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August 25, 1970

**Colombia-Vatican Reforms  
May Affect Baptist Work**

**BOGOTA, Colombia (BP)**--The Roman Catholic Church has opened the door for reform of the Concordat which has been in effect since 1887 between the government of Colombia and the Vatican, according to a front-page article in *El Tiempo*, a leading Bogota newspaper.

Six commissions composed of theologians of the church in Colombia prepared the documents which the Colombian government and the Vatican will discuss in negotiations for reform.

The documents will be discussed in September during the next meeting of the Episcopal Conference of the Colombian Church and will attempt revision of the existing treaty between church and state in accord with directors of the Second Vatican Council.

The proposed revisions deal with freedom of education, treatment of missions, naming of bishops, priestly immunity, Catholic and civil marriage, and abolition of sanctions for apostasy.

Priests related to the preparation of the documents said it is necessary to revise the Concordat to bring the church in line with the modern world.

The existing Concordat is not in keeping with the spirit of modernization of either the church or the Colombian Constitution, especially in the concept of religious liberty, they said.

The existing agreement prohibits any non-Catholic missions in certain sections of Colombia (Indian territory), and gives bishops the right to veto school textbooks and teachers.

The report could be accepted by the next Episcopal Conference as an official position of the Colombian Church in the negotiations to be begun between the government and the Vatican.

Observers expect the new government of Misael Pastrana to take a position on the matter, but as yet no official study commissions have been appointed by the government.

The Church proposes the following reforms in the existing agreement:

--The Church will not impose its own religious teachings and will leave people free to elect the creed under which they educate their children. This is within the precepts of the national constitution which affirms that religious liberty shall exist in Colombia.

--In an ecumenical spirit, the Church proposes to eliminate the missions agreement whereby no group other than Catholics can have missions in Indian territory. "It is considered that this is not necessary since the Catholic Church wishes to suppress all appearance of privilege," says the report.

--The reform also proposes that priests will be taken to court by civil law in disputes and for crimes. Under the present Concordat a priest cannot be called before a state tribunal. Also, Catholic seminary students will be subject to military service as are other male citizens.

--Catholic Church property will continue to be exempt from taxation.

--The Church will not change the rule for excommunication for persons who insult or harm a representative of the church.

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--Regarding matrimony, presently if a Catholic marries in a civil ceremony without benefit of the Church he must renounce the Church. Children of such marriages are considered illegitimate, and the couple has committed mortal sin.

The reforms for matrimony are: (1) The Church will tolerate civil matrimony and will not obligate Catholics who choose such matrimony to give up their religion, and the Church will eliminate existing penalties for those who choose civil matrimony.

This does not state, however, that the church will recognize civil matrimony. Marriage before a priest will continue to be required for recognition by the Church.

(2) In exchange for the above concession, the Church asks the state to recognize as legal the Catholic marriage ceremony. As it now stands, couples must be married by a judge first; then a priest or other minister performs the religious ceremony.

Adopting the marriage reform would open the possibility of the state granting divorces for civil marriages. The Church says there is no divorce nor will there ever be.

The last time a divorce bill with regard to civil marriages was proposed was in 1965. It was defeated, as have been all previous divorce bills.

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Catholics To Publish  
New American Bible

8/25/70

WASHINGTON (BP)--A new translation of the Bible to officially replace the Douay-Rheims Version used by Roman Catholics for 200 years will be published in September, Catholic officials here have announced.

"The New American Bible," described by one Catholic scholar as "a faithful translation in today's language for today's people," replaces words like "thee" and "thou" with "up-to-date language of contemporary man" that is easier to read and understand.

The new Catholic version, the product of 25 years of work by 51 scholars, is the first and only English translation to make complete critical use of recently discovered ancient manuscripts, according to an announcement in a press conference here.

In contrast to previous Catholic versions which were translations of the Latin Vulgate completed by St. Jerome in the year 405, the new version was made from the original languages in which the Bible was written--Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic.

Four Protestant scholars were among the 51 who did the translation. All were Americans. They based their translations on all available Dead Sea Scrolls thus far deciphered, the Masada Hebrew Manuscript written in the first century, B.C., three previously unpublished manuscripts of the Book of Samuel called the Qumran Manuscripts, and a text from the Book of Isaiah some 1,200 years older than previously available.

Though the use of "King James language" was avoided, the "King James spelling" of proper names in the Old Testament was used rather than distinctly Catholic spelling of names like Noe for Noah, Noemi for Naomi, and Osee for Hosea.

Stephen Hartdegen, a professor at Holy Name College here who was executive secretary and coordinator of the editorial board for the new Bible, said the translators consciously avoided paraphrasing and deliberately sought to preserve such literary peculiarities as St. Paul's frequent failure to complete his sentences, and the non-literary business-like quality of much of the New Testament Greek.

Using a contemporary design and format, the new Catholic version features paragraphs with appropriate headings, poetry printed in verse form, and brief explanatory notes illustrating the text, textual notes and cross references to assist the reader in understanding, according to Catholic officials.

Publication date for the first edition, published by St. Anthony Guild Press, is September 30. Editions by 11 other publishers will follow later, Catholic spokesmen said.

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