

THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

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“If You Can’t Beat ‘Em, Join ‘Em”: The Jesuits and the United Bible Societies, Part 1

By Charles Scott-Pearson

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In 2011, during commemorations of the 400th anniversary of the publication of the *Authorized Version* of the Bible, the Vatican Embassy in Washington D.C. stated that the Church of Rome had greatly contributed to its production as it was based on earlier translation work made by a “Roman Catholic priest,” William Tyndale. Most readers, acquainted with Reformation history and the origin of the English Bible, will view this claim with abject incredulity. However, there is a sad truth about many people today who claim to be Christians: they have very little knowledge of the Scriptures and know very little of the history of the Church.

The Church of Rome has been and is constantly active in revising and rewriting history as well as in undermining the positions of Bible believers with their cunning reasoning. One of the claims which is often used by Roman Catholic apologists, particularly when they are unable to cope with the Bible disproving the teachings of their church, is that the Roman Catholic Church gave the Bible to the world.

Before the Second Vatican Council, the Church of Rome was very much against the translation of the Bible in the vernacular and its distribution among the people. In AD 666 Latin became the official language of the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church. The Latin Bible, the Vulgate translated by Jerome in the 4th century, became the official version to be used in churches.

To prevent normal people owning or reading the Bible, either in Latin or in any other language, the Council of Toulouse in 1229 decreed the following: “We prohibit also that the laity should be permitted to have the books of the Old and the New Testament; unless anyone from the motives of devotion should wish to have the Psalter or the Breviary [the Roman Catholic liturgy] for divine offices or the hours of the blessed Virgin; but we most strictly forbid their having any translation of these books.” The Reformation gave impetus to the translation of the Bible into the vernacular of many of the European nations.

The Vatican Off Balance

The work of Bible Societies throughout the 19th Century and early 20th Century, combined with the zeal of many missionaries, alarmed the Roman Catholic Church. Bibles became available in large quantities in French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese and were being given to people who were under Rome's darkness. Large numbers of

conversions followed, and the Church of Rome was forced to respond.

In 1824, Pope Leo XII in his Encyclical Letter *Ubi Primum* addressed the bishops with these words: “You have noticed a society, commonly called the Bible society [British and Foreign Bible Society, founded 1804], boldly spreading throughout the whole world. Rejecting the traditions of the holy Fathers and infringing the well-known decree of the Council of Trent, it works by every means to have the holy Bible translated, or rather mistranslated, into the ordinary languages of every nation. There are good reasons for fear that (as has already happened in some of their commentaries and in other respects by a distorted interpretation of Christ’s gospel) they will produce a gospel of men, or what is worse, a gospel of the devil!”¹

Twenty-two years later, Pope Pius IX, in his Encyclical *Qui Plurimus*, attacked the work of Bible societies with these words: “These crafty Bible societies, which renew the ancient guile of heretics, cease not to thrust their Bibles upon all men, even the unlearned – their Bibles, which have been translated against the laws of the church, and often contain false explanations of the text. Thus, the divine traditions, the teaching of the Fathers, and the authority of the [Roman] Catholic Church are rejected, and everyone in his own way interprets the words of the Lord, and distorts their meaning, thereby falling into miserable errors.”²

The temporal power of Rome was lost in 1870 when the Italian troops invaded the Papal States and conquered Rome, making her the capital of the newly born Kingdom of Italy. The wide circulation of Scriptures in the vernacular in predominantly Roman Catholic nations had begun to undermine the “spiritual power” and the unquestioned religious supremacy enjoyed by the Papacy.

The unstoppable force of the Word of God increased after World War Two. The defeat of Fascist Italy and other Axis powers further

undermined the work of the Roman Catholic Church, particularly in southern Europe. The victory of the Allied forces was followed, in the aftermath of the war, by the arrival of Protestant missionaries from the United Kingdom, the United States and other Protestant countries. The circulation of Bibles increased alarmingly [in the Vatican’s view] and the Church of Rome needed to deal with the increase of Protestants in Europe and Latin America, its heartlands.

Pope John XXIII, alarmed not only by the increase of Communism in the Roman Catholic world, but also by the growing presence of Protestants in those countries which were traditionally considered Roman Catholic, convened the Second Vatican Council in 1963. It became necessary that the issue of the Bible and its circulation should be urgently addressed, since there was no longer a political regime which it was able to force to carry out the bidding of the Vatican and enforce its cruel and oppressive persecutions. So, the policy of the Vatican started to follow [American war correspondent] Quentin Reynolds’ proverb: “If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em.”

Pope Paul VI, successor of John XXIII who died during the Council, promulgated on November 18, 1965 a very important document, *Dei Verbum* – The Word of God.³ A leading figure in the preparation of this document was Basil Christopher Butler, an English convert from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism, an Oxford graduate and Abbot-President of the English Benedictine Order. He has been defined by many Roman Catholic scholars as “one of the two dozen who made the Council.”

Rome’s False Definition of “The Word of God”

Dei Verbum sets out how the Roman Catholic Church sees Scripture and its own tradition. This document states: “Sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, committed to the Church. Holding fast to this deposit the entire holy people united with their shepherds remain always steadfast in the teaching of the Apostles, in the common life, in the breaking

¹ *Ubi Primum, On His Assuming the Pontificate*, Pope Leo XII, 1824, as viewed at <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/leo12/112ubipr.htm>.

² *Qui Pluribus, On Faith and Religion*, Pope Pius IX, 1846, as viewed at <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius09/p9quiplu.htm>.

³http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html.

of the bread and in prayers, so that holding to, practicing and professing the heritage of the faith, it becomes on the part of the bishops and faithful a single common effort.”

The Word of God, in the Roman Catholic Church, is not just the Protestant Canon of Scripture, but the 66 Books of the Bible plus the Apocrypha, and the Tradition of the Church. Roman Catholic apologists give the following definition of Tradition: “Sacred according to Rome, their tradition includes ‘transmitted revelation,’ that part of God’s revealed word which is not contained in Sacred Scripture.” Referring specifically to how Christian tradition was handed on, the Second Vatican Council says: “It was done by the apostles who handed on, by the spoken word of their preaching, by the example they gave, by the institutions they established, what they themselves had received whether from the lips of Christ, from His way of life and His works, or whether they had learned it by the prompting of the Holy Spirit” (*Dei Verbum*).

Rome Begins Undermining “Protestant” Bible Societies, Dialogues with Cults

Following the Second Vatican Council, the Church of Rome has become actively involved with the work of Bible Societies. In 1969, Pope Paul VI, encouraged the formation of the World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate, known since 1990 as the Catholic Biblical Federation. The aim of this federation is not simply to provide translations of the Bible in various languages. From their official website we can read: “The primary task of the Catholic Biblical Federation resides in the effort to translate the biblical message into the personal and communal context of human beings’ lives. It thereby promotes a way of reading Sacred Scriptures which uncovers the life-giving message of God’s Word, thus countering the danger of a fundamentalist misinterpretation.”

This organization also supports “inter-confessional dialogue based on the common heritage of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures, and also the dialogue between the religions based on Sacred Scripture and those scriptures considered as sacred by other religions.” A quick glance through their

website quickly reveals how actively they are involved in co-operating with and influencing the work of Bible translations in an “ecumenical” way as well as providing Bible study materials produced according to the dictates of *Dei Verbum*.

The co-operation of Liberal Protestant and Roman Catholic scholars in the field of Bible translation and related material has helped bolster the dishonest claim that the Roman Catholic Church has given us the Bible.

The acceptance of such a claim by many ignorant Evangelicals and Protestants has led to the acceptance of the Church of Rome as “another Christian denomination.” The walls separating the errors of Rome from the truth of the Scriptures have been pulled down to let a dangerous Trojan horse enter many Christian circles and lead them into apostasy and compromise. It has also pigeon-holed Bible believing Christians in a fundamentalist mold, aptly shaped by Jesuit craftiness, so that the authorities will compare them with Islamic extremism, thus discrediting their image, undermining their credibility, weakening their testimony, and encouraging the potential curtailing of their liberties. Further co-operation with this ecumenical body leads inevitably to co-operation with other non-Christian religions such as Islam.

It also opens a dialogue with cults such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Mormons. After all the Vatican, the Watchtower and the Mormons have a common ground: The Bible plus Tradition, plus the Governing Body, meaning that the laity cannot interpret Scripture for themselves.

Editor’s note: This article will conclude in the next Trinity Review.