

T.C. Hammond

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The Douay Testament

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# THE DOUAY TESTAMENT

An Episode in the History of the New  
Testament in Ireland.

BY

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Rev. T. C. HAMMOND, M.A.

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## An Episode in the History of the New Testament in Ireland.

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By Rev. T. C. HAMMOND, M.A.

**I**N the year 1819 a Committee of Protestants and Roman Catholics met in Dublin. The Earl of Meath occupied the chair. Their object, as stated in public advertisements that appeared in "Saunders's News-Letter," Dublin, at stated intervals during the year 1820, was to place within the reach of poorer Roman Catholics a version of the New Testament to which they would entertain no conscientious objection. The first notice appeared in "Saunders's News-Letter" on January 7, 1820. It was then stated that the issue of the New Testament was to be without note or comment. The advertisement of January 7 was followed by another on January 11. In Both advertisements it is stated that the edition "is in a state of great forwardness." Acknowledgments of subscriptions towards the issue of the Testament appear on January 27, February 19, February 22. Apparently with the object of further conciliating Roman Catholic opinion there is prominence given to the announcement that the work is entrusted to Mr. Richard Coyne, the official Roman Catholic publisher to the Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church and to the College of Maynooth, the great Roman Catholic Seminary for priests in Ireland. The Committee announced its intention of printing 20,000 copies of the book. In London shortly afterwards a

similar society was established, and called "the London Society for circulating the Roman Catholic Version of the New Testament without note or comment." It is interesting to notice that the famous William Wilberforce was a member of this latter society. At a meeting held at the Thatched House Tavern on June 11, 1820, the London Society declared that it was anxious to support the "Dublin Roman Catholic Testament Society," and adopt its rules, "with some necessary local modifications." It was then asserted that twenty thousand copies of the New Testament had been printed, so that the Dublin Society had at that date realized its project.

Careful inquiry has elicited the fact that there are at least five different issues of the Testament of 1820 in existence.

(1) There is what appears to be the first bound copies. Pasted on the cover is a declaration without heading: "I certify that the sacred Text of the New Testament, in this Edition of it, is conformable to that of former approved Editions, and particularly to that of the Douay English Version sanctioned by me, and published by R. Cross, in the year 1791.

J. T. TROY, D.D.

Dublin, 9th February, 1820."

This is followed by a Translation of a Rescript addressed by His Holiness Pius VII. to the Vicars Apostolic of Great Britain, dated "the 18th of April, Year of Grace, 1820, of our Pontificate, 21."

The list of books of the New Testament is printed at the back of the title page. The



address at foot of the title page reads:—  
 “Dublin: Printed by R. Coyne, Catholic Bookseller, 16, Parliament Street. 1820.”  
 On the reverse is the order of books as stated, and on the reverse of the last page the names of the printer and the stereotyper, J. McGowan, Great Windmill St., London. A copy with these features is in the possession of Rev. A. E. Hughes, Vicar of St. James', Clapham.

(2) A second copy in the possession of the British and Foreign Bible Society has a curious feature. It contains the words “I certify,” etc., as above pasted inside the cover of the copy as already described, but also a similar statement on the last page of the Testament. A printed slip is pasted on the title and inscribed, “And sold by R. M. Tims, 85, Grafton Street, and in London sold by Robert Henry C. Tims, 21, Wigmore Street, Cavendish Sq., and Messrs. J. Nesbitt & Co., Bernera Street.”

(3) A book bearing the address on the title page similar to that described above in (1). On the reverse the word “Recommendation” printed at the head of Dr. Troy's Certificate. The Certificate is followed by the Rescript of Pius VII., and at the bottom of the page a second title as follows:—“Dublin: Printed by Richard Coyne, 4, Capel Street, printer and bookseller to the Royal College of St. Patrick, Maynooth; and Publisher to the Roman Catholic Bishops of Ireland.” On the reverse of the last page is found “The Order of the Books of the New Testament, with their proper Names and Number of

their Chapters.” There is no name of printer or stereotyper on this last page in this issue.

(4) There is a copy of this book in the British Museum, re-bound, (3051. A.A.A.6) which agrees with the copy first described, but the words “I certify, etc.,” without any heading appear in a slightly smaller leaf than a blank leaf which has been inserted between it and the cover. The Rescript follows Dr. Troy’s Certificate on the same page. The reverse of this page is quite blank. The title page has the address 16, Parliament Street and the date 1820, similar to the issue described in (1). On the reverse of the title page is printed “The Order of the Books of the New Testament,” and underneath Coyne’s address as 4, Capel Street. There is no imprint on the last page of the book.

(5) There is also what appears to have become the standard issue, a blank leaf. Then the title page with the address Dublin: Printed by Richard Coyne, 4, Capel Street, printer and bookseller to the Royal College of Saint Patrick, Maynooth; and Publisher to the Roman Catholic Bishops of Ireland. On the reverse of the title page is printed “Recommendation,” followed by Dr. Troy’s certificate, followed by the Rescript of Pius VII. The address in small italic type is reproduced as on the title page. The Order of Books, etc., appears on the last page but two, and is followed by a blank leaf. There is no date on the title page.

As the New Testament itself had been stereotyped no difference appears in the

text which runs from page 3 to page 311 in every issue.

Copies (3) and (5) are in the possession of the Irish Church Missions. It is important to observe this fact as it gives evidence of repeated issues, at least in bound form, of this particular Testament.

The book was before the public for a number of years.

The date of the first publication cannot be fixed with certainty. On February 4, 1820, Mr. Randall MacDonald moved at a meeting of the Kildare Place Society: "To substitute the Douay Testament now in the Press for the Protestant translation, in the case of Roman Catholic children." Dr. Troy gave his recommendation five days after, and evidently before the book had been published.

Every known copy contains the Rescript of Pope Pius VII., which was sent to Dr. Poynter, Vicar Apostolic, England, and dated 18th April, 1820.

The first evidence of publication we have been able to secure is the resolution passed at The Thatched House Tavern on 11th June, 1820. In 1823, a Mr. Tisdall had a controversy with Rev. Michael Branagan, the Parish Priest of Cortown. In the course of discussion Mr. Tisdall writes: "Now I have gone to the expense of getting a number of Testaments of the Edition printed by Coyne, and approved of by Dr. Troy, which I am willing to lend to anyone who wishes for them, or to sell at the low price of one shilling each." (A reply to a letter from the Rev. Michael Branagan, P.P., p. 23. Richard Moore Tims, Dublin, 1823.)

This is evidence that in March, 1823, Coyne was still selling the Testament. We further gather from an incidental reference (*Ibid.* p. 27) that Father Branagan admitted that the Rescript of Pope Pius VII. "did recommend the reading of the Scriptures, and was suppressed for that very reason because the Church disapproved of it." It is difficult to understand this reference to the Rescript unless we conjecture that Father Branagan had early knowledge of Christie's abortive effort to issue a Bible in weekly numbers in which the letter of Pope Pius VI. took the place of the Rescript of Pope Pius VII. The first number of the new Bible appeared on 26th July, 1823. (Rhemes and Douay. p. 399. Cotton. Oxford Press, 1855.)

Still later the Rev. Wm. Hennings, P.P., Killarcan, Co. Galway, writes to the Kildare Place Society on 12th November, 1824: "I have borrowed some Testaments without note or comment until I can get a supply of my own from Dublin, as I could not get them to purchase in this neighbourhood." The Rev. Richard Pope quoted from the Testament on 18th January, 1825, at a discussion concerning the London Hibernian School Society. He mentioned the fact that the Testament had the approval of Dr. Troy. (Speeches delivered at a meeting in the town of Sligo, etc. p. 13. Dublin. Richard Moore Tims, 1825.)

The facts would have then been too recent to permit a public and published statement of this sort to pass without contradiction.

The last testimony to be adduced is still more remarkable. In his evidence given

before the Commissioners of Education in 1825, Archbishop Kelly said :—"They (the Irish Roman Catholic Bishops) have acceded to the wishes of the Kildare Street Society so far as to admit a revision of the Douay Testament without note or comment, being used in that school, but it is not used or read except under the immediate direction of the Roman Catholic clergyman." (Report. p. 775.) The evidence of the officials of the Kildare Street Society identifies this New Testament with the edition first issued in 1820. Dr. Troy died on May 11, 1823, and at that time the Testament without notes was circulating fairly widely. As far as can be gathered, after an attack on "the indiscriminate circulation of the Scriptures" which began indeed in 1820 before the issue of the Testament, but was renewed with vigour from 1824-26, the sale of this Testament ceased.

Roman Catholic writers are greatly disturbed by this evidence of a certified copy of the New Testament without notes. They have made several attempts to discredit it.

Mr. F. O'Reilly, Executive Secretary of The Catholic Truth Society of Ireland wrote to "The Anglo-Celt": "The version of the New Testament is that prepared by the late Archbishop Troy, who had it ready with notes when he died. The edition above referred to has been published without notes." It is not necessary to point out that these statements are both wrong and misleading.

The Rev. E. J. Quigley in "The Irish Ecclesiastical Record" of August, 1930, improves on this misleading version by

still further blunders. He asserts:—"A Cork bookseller, Macnamara, printed in monthly parts a Bible, having received from Dr. Troy his sanction to the Cork publication, revised by Rev. P. A. Walsh. The Cork bookseller became bankrupt, and his Dublin printer, a Protestant, suffered. Cumming appealed to Coyne, the Catholic bookseller and publisher, to allow Coyne's name on this edition of the Bible. Coyne consented, and in 1816 the volume appeared. The Bible Society bought up the typed plates of Macnamara, and Cumming, the Protestant, hewed off the setting of the notes, and issued the Douay Testament without note or comment. And the little green covered volumes sold by Bible hawkers in fairs and markets is the edition condemned by Dr. Troy. Its title page contain two lies, Dr. Troy's imprimatur, and Coyne's name as printer."

Dr. Salmon dryly remarks:—"One can generally judge what a man is likely to do by observing what he thinks other people likely to do." (*Infallibility of the Church*, p. xv. Murray, 1923). We hope for Mr. Quigley's sake that the remark is not applicable to his case.

Why are Roman Catholics so anxious to declare that the book is not what it seems?











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