


1-2019

Question 88 - What are the facts regarding the Douay-Rheims Bible?

Harold Willmington
Liberty University, hwillmington@liberty.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/questions_101

 Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Willmington, Harold, "Question 88 - What are the facts regarding the Douay-Rheims Bible?" (2019). *101 Most Asked Questions*. 83.
https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/questions_101/83

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 101 Most Asked Questions About the Bible at Scholars Crossing. It has been accepted for inclusion in 101 Most Asked Questions by an authorized administrator of Scholars Crossing. For more information, please contact scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu.

101 MOST ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE

88. What are the facts regarding the Douay-Rheims Bible?

- . This version was an attempt by the pope to win England back to the Roman fold, but he utterly failed. It was headed by William Allen and Gregory Martin, two Protestant turncoats from Oxford University. The name comes from the two places where the Old Testament and New Testament were produced. The Douai Version was therefore the first Catholic English Bible and was taken almost literally from the Latin Vulgate. The footnotes in this version strongly attacked all Protestant “heresies,” and defended all Roman Catholic doctrine and practices.
- B. Douay-Rheims Bible – The need for preachers to give adequate translations of the Latin Bible in English – and the desire of the Catholic Church for a sacred text that would answer Protestant translations – resulted in the first English Bible for Catholic worshipers.

Because of persecution under Elizabeth, some English Catholics fled across the Channel to Douay in northern France. There in 1568 they established a Catholic college that was later moved to Rheims. The Catholic translation was begun in Rheims in 1578 by Gregory Martin, an Oxford scholar and a lecturer in Hebrew and the Bible. Martin translated at a rate of two chapters a day, submitting the text to two colleagues for editing. The New Testament was issued in 1582. The Old Testament, delayed by lack of funds, appeared in 1609-10, by which time the college had returned to Douay.

The Douay-Rheims translation, proclaimed the official Catholic version at the Council of Trent in 1546, is a literal rendering of the Latin Vulgate Bible. However, Martin and his editors also consulted the Hebrew and Greek, and other translations, with an eye toward accuracy and grammatical usage. In an effort to preserve the Latin tone of the Vulgate, the translators coined Latin-English terms, such as “supersubstantial bread” (for “daily bread” in the Lord’s Prayer). At the end of the New Testament they provided a glossary of 58 obscure renderings, among them, “acquisition,” “adulterate,” and “victim.” Many of these no longer sound strange to the English speaker.

The translation, along with its annotations, strongly defends the Catholic faith and indicts “the absurd translation” of other English Bibles, with

their use of 'congregation' for 'church,' 'elder' for 'priest,' 'image' for 'idol' . . . and such like, to what other end . . . but to conceal and obscure the name of the Church." While the New Testament produced in Rheims was a source for the King James Version, the Douay Old Testament was published too late to influence it.

(*The Bible Through the Ages*. Reader's Digest. Pleasantville, N.Y. 1996. p. 315)