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MODERN TRANSLATIONS OF
THE VULGATE,
AND THE BIBLE SOCIETY.

THE STATEMENT OF
The Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society
RESPECTING THE
CIRCULATION OF ROMAN CATHOLIC VERSIONS
EXAMINED,
IN A LETTER TO THE REV. CARUS WILSON.

BY C. E. STUART,
AUTHOR OF "THE BIBLE, AND VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE."

"He that hath *my* word, let him speak *my* word *faithfully*."—(JER. XXIII. 38.)
"μηδέ δολοῦντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ."—(2 COR. IV. 2.)



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REGARDING THE

CONTINENTAL VERSIONS OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

BY REV. W. CARUS WILSON.

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MODERN TRANSLATIONS

OF THE

VULGATE.

MY DEAR MR. WILSON,—As you take great interest in the work of Bible distribution, and of late years have had some experience of this kind of missionary labour on the Continent, I am desirous of calling your attention to the statement put forth some months ago by the British and Foreign Bible Society in vindication of their practice of circulating among Roman Catholics, on the Continent and elsewhere, versions made from the Vulgate.

The statement to which I refer, and which, doubtless, you read, defends the present practice on three separate grounds :—

I. The practice of our blessed Lord and the apostles of quoting the LXX.

II. The little and unimportant differences which it is alleged exist between the translations of the Vulgate, and the translations of the originals.

III. The *necessity* of distributing versions made from the Vulgate.

1. In the first place, we are reminded that our Lord and the apostles quoted the LXX, and hence, it is concluded, we are justified in adopting for circulation versions of the Scriptures which are unsound in doctrine. I need not go over the whole of this argument, but refer you for the practice of our Lord and the apostles to an excellent letter of Dr. Tregelles, which appeared soon afterwards in the "Record," proving that, though the LXX is quoted in the New Testament, yet when the important word of the quotation differs from the original, the inspired writers correct the LXX. This shows that they did not connive at error in the place of truth.*

* In Matt. ii. 15, where the Evangelist quotes from the LXX, he corrects its reading, for the LXX reads *children*, the Evangelist *son*. In Matt. xxvi. 31, our Lord quotes, "I will smite the *shepherd*;" the LXX reads *shepherds*, in the plural.

From this defence of the Society we should expect to find that the LXX was one of the versions adopted. Instead of which we are informed in a note that the LXX and certain other versions are not circulated by them.

Are the cases parallel? However often the LXX is quoted, it is never once adduced to establish any doctrine *contrary* to what we find taught in the original Hebrew; whereas it is undeniable that the Vulgate and the versions made from it do teach certain doctrines which cannot be found in the originals or the LXX. The LXX was a version much esteemed among the Jews, and, probably, Greek was better understood by the generality of the Jews at the time of our Lord than Hebrew, which had become a dead language.

Before, therefore, the cases are accepted as parallel, it must be proved that by this act of our Lord the LXX was made of equal authority with the inspired Hebrew, and that the doctrinal teaching of the LXX, even when it differs from the Hebrew, is to be accepted as equally the mind of God. But if our Lord's practice in quoting the LXX be sufficient authority for circulating the Vulgate and the several translations of it, it must be held equally valid for the circulation of *all* erroneous versions, and we must be held as failing in our duty in just so much as we abstain from circulating any unsound translation which any sect of the Christian world use in preference to a faithful one. Hence, instead of its being any merit in the Society that it does not adopt the LXX, the Douay, the Rhemish, and Bordeaux, as is sometimes made to appear, it must on this reasoning be admitted that we are wanting in our duty in not distributing them. But what are these versions which the Society makes a merit of not circulating? The LXX is the version quoted by our Lord, and, therefore, according to the argument noticed above, should of *all* versions be adopted by the Society. As for the Douay and Rhemish (for they are but one—the Douay being the translation of the Old Testament into English, and the Rhemish the translation of the New) which the Roman Catholics in this country adopt, the defenders of the Society know full well that the subscribers would never sanction its circulation. Still less would they sanction the Bordeaux version—*one of the most barefaced attempts to pervert the Word of God* ever brought forward—so barefaced, that I feel sure the Roman Catholics of France would refuse to adopt it. (See for an account of it "Horne's Introduction," vol. v.) In truth, if these are the chief versions which the Society makes a merit of discountenancing, the less that is said about them, for the character of this noble Institution, the better.

2. We are told that, after all, the differences in the Vulgate and its translations from the original Scriptures are of little importance.

Can those who say this have examined the question? It is a matter of fact that there are great differences, and that some of these great differences are most important, because on them the Church of Rome grounds some of her worst doctrinal errors.

The Word of God knows nothing of *doing penance*; the phrase is nowhere to be found throughout the Sacred Volume. But in the translations from the Vulgate this phrase is continually to be met with. Here, then, is one most important difference. I am aware that Mr. Plumptre has endeavoured to explain away this phrase as regards De Sacy, but in truth he cannot. "Faire penitence" is a phrase in daily use, and is applied, by the common people at least, to express one particular idea, the painful satisfaction for sin enjoined by the priest. The extract from the Dictionary of the French Academy which I lately sent you is conclusive on this point.

If you refer to Psalm xcvi. 5 (xcix. of our version), you will find these words: "*Worship his footstool, for it is holy.*" In Heb. xi. 21 it is stated that Jacob *worshipped the top of his staff*. It is obvious what use may be made of these errors, which arise in both instances from the omission of a preposition; neither of them can be substantiated from the originals. Take another instance. In Heb. i. 3; x. 12, we read that our Lord Jesus Christ "*sits offering* one sacrifice (or host) for sin," thus implying that the sacrifice of himself once for all offered up on the cross, was incomplete, imperfect. How contrary is this, not only to the general teaching of Scripture, but also to the original in these places. According to the Vulgate, almsgiving can redeem the soul. (Dan. iv. 24.) The original is very different. I might multiply instances, but these will suffice. (See also Gen. iii. 15; Luke i. 28; Gen. vi. 5; Jer. xvii. 9; Ephes. v. 32; Heb. xiii. 16; 1 Pet. iii. 19.) Enough, I trust, has been adduced to prove that the differences are of great importance.

It is further remarked that the Rhemish Testament, which the Society takes credit to itself for not circulating, is *worse* than that of De Sacy. A comparison of the two will, I think, show that the reverse is the case. De Sacy wanders more from the Vulgate, and interpolates more, than the generality of the translations of that version. The Rhemish seems to adhere pretty closely to the Vulgate, adopting most, if not all, its errors, but not interpolating so freely as De Sacy. In De Sacy we find countenance given to the idea of *indulgences* (2 Cor. ii. 10), and celibacy called a *good work*. (1 Cor.

vii. 37.) Bishops and deacons are spoken of as *having had one wife* (1 Tim. iii. 2, 12 ; Titus i. 6) ; thus affording a plea for the celibacy of the priesthood. The Rhemish countenances none of these doctrinal errors. De Sacy, too, interpolates far more than the Rhemish. (See Col. ii. 18 ; 1 Tim. vi. 12 ; Heb. ii. 18 ; vi. 10 ; xi. 21 ; 1 Pet. i. 9, &c.) One other passage let me mention. In Matt. i. 25 De Sacy reads, " He had known her *when* she had brought forth her firstborn son." The Rhemish reads, "*Till* she brought forth," &c. It is plain which version is nearer the original in this place ; and further, it must be admitted that in the comparisons just made De Sacy is found to be (as far as the mere text is concerned, for that is all we have to do with) a more unsound and less trustworthy translator of the Vulgate than the authors of the Rhemish New Testament. Before leaving this part of the subject, I would notice the apology for the practice of the British and Foreign Bible Society. ' It is said that the Irish Church Missions Society adopt a similar course in circulating the Douay Bible. I believe their practice is different, and cannot therefore be adduced as a parallel case. They use and encourage the use of the Douay in their controversial classes, but they do not circulate it as what they consider to be a faithful account of the revealed will of God. The Bible Society has no controversial classes ; it cannot have ; neither does it circulate any notes with its Bibles : a very proper proceeding. Mr. Tiddy tells us that the colporteurs are instructed to point out to purchasers that De Sacy's is not a faithful translation. If this is the case in Belgium, it is plain from Mr. Millard that it is not the case among the colporteurs under his direction, if he has any in Germany ; and though the colporteur in Belgium may tell the people, as Mr. Tiddy says he does, that De Sacy is only a translation of a translation, and, therefore Martin or Osterwald are to be preferred as superior versions, it is clear from Mr. Kirkpatrick's letter that he does not hint at *erroneous doctrine*, else how could he challenge the priest in the same place—a Roman Catholic village—to point out any error in it ? This plan of procedure is a direct assertion in the face of the common people of the faithfulness and accuracy of De Sacy. This is not the practice of the Irish Church Missions. But supposing that they did the very thing we reprobate, would this alter the case ? If it be wrong in itself, as we maintain it to be, the practice of the Irish Church Mission could not make it right ; and if it be right in itself, the Bible Society need not plead the acts of another Society as a warrant or example for themselves. And if the Society, to shelter itself from blame, is so ready to plead

the practice of the Irish Church Missions, how comes it that it takes credit to itself for *not* circulating the Douay? Surely it had need here to say, "Save me from my friends!"

To proceed to the third argument:—

III. We are told that the necessity of the case requires that the translations of the Vulgate be adopted and circulated. The most widely-circulated of these translations are De Sacy in French, Martini in Italian, Scio in Spanish, Pereira in Portuguese, and the New Testaments of Gosner, Van Ess, and Kistemaker in German.

The statement of the Society alluded to at the commencement of this letter rests this part of the case on the testimony of five of its agents, whose letters are appended. Let us, therefore, examine them, and see on what grounds they rest their defence. But first we should remember, when treating of the Bible, that it is God's own word, revealed to us by the Holy Spirit; that the "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," their tongues were the "pen of a ready writer." We must presume that God knew what He would reveal; and that the fact of certain truths being revealed is evidence that He intended us to be acquainted with them as truths of the utmost importance. It follows, therefore, that we cannot suppress any portion of His word, for He alone is the judge of what we require; nor can we alter His message, for we have no authority or permission to do so. As we have received it so we must deliver it, guarding to the best of *our* ability against any imperfection in the transmission of it to others.

Now for the letters of the agents. Mr. Presensée seeks to establish three points:—

1. That the suppression of De Sacy would imperil the colporteur's license, who would then be considered as nothing more than a Protestant emissary; and he would not then appear, as he now does, as committed to neither side,—a neutral person.

2. It would augment the difficulties now thrown in the colporteur's way by the Romish clergy.

3. It would increase the difficulties on the part of the purchaser. For though "there is no prejudice against Evangelical religion in France, there is, in many minds, a serious prejudice against an official Protestantism;" and the colporteurs, with Martin and Ostervald, without De Sacy, could not "then present themselves as Christians, as men who practise the religion taught in the book which they sell."

1. In answer to the first objection. Wherever the practice we seek to establish has been carried out, there has been no difficulty in getting the license for the colporteurs. But should there be found

greater difficulties, may we not hope that He who has given us His word for our use, and who has hitherto so far inclined the hearts of officials to suffer its dissemination in company with their own perverted version, will, if we act in faithful and prayerful dependance on Him, bless us, and remove the difficulties as they arise. Why should we think that increased faithfulness on our part will be followed up with a diminished blessing from God? Are we to suppose that He favours those who pervert His truth, *more* than those who honour it? Surely the promise, "Them that honour me, I will honour," is at once an answer to Mr. Presensée's first objection, and an encouragement to go forward.

2. As for the second objection, the closing sentence of his letter is a sufficient refutation. "Thus much I know full well, as it respects France, of which I can speak positively, that the French priests, with very rare exceptions, are openly and violently opposed, as much to the circulation of De Sacy, as they are to the circulation of the Protestant version: as far as they are concerned, there is no difference between these versions; they proscribe them with equal rigour. This fact appears to me conclusive." Conclusive of what?—that if De Sacy is suppressed, the priest would augment the difficulties now experienced by the colporteur? If De Sacy is equally hated by the majority of the priests, if they proscribe it with *equal* rigour, if they do not discriminate between it and the others, it is difficult to see how its suppression can increase the troubles they already foment, to hinder the work of Bible distribution. We know that if they could, even De Sacy's version would be burnt to-morrow, and what restrains them? Public opinion? No. It is God alone who restrains their wrath. He has a work to be done, and it shall be accomplished, despite the rage and violence of the priesthood. It is from God that our success has come. Let us look at the question from a Christian point of view, and go forward, believing that if He has a work for us to do, no power of man, no opposition of bigotry, no storm of hatred can stop it; but if He will not use us as instruments for His work, then no number of copies we circulate will effect permanent good.

3. But we are further told that it would increase the difficulties on the part of the purchaser. The mask would be thrown off, and the colporteur, who now professes to be a simple Christian practising the precepts of the book he sells, could do so no longer. It is not very easy to see the logic of this. Will the rejection of De Sacy unchristianise him? or does he now practise the precepts of the Vulgate, and not those of the Scriptures? Why, then, should he change his appearance or profession? Are the people at present under the

impression that the colporteur is sent by the priests? M. Presensée has answered this question. "Every Catholic who purchases the Bible, or even the New Testament, by that act detaches himself from the direction of the curé. All the priests in France from their pulpits denounce anathemas against every one who shall suffer himself to be seduced by these Protestant propagandists, who go about colporting 'falsified' Bibles; declaring, in the plainest manner, that none of the faithful can be allowed to read the Scriptures which they cannot understand. Such being the case, it is evident that it is not to the priest that the people apply for the purpose of being instructed concerning what they either read or hear read in the Bible, but they apply to the man who sold them the book, and had advised them to read it." And further on,—“It may, therefore, be said, that the greater number of those who read the sacred Scriptures read them under the direction, and under the influence of the colporteurs, and, in any case, are not in bondage to the Church of Rome.” These words prove that the people know well that the colporteurs *are* the opponents of the priests. There is, therefore, no disguise in the matter. They present themselves as teachers of a religion different from the priests, in proof of which assertion they refer to Scripture. What more could they do if De Sacy was withdrawn? M. Presensée's third objection is answered by his own statements.

Dr. Pinkerton states that "the German Roman Catholic spurns Luther's version; his name upon the title-page is a terror to the people, and seldom is his Bible bought even by educated Roman Catholics." He adds that, "through the powerful opposition of the priests, our distribution, even of their own versions, have decreased to nearly one-third of what they formerly were." Hence he infers that the practice cannot be changed. Now, if it be the case that the German Roman Catholic spurns Luther's Bible, and his very name is a bugbear, how comes it that at the chief depôt in Earl-street no German Bibles or Testaments are kept on sale but those of Luther? The others are not kept because they *would cumber the shelves with unsaleable stock*. Are there no German Roman Catholics in England? Or are there none who desire or are willing to read the Bible in this country? Either the Society wholly neglects the German Roman Catholics who visit our shores, or these visitants are willing to receive Luther's version. Dr. Pinkerton further informs us that he never heard of a Protestant becoming a worshipper of the Virgin from reading in Genesis, "*She shall bruise thy head.*" This information was scarcely necessary. But this mode of stating the question evades the *real* point. Have the translations of the Vulgate fostered in any

Roman Catholic any of the peculiar dogmas of his Church which are not to be found in Scripture? Do these versions, not in some places only, but uniformly through the several books of Scripture, condemn the peculiar errors of Rome, or do they in any places seem to support them in opposition to the teaching of the originals? Do they set forth clearly, and with no uncertain sound, what are the truths revealed to us in God's word or not?

Before passing on to Mr. Tiddy, I would call your attention to the Report of Dr. Pinkerton, published in the Annual Report for 1855-56:—"One of the principal undertakings of the past year has been the publication of the first edition by our Society of Van Ess's Bible, of which the Old Testament is a translation from the Hebrew; and I am happy to state that it has met with a more favourable reception among Roman Catholics than we had anticipated. Of the first edition of 5,000 copies, nearly one-half from the three depôts of the Society have been disposed of, and a new edition of 10,000 copies is now in the press." It appears to me that this statement is most important, we learn from it that Roman Catholics will receive translations of the originals. If we can get them to this we can offer faithful versions. Who shall say that Roman Catholics will only receive the version sanctioned by their Church, when a version from the Hebrew Old Testament is so readily disposed of? It matters not who the translator is, Protestant or Roman Catholic, provided he make the translation from the originals, and adheres to them. Surely the success that has attended Van Ess, if his Bible be really a faithful translation, should embolden the Society to adopt the plan urged on them, and should encourage us to persevere in seeking for its adoption.

Mr. Tiddy writes, that the withdrawal of translations of the Vulgate "would put an end to the work of colportage on the Continent." Has this been proved, or is it merely his opinion? If the latter, then, though his experience of nineteen years is entitled to much weight, his deliberate judgment of what cannot be done must be received with caution. He further writes, "that you cannot break new ground but by circulating these versions." This assertion requires proof. How comes it that new ground was broken at Boulogne *without* the Vulgate translations? "The priests," he writes, "are as much opposed to the one as the other; and in discussing with the people, both *vivâ voce* and by the press, they have protested against *all* our versions, as being equally Protestant. Your withdrawal of the Vulgate version from circulation would be the greatest boon ever conferred on Popery; and the most important victory ever gained over Protestantism on the Continent!" These two last sentiments appear rather contradictory.

If De Sacy is called Protestant along with Martin, how can the withdrawal of one Protestant version be a great boon to Popery? If the priests are equally opposed to De Sacy and Martin, the withdrawal of the former could not be expected to increase their hostility; and if the Roman Catholic has, despite the denunciations of the priest, purchased a translation which his priest tells him is equally Protestant with Martin or Ostervald, why should he refuse to take Martini or Ostervald when the other is no longer offered him?

Mr. Kirkpatrick writes, that while the circulation of Martin and Ostervald far exceeds De Sacy in Belgium, "yet there are many conscientious Catholics who would on no account open a book with the name of David Martin on the title-page." The colportage, he thinks, would suffer, for the colporteur could not present himself in a bigoted village with only Protestant versions to dispose of. But now if he meet with opposition from the priest, he can hand him his own version to examine, and to point out any errors he can find in it. In conclusion, he says, "The priests are generally as much opposed to the Catholic as to the Protestant versions: everything published by the Bible Society is placed by them in the *Index*."

Since the priests place all the publications of the Society in the *Index*, and are equally opposed generally to all the versions of the Society, it is difficult to see why the withdrawal of De Sacy should increase their hatred and opposition. As to the colporteurs and the priest, though the exhibition of De Sacy may silence the priest, it is surely working in an underhand manner, to challenge him to point out errors in a version which the colporteur must know is most unsound in doctrine; and then to give him to understand that it is this only that he sells, for I conclude this is the object of showing him De Sacy. Surely this method of working is not what we would wish or uphold. If God's word shall prosper in the thing whereto He sends it, we need not seek to stop the priest's mouth with a version we do not approve of.

Mr. Millard, of Cologne, endeavours to meet the question by a comparison of Van Ess and Kistemaker with Luther's Version. Unfortunately for his argument, he quotes those passages where the Vulgate does not differ in any material point from the Greek. This part of his argument, therefore, goes for nothing. But he asserts that we may, without sacrificing any principles, safely circulate the translations of the Vulgate. This is a mere assertion, which, if the New Testaments of Van Ess and Kistemaker adhere at all strictly to the Vulgate (of which the latter, I believe, professes to be a translation), a slight examination of them would prove fallacious. He

states that the version of Luther cannot be circulated among Roman Catholics. Has he tried it? But he adds, "were the Roman Catholic Versions wilfully falsified the case would stand differently." Now it may be proved that they are wilfully falsified; for it is no secret that the important doctrinal differences between the Vulgate and the originals cannot be supported on the ground of their being true. Yet they are continued and circulated as true. They are, therefore, *now* wilful corruptions and perversions. But the fact of these errors being wilful or not does not affect the real question. If certain doctrinal errors exist in a translation of God's Word, that is surely sufficient to condemn it as unsound, whether these errors were the mistakes of the printer or the wilful corruptions of the translator. When we buy a book which, on examination, proves not to be what it professes, some leaves being omitted, or passages altered, we do not stop to inquire how the mistake arose, but we condemn that copy at once as imperfect or erroneous. Mr. Millard concludes by predicting a total cessation of the work, if only faithful versions are henceforth circulated in Germany. This is only an opinion, as yet unsupported by experience. For my part, I cannot *yet* think that God's Word fails of its mission wherever it is faithfully presented to the people for whom it is prepared.

Thus far the letters of the agents. A perusal of them brings out prominently the following points:—

I. *That none of them HAVE TRIED the plan proposed.* They speak, therefore, not from experience, but conjecture. Some may remember that the same arguments, or very similar ones, were urged against the omission of the Apocrypha. That victory having been gained, this question follows. For if the Roman Catholic now consents to receive a mutilated copy of the Word of God (for such his Church considers all copies without the Apocrypha), why should we not hope that he will come to accept a faithful one? If we have succeeded in proving to his satisfaction (as the increased sale of the Scriptures abroad shows), that the Apocrypha is not an integral part of Holy Writ, why can we not hope to convince him of the indisputable fact that the Vulgate, to which his Church pays such deference as to account it equal in authority to the originals—that the Vulgate, of which he now accepts a mutilated copy, because man had added to it works which are not divine—that this version with which so much of human error was mixed up, is *still* unsound and erroneous,—containing many errors not the less to be avoided because they are so insidiously introduced into the sacred text itself? Having shaken his faith in the correctness of the Vulgate already, why should we despair, with the Divine blessing, of making him discard it altogether? Those

who advocate a reform in the Society do not ask for the adoption of an untried plan—a mere chimera. They point to *what has been done*, and ask the Society to go and do likewise. But it is said, the instance chiefly relied on—the work among the French troops—is an exceptional case. All will admit that an army is oftentimes more free from the dominion of priestcraft than most other bodies of men. But while admitting this it should also be remembered that an army is composed of men drawn from different parts of the country, and hence we may, in some degree, feel the pulse of the common people through their brothers and fathers in the army. We may, therefore, conclude from the success of the experiment in the French army, that the common people are not so much opposed, in themselves, to receive faithful versions as is sometimes asserted. But it will be said that the priests have more power over the peasants. Granted. But why not work in faith, believing that God has power over the priests, and can and will control the opposition of men to further His own ends? Mr. Presensée, speaking of the distribution at a low price, says that the men “would have given evidence of very bad grace, if they had not accepted, without remark or objection, the book so freely offered them.” This may sound well, but you will remember that our experience on the Lake of Geneva does not bear it out. Hostility to God’s Word is not allayed even by gratis distribution. Witness the tearing up of a copy of Martin’s Testament, in Captain Kelly’s face, at Ouchy, that winter. Surely Mr. Presensée, to make out his case, pays the soldier but a sorry compliment. Mr. P., to make his case stronger, says that the majority of the soldiers did not know that Martin and Ostervald were Protestants. This fact tells both ways. If the conscript was ignorant of the religion of these translators, must we not expect that his family and brethren are equally ignorant, and hence very many of the common people in France are not in themselves opposed to the reception of these versions. I might mention here a curious fact connected with the distribution of Bibles among the Sardinians, in the Crimea. An eye-witness informs me that at first some copies of Martini were supplied them. The soldier compared it with Diodati, and very soon many of the copies of Martini were returned as *incorrect*. This fact speaks volumes.

II. *The letters of the agents exhibit throughout a want of confidence in the inherent power of God’s Word.* I am not misrepresenting their sentiments, as expressed in these letters, when I say, that the substance of their testimony is to this effect: God’s Word cannot work alone. It needs—what? More faith?—more plainness? No, but man’s corruptions, man’s perversions, before it can perform its work. Surely, if those who thus write were asked their opinion of

the power of God's Word, they would answer very differently. They declare that the withdrawal of the translations of the Vulgate would almost put an end to the work of colportage on the Continent. Now what, let me ask, do the authorities fear abroad? Is it the Vulgate? Is it the translation of the Vulgate? Ask the authorities in Tuscany. They permit Martini, but condemn Diodati. They print Martini, and proscribe Diodati. Nay, the testimony of the agents is decisive on this point. De Sacy's Version is allowed by the civil authorities, say they; but the other would not be permitted without it,—what is this but a confession that the versions feared are the faithful ones? Is not this a convincing testimony to the power of the truth? These versions would not be proscribed and declaimed against, if they did not militate against the religion of the priests. The very fact of their being everywhere spoken against is an evidence of their power, and the good, under God, they can effect. Why, then, should we hang back in this matter? We may see which version can effect most, by seeing which versions those opposed to the truth fear most. And what says God's Word of its own power? We read of it as “quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” We read of it “as a fire and as a hammer, which breaketh the rock in pieces.” We read of it “as converting the soul.” What surer testimony is needed of its power? Shall we, then, admit for one moment that without the corruptions of man it cannot prosper? That without the errors which man has introduced, it cannot produce the right effect? What is this but to limit the power of the Holy Spirit, and belie the character of the Word?

III. *There is a confusion between errors in doctrine and mere imperfections.* Mr. Millard's letter is a striking instance of this. Now I maintain that these are two *distinct questions*; a version may have imperfections without doctrinal errors. It may fail to express the full force of the original, either from some inherent want in the language, or from the ignorance of the translator. All human translations of God's Word *must* fall short of the original, for man's work must be imperfect. And who will say that our own beautiful version is without any imperfection? But it is free from doctrinal error. We cannot expect that a version shall be free from imperfection, but we have a right to expect that a translation of the Bible shall not pervert the truth, or teach as true what it is well known cannot be found in the originals. Here is a broad line of demarcation. Doctrinal error we will not have; imperfections we cannot avoid. The subject is too often presented as merely one of imperfection. A slight

examination will show the fallacy of this. In the Vulgate, and the translations of it, not only are facts misrepresented, but doctrinal errors are introduced. Our complaint against these versions is of a twofold nature. First, that in following the Vulgate, they teach the doctrinal errors contained in it; and, secondly, that in differing from it, they teach many doctrinal errors which even that translation condemns. For examples confirmatory of this statement I refer you to two pamphlets,—“The Bible and the Versions of the Bible,” in which you will find some of the leading errors of Scio’s and Pereira’s Version exposed, and the “New Testament and its Translations,” in which you will find pointed out some of the leading errors of De Sacy and Martini.

IV. *The whole defence proceeds on the assumption that we are answerable for the result.* If the Roman Catholic will not receive a faithful translation, we must give him an unfaithful one. With all deference to those who, perhaps, have grown grey in the work of Bible distribution, I would remark that this is a grand mistake. We have nothing to do with the result; we are not answerable for the conduct of others: but we are accountable for our own. Their rejection of the truth will not be laid to our charge, if we have faithfully delivered it to them. If we warn them according to the tenour of God’s truth, our work is done. Results belong to God. We cannot change the heart, or uproot the enmity of a life-time. We cannot overcome prejudice, or do away with the hostility of the natural man; but God can, and it is the special attribute of His Spirit, acting through His Word, to change the heart and overcome all opposition. “Not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit” alone, is a change effected: If this be the case, as undoubtedly it is, should we not look more at the means than the result? Should we not be more careful that the means we use are unexceptionable, that our conduct in the matter is beyond reproach, and leave the rest to Him who “worketh all things after the counsel of His own will”?

But we are constantly reminded of the success which has attended the present plan. True, God has prospered the reading of these versions; but the success with which we have been blessed should stimulate us to redoubled diligence, and a more faithful reliance on Him, feeling assured that if He has prospered us in our unfaithfulness, He will doubtless more abundantly bless our faithful efforts.

V. *The only versions defended are those of De Sacy, Van Ess, and Kistemaker.* Are we to infer from this that the Committee do not defend Scio, Pereira, and Martini? As regards Martini, we have been told that there are now but few copies in the depôts abroad. In Eng-

land there are none. As respects Scio, if in the mother country the opportunities for circulating the Bible are now few, in some of the South American States, old colonies of the Spanish Monarchy, no legal enactments against the Bible are in force.

In the Report of the Society for 1856 you will find the following interesting intelligence respecting the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking population of South America. Of the Spanish population it is said, "There is, as is ever the case in Papal countries, a desire on the part of the common people to receive the Scripture, and yet a determination on the part of the priesthood to prevent such reception. But, notwithstanding the opposition, his (Rev. Mr. Montsalvage, an agent of the American Bible Society,) distributions have already been large and encouraging." Speaking of the Portuguese population in that Continent, the Report proceeds, "From the unusual eagerness with which the Portuguese seek the Scriptures, there is reason to expect happy results from this agency."

The above are extracts from the American Bible Society's Report. What are we doing, I would ask, for these people? Are Scio and Pereira to be the *only* versions offered them?

It would be well if we knew whether the agents for France, Belgium, and Germany decide by their opinion the practice of the Committee in Spain, Portugal, Italy, Mexico, New Granada, &c., or whether the Committee abandons, as far as these countries are concerned, the practice it so earnestly contends for in France, Belgium, and the German States.

But, after all, the arguments adduced for the continuance of the practice sink into insignificance before the great, the preliminary question, What message have we to deliver? Have we *authority* to tell men to do penance in the place of repentance? Have we authority to teach by precept and example the worship of created things? Does the dogma of indulgence form part of the Gospel? Does purgatory enter into the scheme of salvation? Can we adduce authority for declaring celibacy to be a good work, or for insinuating that the clergy should be single? Do we find any countenance for the statement that marriage is a sacrament, or that the Apostles observed canonical hours? Does Scripture declare that we can gain the favour of God by anything we can do? Or have we any grounds for writing the word *mother*, where the Virgin Mary is meant, with a capital *M*, thus putting her, in this respect, on an equality with the Father?*

* In Pereira's Portuguese Bible, we read *Mã* for *mã*, mother, just as we read *Pai*, Father, where the First Person in the blessed Trinity is spoken of. See also Scio's Spanish Bible.

If these are doctrines of the Bible,—if they form part of Divine revelation,—by all means circulate the translations which teach them ; but if not,—if such topics form no part of the revealed will of God,—if such notions cannot be found in Scripture,—if Scripture is opposed to them in precept and declaration,—what business have we, what authority can we plead, for teaching them as truth, and making the ignorant believe that such dogmas can be proved from Holy Writ ?

Before closing these remarks, I wish to call your attention to a statement of Mr. Kirkpatrick, confirmed by Dr. Pinkerton, that Roman Catholics often refuse a Bible with the name of a Protestant translation on the title page. Now if the names of David Martin and Martin Luther are such bugbears, why not endeavour to overcome this preliminary objection by printing an edition of their Bibles without their names, following the example of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, in their revised French and Spanish Bibles. This would be no surrender of principle. Or if there be anything in the several versions called Protestant, which hinders a Roman Catholic from receiving them, any obsolete words or peculiar form of expression ; if these can be altered without compromising the truth, or destroying the fidelity of these translations, why not subject them to a revision ? It is clearly as much our duty to remove any impediment which at present hinders a Roman Catholic from receiving a faithful version, as it is to take care that the version offered for his acceptance be, what it professes, a faithful translation of the revealed will of God. Let it be, at the same time, remembered, that we ask for the adoption of only Protestant versions, because of their general fidelity to the originals, and not because of the translator's faith.

Shall we be met with the objection that the Committee are not critics ? Willingly or unwillingly they constitute themselves critics, else why was the Turkish New Testament withdrawn some years ago because of its errors ? If they are not critics, why are the LXX and the translations of it excluded from its list ? Does not the Society revise versions ? Undoubtedly. For example, Pereira's Bible was revised in 1838 by Messrs. Da Costa and Green, and a few of the most objectionable mistranslations corrected. Has the Society abandoned this practice ? Clearly not ; else why should we hear of the proposal to revise Diodati ? Would not its income be properly employed in forwarding such a work ? Unquestionably, quite as much, so as when it revised Pereira. What objection could there be against adopting this plan ? The Bible would be kept intact, just as much as now. Modern versions possess no intrinsic merit in themselves. We are not, therefore, called

upon to retain a version just as the translator made it. Else why revise Pereira or Diodati? Do I advocate a course hitherto unknown? The Christian Knowledge Society has revised Diodati and Torres Amat. The Trinitarian Bible Society has revised D'Almeida. Shall it be objected that we cannot hope to find any one qualified for the task? May we not as reasonably hope to find one fitted to revise any version that may require it, and so amend it that a Roman Catholic will receive it, as the Society does some one to revise Diodati?

What advantage would result from this plan? The Roman Catholic would have a Bible he would receive without prejudice, and we a Bible we could offer without compromise. We are not bound to adhere to any translation, but we are bound to adhere as far as possible to the originals.

It is no argument to say that certain versions contain much truth, and may therefore be circulated. By the same reasoning we might plead for the adoption of the creed of Pope Pius IV., which contains all the articles of the Apostles' Creed. If it be declared that certain versions made from the originals are unsuited to the readers of the present day because they contain obsolete expressions, why not revise them if necessary, rather than circulate unsound ones?

But while we urge on the Committee and the supporters of the Society the duty of acting consistently in this matter, we must not conceal from ourselves (despite the declaration of the agents that the priests are equally opposed to all versions) the probability of at first meeting with increased opposition. This, however, need not deter us from the right path. The work is God's, the success of our labour is in His hands, and we must feel sure that He will make a way for the spread of His truth. Let us look the matter boldly in the face. We need not conceal the fact that the more faithfully we act, the more will the Evil One stir up opposition against us. But, on the other hand, we have no right to magnify the difficulties. If our work be of man, it will come to nought, but if it be of God,—if we be honoured as the instruments by which God will make known His will to others,—then, though the whole powers of hell were arrayed against us, the work must proceed, and the Word triumph over all opposition. The progress that has been made despite our unfaithfulness,—first in circulating the Apocrypha as God's Word, and now in circulating error with truth, and calling it all truth, despite the continued and determined rejection of all acknowledgment of our need of help and assistance from God, by the refusal to commence our Meetings with prayer,*—the progress that has been made should assure us that with

* Though the subject of prayer is foreign to this letter, I would take this oppor-

more faithfulness on our part, and when prayer and faith shall go hand in hand, the labours of the Society will be blessed an hundredfold. And is it a strange request that we make,—a thing hitherto unheard of in the Committee,—a practice contrary to the intentions of the original members of the Society? Surely not. When first it became necessary to choose a version for the Portuguese, D'Almeida's was selected on the ground of its being the only Protestant version in that language. (See "The Bible in Every Land.") It was not till 1818 that the Society adopted the Portuguese Version of Pereira. In like manner, though Diodati was first circulated in 1809, Martini was not accredited till 1817.

The Spanish Version of Scio was not circulated by the Bible Society till 1820. "For from the reluctance of the British and Foreign Bible Society in the early period of its history to print any Catholic versions of the Scriptures, it was long before any other version was issued except that of Enzina," which was made from Reyna's in 1708. ("Bible in Every Land.") Now, the Society has on its list none but Scio's. Valera's Version, though asked for by Spaniards a year and a-half ago, does not seem to have been supplied them.

Of German versions the translation of Van Ess was not made till 1812, Gosner's till 1815, and Kistemaker's till 1825, and none of these seem to have been adopted when they were first published by their translators. Before their adoption, Luther's Bible was the Society's German translation.

As to the French versions, De Sacy was not adopted till 1813, nine years after the establishment of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

These facts are important, I think, and show that the adoption of Roman Catholic versions was an after-thought.

I have now endeavoured to point out in all fairness, and without misrepresentation, the unsatisfactory nature of the statement published

tunity of calling your attention to the reason given for its omission. It is urged that in a body composed of so many shades of opinion as the Bible Society, you cannot get all to unite in prayer together. In answer to this it may be said that there are many auxiliaries throughout the country where prayer is always made before the Meeting commences. May there not be as many shades of opinion in a country auxiliary as in the Parent Committee? But if some will not join in prayer, should we unite with them in the work? Which is best,—to obtain the countenance and support of those who will not unite in prayer, or the support of those who wish to join in prayer, and are now prevented from joining this Society because of this laxity in its practice? Surely the help of these latter is far more valuable. But the Religious Tract Society does not find it impossible to commence its proceedings with prayer. Why then should the British and Foreign Bible Society?

by the Committee respecting the circulation of translations of the Vulgate. It cannot be denied that these versions do contain doctrinal error. Before, therefore, it becomes a question of what the Roman Catholic will or will not receive, we have to consider and decide what we are authorized to offer. Have we any authority in Scripture for offering an erroneous version of Scripture? We believe that all Scripture is inspired. Can we affirm that the reading of the Vulgate in Genesis iii. 15, Luke i. 28, Psalm xciii. 5, Hebrews xi. 21, Genesis vi. 5, Jeremiah xvii. 9, Daniel iv. 24, Hebrews xiii. 16, Revelation viii. 3, 4, Ephesians v. 32, 1 Peter iii. 19, Hebrews i. 3, x. 12, faithfully represent the inspired originals, or that 2 Corinthians ii. 10, 1 Corinthians vii. 37, and Colossians ii. 18, in the translation of De Sacy, besides other places too numerous to mention, in this and other translations, do represent the teaching of Scripture in these passages? If not (as most assuredly they do not), why then should we continue to circulate these versions? If they are not faithful translations of God's Word, what business have we with them?

The Committee refuse to alter their practice. We must, therefore, appeal to the great body of subscribers to ask if error shall be circulated as truth, if God's Word needs the admixture of human corruption and unsound teaching, before it can be made effectual to the saving of the soul?

Believe me, my dear Mr. Wilson,

Very affectionately yours,

CLARENCE E. STUART.

December, 1856.

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