of Alcuin (an English prelate, reputed the most learned man of his time, and who was appointed Abbot of St. Martin's at Tours by Charlemagne) are these: "Write the Gospels in your heart;" "Read diligently, I beseech you, the Gospel of Christ;" "Be studious in reading the Sacred Scriptures." Reculfus, Bishop of Soissons, in 879, admonishes his clergy that "each of you be careful to have a Book of the Gospels, a Missal, a Lectionary," etc. Wolp-helm, Abbot of Brunwillers, in the eleventh century, caused the whole of the Old and New Testament to be read through every year, and a still more comprehensive system prevailed in the famous Benedictine Abbey of Clugni. John, Abbot of Gorze, "committed to memory all the les-

sons which are appointed for certain times in the Church." St. Wilfrid, when at Rome, studied under St. Boniface, and "learned the four Gospels by heart"—as Beda remarks, "according to the general custom." Peter the Venerable "retained in his memory nearly the whole of both Testaments." Anselm, Bishop of Lucca, "knew almost all the Holy Scriptures." The same thing is told of many other ecclesiastics.

In the lavish magnificence in adornment of the Sacred Volume we may also trace an utterance of the veneration for the Bible which filled the hearts of clergy and laity. Pope Leo III gave to one church a copy of the Gospels bound in pure gold and studded with precious gems. Pope Leo IV presented to another church a copy of the Gospels bound in silver. Pope Benedict III presented to the Church of St. Calistus a copy of the Gospels adorned with "plates of gold and silver, weighing nearly seventeen pounds." The Emperor Michael sent

as a present to St. Peter's, at Rome, a copy of the Gospels bound in pure gold and adorned with precious stones. The Emperor Charlemagne gave to St. Angilbert a copy of the Gospels written in letters of gold upon purple vellum. When the remains of SS. Sebastian and Gregory were removed to the Monastery of St. Medard, at Soissons, in 826, Louis le Debonnaire presented to it a copy of the Gospels written in letters of gold and bound in gold plates. The Empress Agnes presented to the Monastery of Monte Casino a copy of Gospels covered with gold and precious gems. Henry, Emperor of Bavaria, gave to the same monastery a copy covered with gold, adorned with jewels, and gorgeously illuminated. King Robert bequeathed to the Church of St. Aman, in Orleans, six copies of the Gospels—two of which were bound in gold, and two in silver. Hincmar, Archbishop of Rheims, caused the Gospels to be written for his cathedral in letters of gold and silver, and

bound in plates of gold, resplendent with jewels. In the *Breve Recordationis* of Abbot Bonus mention is made of a Bible purchased in the eleventh century, by the Monastery of St. Michael at Pisa, for a sum equal to about \$1,250 modern value. At a visitation of the treasury of St. Paul's, London, in 1295, there were found twelve copies of the Gospels bound in silver, some decorated with precious stones.

Martene, in examining the archives of numerous monasteries and churches, in 1717-24, discovered many Bibles of great antiquity, written in letters of silver or gold, upon purple vellum, some of which "were so gorgeously encased that upward of twenty pounds of gold were used in the construction of their coverings. When William Rufus imposed a heavy tax to pay for the purchase of Normandy, the Abbot of Malmesbury was compelled to strip the covers from several copies of the Gospels, in order to pay the amount levied upon his abbey.

William de Longchamp, Bishop of Ely, in order to raise the sum of one hundred and sixty marks, which he contributed toward the ransom of Richard Coeur de Lion from captivity, pledged the covers of thirteen copies of the Gospels belonging to his church.

Having thus seen in what esteem the clergy held the Bible, we proceed to present a few facts showing their labors to disseminate it among the laity. Latin being then the universal language of learned Christendom, obviously translations were needed only by the unlearned. The Psalms were translated into *Saxon* by Bishop Aldhelm, about 706; the Gospels by Bishop Egbert, about 721; and the whole Bible by Bede in the tenth century, he having completed his task with the last verse of the Gospel of St. John a few moments before he expired.

In 807, at the desire of Charlemagne, the whole Bible was translated into *French*. In 820, Otfrid, a Benedictine monk, composed in

French a harmony of the four Gospels. In the same century a version of Psalms in French was made by request of Louis le Debonnaire. In the twelfth century, at Metz, translations were made of the four Gospels, the Epistles of St. Paul, the Psalms, etc. In the fourteenth century Raoul de Praelles made a French version of the Bible from Genesis to Proverbs, a copy of which is among the Lansdowne MSS. in the British Museum. In the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, are French versions of the twelfth century, of the Psalms; of thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, nearly sixty different versions, comprising translations of the entire Bible, of the New Testament, of the four Gospels, and of other portions of the Scriptures.

Among the Cotton MSS., in the British Museum, are a copy of the Gospels in French verse, a Harmony of the Gospels which belonged to Canute, a copy of the Book of Proverbs in Latin with interlinear Anglo-Saxon translation, a copy of Genesis and other

books in *Anglo-Saxon*, a Harmony of the four Gospels and an *English Bible* of the fifteenth century. Among the Harleian MSS., in the same museum, are seven copies of French translations of the whole or portions of the Bible, two of which are accompanied by English translations; the four Gospels in Anglo-Saxon, copies of Books of Job and Tobias in English of the fourteenth century, and several copies of other portions of the Bible in the same language.

A version of the whole Bible in English of the thirteenth century is now in the Bodleian Library. In the *Bibliotheca Ambrosiana*, at Milan, are several *Gaelis* interlinear translations of portions of Scripture, one of the most remarkable of which is a copy of the Psalms of the seventh century.

Ulphilas, Bishop of the Goths, translated the New Testament into *Gothic* in the fourth century. In the University of Upsal is preserved a copy of the Gospel written upon vellum, in Gothic characters of gold and

silver, supposed to be a thousand years old.

About 980 Notker Labeo translated the Book of Job and Psalms into *German*; in the eleventh century, a monk of Fulda made a version of the Canticles in Teutonic prose; in the Imperial Library of Volksgarten is a German Bible, in six volumes, translated in the fourteenth century. In the library of the cathedral at Florence is a MS. of forty-two leaves, containing the first twelve chapters of the Gospel of St. Luke, in *Italian* of the sixth century. In the Japanese Palace at Dresden is a Bible in *Bohemian* of the fourteenth century.

When in the thirteenth century the churches of Lesser Armenia and Cilicia submitted to the Holy See, and Haitho the King became a Franciscan friar, his first act was to prepare a translation of the entire Bible in *Armenian*. A version in *Swedish* was made under direction of St. Bridget, in the fourteenth century; one in *Icelandic* was made in 1297;

one in *Flemish*, by Jacobus Merland, in 1210. In the latter end of the fourteenth century St. Hedwiga had a translation made of the Bible into *Polish*.

Translations of the New Testament into *Russian* were made in the tenth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and one of the entire Bible in the fifteenth century. In *Spanish* there were several versions of the whole Bible; three in the Catalonian dialect, one of the twelfth century being in the Bibliotheque Nationale at Paris; one in the Valencian dialect, made in 1405 by Boniface Ferrer, brother of St. Vincent Ferrer; and one in the Castilian dialect, prepared by order of Alfonso the Wise, in the thirteenth century. In this brief notice only a few are gathered, yet we have translations in *sixteen* modern languages, between the fourth and fifteenth centuries.

It remains only to show that the Church was as zealous in promoting

the printing as in encouraging the copying of the Scriptures. Before the publication of Luther's German version of the Bible (1534), much lauded as the event which first made the Sacred Volume accessible to the people, there had issued from the press, with the sanction and at the instance of the Church, 626 editions of the Bible, or portions of the Bible, of which 198 were in the languages of the laity—*i. e.*, of the whole Bible, 30 in German, 26 in French, 20 in Italian, 19 in Flemish, 2 in Spanish, 6 in Bohemian, 1 in Slavonic, and 94 of portions, chiefly the New Testament and the Psalms.

In the ancient languages, there were 62 in Hebrew, of which 12 were of the Old Testament entire, and 50 of portions; 22 in Greek, of which 3 were of the Old, and 12 of the New Testament, and 7 of portions; and 343 in Latin, of which 148 were of the entire Bible, 62 of the New Testament, and 133 of separate books.

Among these editions some were

remarkable in various ways, but we have space to name but two: Cardinal Ximenes' celebrated Complutensian Polyglot Bible, in six volumes folio, was printed at Alcala (Complutensis), in Spain. It was dedicated to Pope Leo X. The first edition, published in 1522, was at the expense of Cardinal Ximenes, and cost 250,000 ducats; three copies were printed on vellum, and six hundred on paper, the price of the latter per copy being fixed at $2\frac{1}{2}$ crowns of gold (about \$22 present value). Of this edition but four copies are known to be in existence. At the sale of the library of Count MacCarthy, of Toulouse, in 1817, a vellum copy of this Bible brought \$3,123.40; the count having bought it at the Pinelli sale for \$2,342.55.

The Bible for the Poor (*Biblia Pauperum*), consisting of engravings illustrating Scripture history, with texts, carved on wood, was printed early in the fifteenth century, and was compiled by Saint Bonaventure,

general of the Franciscans, about 1260.

Bible Reading In Middle Ages

DEAN GOULBURN (Prot.)

("Life of Bishop Herbert.")

"If having the Bible at their fingers' ends, could have saved the Middle Ages' teachers from abuses and false doctrines, they were certainly well equipped. They were not merely accomplished Textuaries. They had their minds as saturated with the language and associations of the sacred text as the Puritans of the seventeenth century."

REV. E. CUTTS, D. D.

(In "Turning Points of English History," pp. 200-201.)

"There is a good deal of popular misapprehension about the way in which the Bible was regarded in the Middle Ages. Some people think that it was very little read, even by the clergy; whereas the fact is that the

sermons of the mediaeval preachers are more full of Scriptural quotations and allusions than any sermons in these days; and the writers on other subjects are so full of Scriptural allusion that it is evident their minds were saturated with Scriptural diction. . . . Another common error is that the clergy were unwilling that the laity should read the Bible for themselves, and carefully kept it in an unknown tongue that the people might not be able to read it. The truth is that most people who could read at all could read Latin, and would certainly prefer to read the authorized Vulgate to any vernacular version. But it is also true that translations into the vernacular were made. . . . We have the authority of Sir Thomas More for saying that 'the whole Bible was, long before Wyclif's days, by virtuous and well-learned men translated into the English tongue, and by good and godly people with devotion and soberness well and reverently read.' . . . Again, on

another occasion he says: "The clergy keep no Bibles from the laity but such translations as be either not yet approved for good or such as be already reprov'd for naught (bad), as Wyclif's was. For as for old ones that were before Wyclif's days, they remain lawful, and be in some folk's hands.' "

DEAN HOOK.

("Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury, vol. III, p. 83.)

"It was not from hostility to a translated Bible, considered abstractedly, that the conduct of Wyclif in translating it was condemned. Long before his time there had been translators of Holy Writ. There is no reason to suppose that any objection would have been offered to the circulation of the Bible if the object of the translator had only been the edification and sanctification of the reader. It was not till the designs of the Lollards were discovered that Wyclif's version was proscribed."

THE ATHENAEUM.

(August 24, 1889.)

“Long before the Reformation every Catholic country all over Europe had versions of the Bible in the vernacular of the country. Between 1477, when the first edition of the French New Testament was published at Lyons, and 1535, when the first French Protestant Bible was published, upwards of twenty editions in the French vernacular issued from the Catholic press.”

ADOLF HARNACK.

(In “Bible Reading in the Early Church.”)

“Catholicism has at all times undoubtedly regarded Bible reading as useful and salutary for every man in the abstract, and is still of the same opinion.”

CHARLES BUTLER.

(“Horae Biblicae,” pp. 35 and 36.)

“For the sacred writings which contain the word of God, and for the

traditions of the wise and good respecting it, we are almost wholly indebted, under Providence, to the zeal and exertion of the priests and monks of the Church of Rome during the Middle Ages. . . Copying the Bible was a task of infinite pains and perseverance, to which (for gain was out of the question) nothing but the conscientious and unwearied industry of a religious copyist was equal."

DR. BRIGGS.

(Whither?, p. 21.)

"If there had been no divine authority in the Church, there would have been no divine canon of Holy Scripture."

BISHOP P. M. RHINELANDER
(Epis.)

(At Cambridge, Mass., July 8, 1911.)

"Leading critics have finally come to the opinion that, since the Bible comes from the Church, it must be restored to the Church—for proper in-

terpretation, of course—in order that it may be understood.”

BISHOP CHARLES P. ANDERSON
(Prot. Epis.)

(Chicago, April 19, 1915.)

“I regret to say that the most destructive criticism of the Bible comes from the Protestant church. We do not find this in the Roman Catholic Church.”

EIGHTEEN COMPLETE EDI-
TIONS OF THE BIBLE IN
GERMAN APPEARED BE-
FORE LUTHER'S DAY
(1450-1522).

The following fourteen complete editions of the Bible appeared after the invention of printing and before Luther published his version of the New Testament:

1. Faust and Schoffer, 1462, Mainz;
2. Johann Hentelin, 1466, Strassburg;
3. Ppanzmann, 1475, Augsburg;

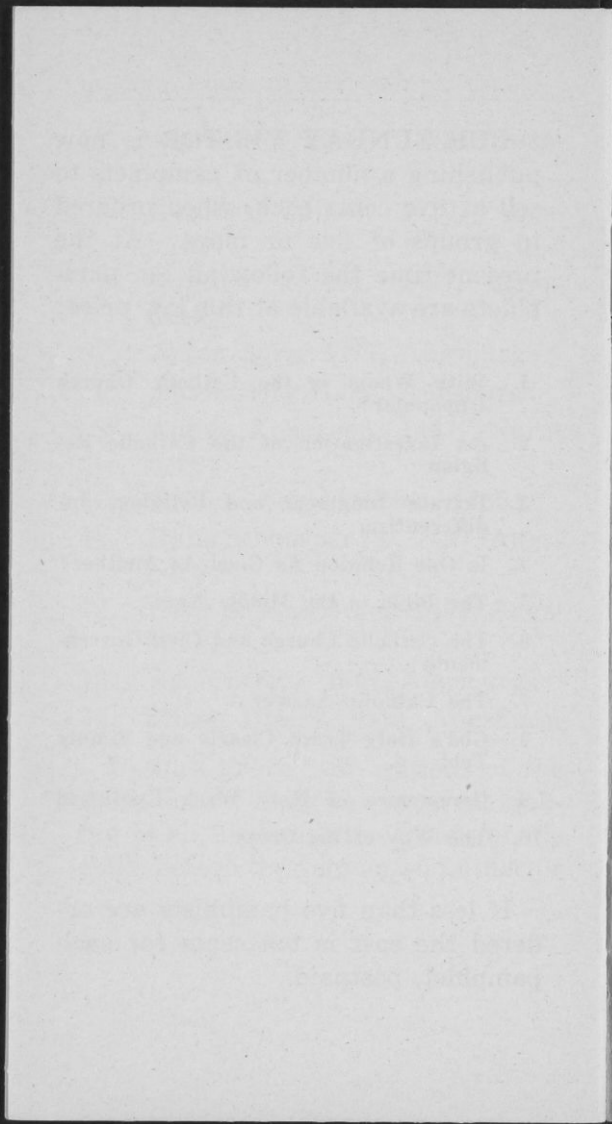
4. Andreas Frisner, 1473, Nurnberg;
5. Gunther Zainer, 1470, Augsburg;
6. Gunther Zainer, 1477, Augsburg;
7. Anton Sorg, 1477, Augsburg;
8. Anton Sorg, 1480, Augsburg;
9. Anton Koburger, 1483, Nurnberg;
10. A Strassburg Edition, 1485;
11. Hans Schonsperger, 1487, Augsburg;
12. Hans Schonsperger, 1490, Augsburg;
13. Hans Otmar, 1507, Augsburg;
14. Silvan Otmar, 1518, Augsburg.

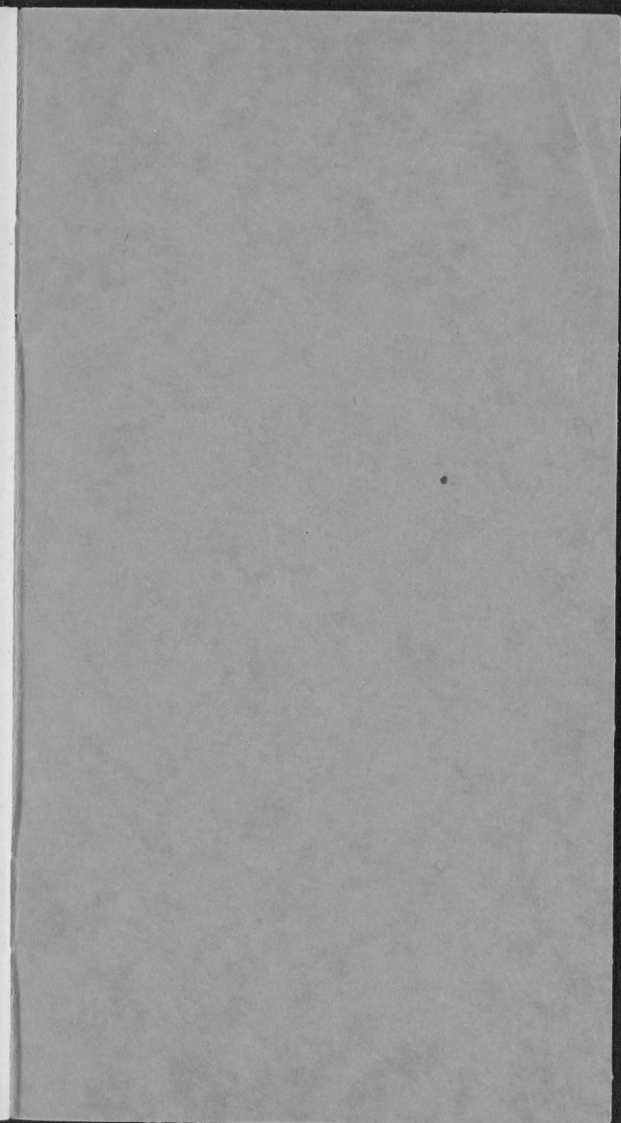
Besides these, four editions of the Bible in Low German appeared, making in all, 18 complete editions of the Bible before the version of Luther.

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1. With Whom is the Catholic Church Unpopular?
2. An Investigation of the Catholic Religion
3. Private Judgment and Religious Indifferentism
4. Is One Religion As Good As Another?
5. The Bible in the Middle Ages
6. The Catholic Church and Civil Governments
7. The Catholic Answer
8. God's Holy Truth Clearly and Simply Told
9. Ceremonies of Holy Week Explained
10. The Way of the Cross

If less than five pamphlets are ordered the cost is ten cents for each pamphlet, postpaid.





ST. MARY'S CHURCH,



LAREMONT, N. H.