

On the Right Side

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

How Not To Use The Bible

The Rochester Legion of Mary had a booth at Midtown Mall, Rochester, the week of July 17. They asked me to give a few hours, so on July 18 I spent five hours at the booth. In the



Fr. Cuddy

morning a tense woman, about 25, accosted me with "Are priests allowed to smoke a pipe?"

"Yes, they are." (I visualized Msgr. Ronald Knox relaxing with his beloved pipe.)

"Where in the Bible does it say they can smoke a pipe?"

"Where in the Bible does it say you can eat tomatoes? There was a sect called Hook and Eye Baptists who would not use buttons because the Bible doesn't mention them. This is no way to use the Word of

God.

She persisted. "Have you been baptized in the Holy Spirit?"

"As an infant I was baptized in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit took possession of my soul at the moment of my baptism."

She retorted, "We must be baptized in the Name of Jesus. I was baptized in the Name of Jesus and received the Holy Spirit. Paul said we must be baptized in the Name of Jesus." (Evidently she was referring to Acts 27:19.)

"Of course. Jesus is the second person of the Blessed Trinity and he told us in Mt. 28 we must be baptized in the Name of

the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

"But Paul said we must be baptized in the Name of Jesus. The Father is Jesus, the Son is Jesus and the Holy Spirit is Jesus."

This weird exposition of the Bible texts, she insisted, is the one true interpretation of baptism revealed to her by the Holy Spirit, despite 2,000 years of Christian teaching to the contrary. Most people have experienced the fatuousness of exchanging Bible quotes like pingpong balls with text-tossers; Bible quoters, divorced from the teaching Church quote out of context to weave conclusions they imagine. They are convinced the Holy Spirit

inspires them to conclusions which students of the Bible, even of limited training, must cordially reject.

Catholics have recently developed a great interest in Bible reading. Most want the Bible not as an exercise in scholarship, but for their spiritual life. Cardinal Newman wrote beautifully that we should read the Bible as prayer.

Recently Msgr. Henri Hamel, a classmate from New Bedford and just retired, wrote: "What a relief to be totally free from administration, finances, repairs, meetings, etc. It is unbelievable how much tension and friction such peripheral actions create. Now I have time

for an hour of prayer in the early morning. I am enjoying Dr. William Barclay so much. He is the Protestant scripture scholar whom Abp. Sheen recommended. Seventeen volumes on the New Testament, entitled Daily Bible Studies."

For most people who want the Bible for their devotional life, Barclay's Daily Bible Studies, despite some errors which we should recognize, gives great inspiration and insight. They have the enthusiastic commendation of Abp. Sheen. They are used by many priests throughout the country both for sermon material and as a meditation book.

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