

THE HAYDOCK BIBLE

by T. CONNELLY

THE priests of Manchester were surprised when early in January 1811 they received a circular letter upbraiding them and at the same time appealing to them for support. Some of them must have been a little disconcerted to find that Thomas Haydock was still going to produce his new edition of the Bible . . . (he had talked of it and even raised some subscriptions for it, but that was nearly five years previously). By now, some at least, had subscribed to Mr. Syer's edition¹ which had appeared but recently, evidently under the impression that Haydock had given up all hope of producing one, and that his previous circular had been just another publisher's dream.

Now, before them, they had the letter which claimed that, while on urgent business in Ireland, his stock had been seized by one of his creditors and his financial position had been undermined. Having righted the matter, he had been deeply offended by the way another Catholic publisher, taking unfair advantage of his temporary financial straits, had also begun to produce a new edition of the Bible. Hoping that these reasons would reassure his former subscribers, he begged them not to withdraw their support from his enterprise. He assured them that work had already begun on his edition, and he hoped to have the first instalment off the press by July. Thereafter, he would produce fortnightly numbers of the Old and New Testaments alternately, increasing to a weekly instalment once the work had got under way. The price would be moderate, only one shilling per number.²

True to his word this time, the first number of his new edition came off the press on 11th July, 1811, and after the second number instalments came weekly. Thus the Haydock Bible came into being.

It was a family affair, Thomas Haydock published and printed it at his Manchester office, and his brother the Rev. George Leo Haydock wrote most of the notes and commentary, and edited the whole work.

Thomas Haydock was the second of three boys of a well known Lancashire Catholic family which came from Cottam, near Preston. With his brothers he attended school at Mowbreck Hall, run by a Mr. Bannister, who had been a professor at Douay for some twelve years. James the elder brother, went at the age of fifteen to the English College, Douay, in the year 1780, and he was followed in 1785 by George, the younger of the three, who was then eleven. Thomas, as he had shown

¹ Syer's Bible was edited by a Mr. Kenyon and the Rev. Thomas Sadler (two contemporaries of George Haydock at Douay) and had the approbation of Dr. Gibson of the Northern District.

² "Price one shilling per sheet . . ." MacNamara's Bible (1816 printed in Dublin) was issued at 1s. 8d. per number, 47 numbers in all, with 32 pages in the O.T. numbers, and 24 in the N.T., i.e., about £4 for the whole Bible. Haydock's was published in roughly 160 numbers (one per week from July 1811 until September 1814), price 1s. per number, i.e., approximately £8.

greater ability remained a little longer with Mr. Bannister, but he too went to Douay in 1785, when he was nearly fourteen years old.

Little is known of them at Douay, but James was ordained priest in 1792 and came to this country to work on the mission, thus missing by a few months the breaking up of the English College and the dispersal of the boys and staff by the Revolutionaries. Thomas and George were not so fortunate, but they made their escape from the College and arrived at Bruges, whence they took coach to Ostend. There they were refused a passport by the British consul, but succeeded in taking ship across the Channel and eventually arrived in London. They finally made their way to Manchester where their brother James was a chaplain, and, together with him, they walked home to Preston.

In November 1793 George was ordered by his superiors to go to Old Hall Green, but Thomas, it appears, was undecided about his vocation, and remained at home. A little time later he went to Lisbon, but returned in 1795, the college authorities having decided that he was not a suitable candidate for orders. When all the students for the northern district were recalled from Old Hall by Bishop Gibson in 1796, in order to be sent to Crook Hall, Thomas went back along with George. This was his third attempt at the priesthood, but it was as unsuccessful as the other two. He was advised to leave the College as some people had evidently been casting doubts on his vocation. One of the chief complaints was that he was "funny," i.e., of a humorous disposition. Mr. Eyre, the President, remarked that, "whenever I go into the grounds I always see a crowd about Thomas laughing, and such generally end in an asylum!"¹

So Thomas became a schoolmaster and opened a school in Manchester. He issued a prospectus announcing that "he intends to teach the following branches of useful and ornamental knowledge, Greek, Latin, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian and the usual subjects." The task was not suitable for him, however, and he turned his hand to the publishing of Catholic books and engravings. In 1799 he extended his publishing business and had a succession of moves into larger premises. In a letter to his brother George in this year he gives a list of works, in print, and in preparation, which is surprisingly large.

It was not until 1806 that he first conceived the idea of publishing a new and handsome edition of the Douay Bible and the Rheims Testament, an edition moreover which would supply a real need of his times. Financial trouble interfered, and he shelved the idea, and for a while returned to teaching. His idea was to publish "a correct edition of the Douai Bible, supplied with a large body of notes and commentary, with historical dissertations affixed to each book; the whole complete with precise lives of the evangelists, tables, and index, etc." The

¹ Haydock Papers : Gillow, London 1888.

Rev. Bernard Rayment proffered his assistance, but later withdrew, so Thomas persuaded his brother to write and select notes. George was by this time ordained and working on the mission as a priest at Ugthorpe. The work was to have begun in 1806 but was put off until August 1807.

Meanwhile, Thomas went to Dublin to collect some large outstanding debts. While he was there he married an Irish girl, Mary Lynch, and also opened up an establishment in that city. Taking advantage of his absence in Ireland a Mr. John Heys, with whom he had entered into financial dealings prior to his departure, suddenly brought forward a claim for £800, seized Haydock's stock in Manchester, and demanded immediate payment. When this matter was settled, he returned only to find that another publisher, Oswald Syers, had entered the field. As we have mentioned earlier he received some support from the clergy in the publishing of an edition of the Bible, since they were under the impression that Haydock had given up his production altogether.

Haydock's edition finally went to press, and the first copy was on sale in July 1811. It was a limited edition of only 1500 copies, but a reprint was called for and was begun in 1812. It took three years in all to publish even though the sheets were brought out weekly after the second number, instead of fortnightly as was first planned.

The whole undertaking, however, was quite unremunerative and brought about Haydock's ruin. He was still in the hold of Heys over money matters, and when the latter was declared bankrupt Haydock's bond was entered up and his property sold by auction in 1818. Further, he was imprisoned for four months for debt. In a letter to Dr. Gillow George said that Thomas was easy-going and got himself into great difficulties in consequence. He also seems to have been a bad judge of character, for the manager and chief clerk of his Dublin office robbed him of over £3,000. His travellers or "caterpillars" as they were called, also seem to have robbed him fairly consistently.

After the production of his Bible his life has little of note in it. When his wife died in 1823 he settled in Liverpool and later, on the death of his son in 1840, he returned to Preston and retired from business. At the age of 87 he died in the year 1859.

His Bible. The Bible was chiefly the work of George Leo Haydock, for he supplied all the notes for the Old Testament besides supervising the whole production. When we consider that he had to contend with the difficulty of not allowing the presses to stand idle, we must admit that he kept up a very high standard of workmanship. There was a time though, when Thomas had to issue a circular disowning certain sheets that had been allowed to appear, since "they have been printed with an inaccuracy and a suppression of many essential notes that have justly caused the disgust and indignation of his brother, the

Rev. Geo. Leo Haydock, who was engaged to compute the same." The notes for the New Testament were under the care of Dr. Rayment and some other Benedictines of Ampleforth. The "new and copious annotations" are the chief characteristic of this edition. There was no new translation of the text, but the second edition of Challoner's version (1750) was used. We are told in the advertisement to the first volume, that the editor had decided also to include Challoner's notes verbatim (they are marked throughout with the initial "C"). To these were added others abridged and modernized from Bristow, Calmet, du Hamel, Estius, Bishops Walmesley, Worthington and Witham. Where he thought they were required, he added notes of his own and quotations from the Fathers. Archdeacon Cotton remarks,¹ that in the New Testament the version followed is not Dr. Challoner's, but Dr. Troy's 1794 edition.

The quality and thoroughness of the notes can be seen for example in the treatment accorded to the eucharistic discourse in the sixth chapter of St. John. Practically every verse has a commentary, and to explain and illustrate the dogma he invokes Maldonatus, Challoner, Witham, St. Augustine (four or five times in as many verses), Calmet, Ven. Bede, Theophylact, St. Hilary, St. John Chrysostom and the Bible de Venice.

Despite the usefulness of his Bible (it was a compendium of theology, for he takes any salient texts to give a short dogmatic treatise on the point in hand) it was a financial failure, and George Haydock was personally out of pocket to the tune of some £3,000. The enormous scholarship that he put into the work is reflected not so much in the quantity, which is prolific, but in the quality and universality of his commentary. The Fathers of all ages are called upon to strengthen an opinion, refute a heretic, or to give a practical homily.

The Haydock Bible was a joint production and it is interesting to ask, which Haydock is honoured in the title? Is it Thomas, the publisher or is it George, the editor, that we refer to, when we say "Haydock's Bible"? We speak of Challoner's version and make no mention of the publisher, and similarly with Kenrick's and Witham's versions. But when we speak of Haydock it is Thomas the publisher that is always called to mind.

The Bible went through many editions, being republished in Dublin, Edinburgh, London, and New York. They were for the most part reprints of the original text but one of these, Dr. Husenbeth's revision (1850) was slightly abridged for he omitted notes on certain passages that were either out of date or deemed superfluous. The original edition was lavishly illustrated with many engravings which have been changed in the later editions. When family bibles were popular, his

¹ "Rhemes and Doway." Archdeacon Cotton, Oxford 1855.

Bible seems to have had its uses apart from its size (it was never a pocket edition!) . . . every copy I have seen has had a plentiful supply of space for family records. Births, deaths, and marriages are all provided for; and in some cases the pages set aside for these records are copiously decorated with heavy ornamentation.

The Haydock Bible is a curiosity today and its originators nearly forgotten. It was, I suppose, the high water mark in their lives. For both it meant financial ruin; Thomas turned his hand to various undertakings but never achieved further success. George had his priesthood and his priestly duties to return to . . . but even these were taken from him when he was under a personal interdict¹ for just over eight years. The world seems to have dealt hardly with these two, but they have left their names enshrined in a monumental work . . . the Haydock Bible.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Expounding the Sunday Gospel

I am afraid that my title, though a convenient one, is an example of *lucus a non lucendo*, since my main interest is to discuss whether the Sunday Gospel may lawfully be passed over and another expounded. Once upon a time I read a paper to the Conference of Higher Studies upon "Holy Scripture and the Liturgy," which appeared in the *Dublin Review* for July 1936, and I may be allowed to refer to it here for much that cannot find a place in the present note. It must be enough to remark that the present selection of epistles and gospels for Sundays is not the result of careful investigation, nor yet a happy one upon its own merits. The biblical and the liturgical movement alike suggest improvement; until this is effected, the question arises whether a parish priest may take it upon himself to read a more helpful epistle or gospel instead of the prescribed one.

The Very Rev. Canon Mahoney (whose authority, I need not say, I greatly respect and am prepared to follow) has published two relevant answers in the *Clergy Review*. In Vol. XV (July–December 1938), p. 537, the question put ran as follows: "Is there any express law which requires the sermon at the chief Mass on Sunday to be explanatory of the Gospel of the day rather than an exposition of some other portion

¹ Haydock's interdict was connected with a sum of money left to endow a poor school for girls at Whitby. The donor seems to have some 30 years later wanted the money to be given to Ushaw. George Haydock paid back £200 thinking it had been a conditional bequest. He refused to pay the rest when he discovered from his predecessor that it had been an absolute gift. He writes in 1849: "I asked simply, as I have done usque ad nauseam, from the different bishops and presidents (of Ushaw) since . . . 'can an absolute donation be recalled, particularly in such circumstances?'"