

They Could Not Destroy It!

The Reproduction of the Bible

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Given 12-Aug-17; Sermon #1392c

There are many types of miracles that have had a long-term impact on the world. One that is greatly underappreciated is God's miracle of making His inspired written Word widely available, despite all of the human efforts to stop its proliferation.

You would have been hard pressed to find a written copy of the books of the New Testament in the Middle Ages. In fact, production, distribution, and study of any of those books would have been virtually impossible. There was no printing, little education, very few Bibles, and to read the few that were available was considered illegal!

Until the development of printing, it took a skilled and rapid writer ten months to make a copy of the whole Bible. A finished and bound copy was worth the price of a landed estate! Therefore, under such limited circumstances it was all but impossible for God's Word to become widely read.

A major labor of God's church during the Middle Ages was to translate, copy, and make the Scriptures known. Yet for all the effort, the truth remained virtually unknown to the broad masses. All Scripture manuscripts the authorities could lay their hands on were confiscated or kept out of circulation. It is a little-known fact that even most manuscripts that came to be stored away in Catholic monasteries and cathedrals are ultimately traceable to the work of God's church!

Let's take a page from history regarding a group of people called the Waldenses. By the early 12th century in the Waldensian Valley of northwestern Italy, history shows that there were Sabbath-keeping people whose beliefs in many ways reflected the doctrines of the true church of

God, and they may very well have been just that—the church in the wilderness at that time. They were opposed to the Roman Catholic Church, and they were very careful to maintain handwritten copies of the Scriptures.

Few scholars in the Middle Ages had the ability to read or translate from the original Hebrew or Greek, so they used the Waldensian version. The Waldensian version was actually translated from the Latin Vulgate. How accurate it was, we don't know, but it was the best that they had at the time.

In southern Europe, many such people, often falsely stigmatized as Waldenses or Lollards, were martyred, often by being burned to death. Meanwhile, in the Netherlands, Waldenses had become known by their enemies as Lollards from a Flemish word, *lollen* or *lullen*, meaning, "to sing or speak softly, or to mumble," because of their practice of memorizing the Scriptures in their own language by mumbling it to themselves or to one another. Their enemies seized on this name and attempted to connect it with Latin *lolium*, meaning "tares." Interesting how they were able to pervert it to that. The word came to be applied to all so-called heretics. These “wandering and hypocritical fellows” (as their enemies called them) were noted in Holland as early as 1309.

In 1315, one Walter the Lollard, a chief Waldensian minister, with his brother, Raymond, carried the gospel of Christ to England. He is said to have spread the Waldensian doctrine all over England before he himself was seized and burned in Cologne, Germany, in 1322.

About 1450, God caused the art of printing by movable type to be developed in Germany. It was not accidental that the famous Gutenberg Bible was one of the first books to be printed. From there, printing spread to Holland, England, and all over Europe, wherever God wanted to call people into His church.

The first edition of the Bible in the language of the people was the German translation of 1466. Between this first edition and 1518 (the time of Luther), fourteen editions of the Bible in German and four in Dutch were printed. Others appeared in England, Bohemia, Italy and other countries.

The New Testament of this first edition (in 1466) was derived directly from the Waldensian version. Later, Baptists and Mennonites preferred the Waldensian version to the Lutheran for about 100 years, overlapping the 15th and 16th centuries.

Clearly, the impulse to spread the Word of God did not originate in Protestantism, as it would have you believe! Protestantism began later in 1517. All efforts by the established Catholic religion to prevent the Word of God from reaching the people failed. Confiscation and burning of Bibles was practiced freely, but to no avail.

An attempt was made to remove the source of “heresy” by buying up and destroying the complete output of an edition printed in Holland and imported into England. As might have been expected, the presses only ran all the faster on a new and larger edition. The more money they received in purchases by the false church to take them out of circulation, the harder the printers worked. Two Bibles appeared where only one had been before. What the Catholic church tried to do in preventing the production of it it caused it to double.

Jesus Christ had begun to supply the means by which God’s church could and ultimately would reach all of the world with His gospel. Now not only could the Bible be printed and multiplied, but it could also be explained by means of the printed word.

Today, God Himself has seen to it that the development of radio, electronic recording, television, and the Internet has been invented and developed for a great, but almost totally unrecognized, purpose!

The sacrifices in continuing to promote God’s way of life have always been costly. We can be so very thankful that we have not had to go to such horrible lengths to promote God’s truth. The Bible is readily available in stores all over (almost) the world. But how long will our peace last? It is already in jeopardy.

In a February 2, 2017, article by Perry Chiaramonte, published by FOX News World, titled, "Christian Persecution seen in more locations across the globe, new report shows," he writes,

In the past year, the persecution of Christians has not only increased, but it has also spread to more corners of the globe, with incidents occurring on every continent, according to a new report.

The advocacy group Open Doors USA recently released the latest edition of its annual World Watch List, which ranks countries based on the treatment of their Christian populations.

"It is appalling that Open Doors has to report that persecution has increased again in 2016 and we are still at the worst levels of persecution in modern times," David Curry, president and CEO of Open Doors USA, said to Fox News. "The spread of persecution has gotten worse, now hitting nearly every continent in the world."

The report comes on the heels of another study by the Center for Studies on New Religions that showed nearly 90,000 Christians were killed for their faith in 2016 and that as many as 600 million were prevented from practicing their faith through intimidation, forced conversions, bodily harm or even death.

"These numbers underscore what we already know," Robert Nicholson of the Philos Project, an advocacy group for Christianity in the Middle East, told Fox News at the time of the report's release. "There are many places on Earth where being a Christian is the most dangerous thing you can be."

In this vein, the apostle Paul warned and advised the young minister Timothy,

II Timothy 3:12-17 (*English Standard Version*) Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned

it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

The 2017 Statistic Brain Research Institute lists some miraculous statistics regarding the printing and reproduction of the holy Christian Bible today.

Bible Statistics	Data
Number of total Bibles Printed	6,001,500,000
Approximate number of languages spoken in the world today	6,900
Number of translations into new languages currently in progress	1,300
Number of languages with a translation of the New Testament	1,185
Number of languages with a translation of the Bible (Protestant Canon)	451

[The Catholic Bible is not included because of its corruption (e.g. removal of the 2 nd commandment against idolatry and other major errors such as the addition of untrustworthy books.)]	
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Miraculously, despite efforts to destroy it, the Christian Bible has continued to be reproduced in larger quantities and in more languages than ever before.

This overlooked miracle of the proliferation of the Word of God in written form throughout the last 400 or so years is one of the great ways in which God keeps His promise when He says, “I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).