

Bible Possession Once Banned by the Catholic Church!

ITEM #1 POPE INNOCENT III

Pope Innocent III stated in 1199:

... to be reprov'd are those who translate into French the Gospels, the letters of Paul, the psalter, etc. They are moved by a certain love of Scripture in order to explain them clandestinely and to preach them to one another. The mysteries of the faith are not to be explained rashly to anyone. Usually in fact, they cannot be understood by everyone but only by those who are qualified to understand them with informed intelligence. The depth of the divine Scriptures is such that not only the illiterate and uninitiated have difficulty understanding them, but also the educated and the gifted (Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum* 770-771)

Source: *Bridging the Gap - Lectio Divina, Religious Education, and the Have-not's* by Father John Belmonte, S.J.

ITEM #2 COUNCIL OF TOULOUSE - 1229 A.D.

The Council of Toulouse, which met in November of 1229, about the time of the crusade against the Albigensians, set up a special ecclesiastical tribunal, or court, known as the Inquisition (Lat. inquisitio, an inquiry), to search out and try heretics. Twenty of the forty-five articles decreed by the Council dealt with heretics and heresy. It ruled in part:

Canon 1. We appoint, therefore, that the archbishops and bishops shall swear in one priest, and two or three laymen of good report, or more if they think fit, in every parish, both in and out of cities, who shall diligently, faithfully, and frequently seek out the heretics in those parishes, by searching all houses and subterranean chambers which lie under suspicion. And looking out for appendages or outbuildings, in the roofs themselves, or any other kind of hiding places, all which we direct to be destroyed.

Canon 6. Directs that the house in which any heretic shall be found shall be destroyed.

Canon 14. We prohibit also that the laity should be permitted to have the books of the Old or New Testament; unless anyone from motive of devotion should wish to have the Psalter or the Breviary for divine offices or the hours of the blessed Virgin; but we most strictly forbid their having any translation of these books.

Source: *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe*, Edited with an introduction by Edward Peters, Scholar Press, London, copyright 1980 by Edward Peters, ISBN 0-85967-621-8, pp. 194-195, citing S. R. Maitland, *Facts and Documents [illustrative of the history, doctrine and rites, of the ancient Albigenses & Waldenses]*, London, Rivington, 1832, pp. 192-194.

Additional Sources:

Ecclesiastical History of Ancient Churches of the Albigenses, Pierre Allix, published in Oxford at the Clarendon Press in 1821, reprinted in USA in 1989 by Church History Research & Archives, P.O. Box 38, Dayton Ohio, 45449, p. 213 [Canon 14].

• [The History of Protestantism](#), by J. A. Wiley, chapter 10 cites:

- Concilium Tolosanum, cap. 1, p. 428. Sismondi, 220.
- Labbe, Concil. Tolosan., tom. 11, p. 427. Fleury, Hist. Eccles., lib. 79, n. 58.

Some Catholics may doubt that there even was a Church Council in Toulouse France in 1229. The following quotes are offered as corroborating evidence:

After the death of Innocent III, the Synod of Toulouse directed in 1229 its fourteenth canon against the misuse of Sacred Scripture on the part of the Cathari: "prohibemus, ne libros Veteris et Novi Testamenti laicis permittatur habere" (Hefele, "Concilgesch", Freiburg, 1863, V, 875).

Source: *The 1913 Catholic Encyclopedia* article on [Scripture](#).

In France Louis VIII decreed in 1226 that persons excommunicated by the diocesan bishop, or his delegate, should receive "meet punishment" (debita animadversio). In 1249 Louis IX ordered barons to deal with heretics according to the dictates of duty (de ipsis faciant quod debebant). A decree of the Council of Toulouse (1229) makes it appear probable that in France death at the stake was already comprehended as in keeping with the aforesaid debita animadversio.

Source: *The 1913 Catholic Encyclopedia* article on the [Inquisition](#).

... the Council of Toulouse (1229) entrusted the Inquisition, which soon passed into the hands of the Dominicans (1233), with the repression of Albigensianism. The heresy disappeared about the end of the fourteenth century.

Source: *The 1913 Catholic Encyclopedia* article on the [Albigenses](#).

1229 - The Inquisition of Toulouse imposed by Albigensian Crusaders forbids laymen to read the Bible.

Source: *The People's Chronology*, Revised and updated, by James Trager, Copyright 1992, 1994, published by Henry Holt and Company, ISBN 0-8050-3134-0, New York, page 108.

In 1229, when the Council of Toulouse assembled to survey and regulate the results of the Albigensian Crusade, its canons reflected the severity of ecclesiastical discipline in an area in which the inability to eradicate heresy had led to profound secular and ecclesiastical consequences. The first canon of the Council insists upon the appointment of the traditional *testes synodales*, but these now have new powers of actively searching out the hiding places of heretics; condemned heretics who repent must be moved to orthodox places to live, and they must wear conspicuously colored crosses on their garments to publicly indicate their penitential status; certain professions were closed to those even suspected of heresy.

Source: *Inquisition*, by Edward Peters, published by University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, Copyright 1988 by the Free Press, a division of Macmillan, Inc., ISBN 0-520-06630-8, page 51.

In the same year [1229], the Council of Toulouse set up a special court of permanent judges to search out and try heretics. But although twenty of the forty-five articles of that Council dealt with the problem of heresy, it did not yet create a new and specific institution for this work. The local bishop remained the final judge, and had the power to commute sentences. 4

4. Lea, Henry Charles, *The History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, New York: Macmillan, 1908, vol. I, p. 310.

(Lea cites the 1229 Council of Toulouse as the foundation for the Inquisition, on page 359 of vol. I., as does Guiraud in *The Medieval Inquisition*, London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1929, on page 59.)

Source: *The Inquisition, Hammer of Heresy*, By Edward Burman, Copyright 1984, Published by Dorset Press, a division of Marboro Books Corp., by arrangement with Harper Collins Publishers, UK., ISBN 0-88029-909-6, pages 31, 32.

The clauses of the Peace of Paris and the decrees of a council held at Toulouse in November 1229 demonstrated that twenty years of crusading had not been very effective, since heresy was as much a concern as ever. The fact was that crusading, particularly when as episodic as this type was, could not eradicate deep-rooted heresy. It required the establishment of the inquisition in Toulouse in 1233 and the persistent pressure that such an instrument could bring to bear for headway to be made ...

Source: *The Crusades, A Short History*, by Jonathan Riley-Smith, Copyright 1987, published by Yale University Press, New Haven and London, ISBN 0-300-04700-2, pages 138, 139.

ITEM #3 THE COUNCIL OF TARRAGONA - 1234 A.D.

The Council of Tarragona of 1234, in its second canon, ruled that:

"No one may possess the books of the Old and New Testaments in the Romance language, and if anyone possesses them he must turn them over to the local bishop within eight days after promulgation of this decree, so that they may be burned lest, be he a cleric or a layman, he be suspected until he is cleared of all suspicion."

-D. Lortsch, *Historie de la Bible en France*, 1910, p.14.

See also: *The 1913 Catholic Encyclopedia* article on the [Scripture](#).

ITEM #4 JOHN WYCLIFFE - MORNING STAR OF THE REFORMATION

John Wycliffe was the very first to translate the entire Bible into English, which he completed in 1382. Wycliffe translated from the Latin Vulgate. One copy of an original manuscript is in the Bodlein Library in Oxford, England. Wycliffe's Bibles were painstakingly reproduced by hand by copyists.

In 1408 the third synod of Oxford, England, banned unauthorized English translations of the Bible and decreed that possession of English translation's had to be approved by diocesan authorities. The Oxford council declared:

"It is dangerous, as St. Jerome declares, to translate the text of Holy Scriptures out of one idiom into another, since it is not easy in translations to preserve exactly the same meaning in all things. We therefore command and ordain that henceforth no one translate the text of Holy Scripture into English or any other language as a book, booklet, or tract, of this kind lately made in the time of the said John Wyclif or since, or that hereafter may be made, either in part or wholly, either publicly or privately, under pain of excommunication, until such translation shall have been approved and allowed by the Provincial Council. He who shall act otherwise let him be punished as an abettor of heresy and error."

Source: *The Western Watchman*, a Catholic newspaper published in St. Louis, August 9, 1894, "The Word of God", *The English Bible Before the Reformation*, page 7.

At the ecumenical Council of Constance, in 1415, Wycliffe was posthumously condemned by Arundel, the archbishop of Canterbury, as "that pestilent wretch of damnable heresy who invented a new translation of the scriptures in his mother tongue." By the decree of the Council, more that 40 years after his death, Wycliffe's bones were exhumed and publicly burned and the ashes were thrown into the Swift river.

Around 1454 Gutenberg printed an edition of the Latin Vulgate Bible on the first moveable-type printing press. With this new printing technology books could now be printed faster and cheaper than ever before, a fact that Protestants soon took advantage of. Within a hundred years there was a virtual explosion of Protestant Bibles coming off the new presses.

ITEM #5 THE BIBLE IN ENGLISH IS PRINTED

William Tyndale completed a translation of the New Testament from the Greek in 1525, which church authorities in England tried their best to confiscate and burn. After issuing a revised edition in 1535, he was arrested, spent over a year in jail, and was then strangled and burned at the stake near Brussels in October 6th, 1536. It is estimated today that some 90 percent of the New Testament in the 1611 King James Bible is the work of Tyndale. Tyndale was unable to complete his translation of the Old Testament before his death.

Miles Coverdale, an assistant to Tyndale, completed Tyndale's translation of the Old Testament using Martin Luther's German text and Latin as sources, and in Germany he printed the first complete Bible in English on October 4, 1535.

Matthew's Bible, a composite of the work of Tyndale and Coverdale, probably edited by John Rogers, was published in 1537 under the pseudonym "Thomas Matthew", and was the second complete edition of the Bible printed in English.

Coverdale's "Great Bible", called that because of its size, was published in 1539 and had over 21,000 copies printed in seven editions in only a single year. Working under the patronage of Thomas Cromwell, Coverdale had submitted his Bible via the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, and it was published with the authorization of King Henry VIII, whose likely motivation was the realization that the Bible was an effective means of combating papists. Amazingly, at the end of the book of Malachi were the initials W.T., covering half a page, standing for William Tyndale! Beginning with the second edition, the Great Bible included a preface by Thomas Cranmer, and so it is also called Cranmer's Bible.

The English parliament in 1543 passed a law forbidding the use of any English translations other than the "Great Bible". Tyndale's New Testament was specifically prohibited, and later Wycliffe's and Coverdale's Bibles were also banned. It was decreed a crime for any unlicensed person to read or explain the Scriptures in public. Many copies of Tyndale's New Testament and Coverdale's Bible were burned in London, though ironically, the authorized "Great Bible" contained the work of both men!

In 1557 the Geneva Bible was first published, which continued to be popular even years after the King James was available. The Geneva Bible was the version in use during Shakespeare's time, and was often quoted by him in his plays.

In 1559 Queen Elizabeth, a Protestant, decreed that a copy of the Bishop's Bible be placed in every parish church. The Bishop's Bible was printed in 20 editions over 42 years and was the basis for the King James Bible.

Responding to the increasing flood of Protestant Bibles in English, the very first complete Bible in English to be produced by the Catholic Church was the Douay Rheims, a translation from the Latin Vulgate, which was finally completed in the early 17th century. The New Testament was begun in 1578 and finished in Rheims France in 1582, and the Old Testament was finished in 1609-10 in Douay. Note that it had been over *two centuries* since Wycliffe had completed his English Bible!

In an attempt to combat the swiftly rising tide of Protestantism, the Catholic Church began maintaining lists of the prohibited books which were to be confiscated. Here is an example from England:

Memorandum of a proclamation made at Paul's Cross on the first Sunday in Advent, 1531, against the buying, selling or reading of the following books:

The disputation between father and the son.
 The supplication of beggars.
 The revelation of AntiChrist.
Liber qui de veteri et novicio Deo inscribitur.
Precaciones.
Economica christiana.
 The burying of the mass, in English rhyme.
 An exposition into the VII chapter of the Corinthians.
 The matrimony of Tyndal.
 A B C against the clergy.
Ortulus animae, in English.
 A book against Saint Thomas of Canterbury.
 A book made by Friar Reye against the seven sacraments.
 An answer of Tyndal to Sir Thomas More's dialogue, in English.
 A disputation of purgatory, made by John Frythe.
 The first book of Moses, called Genesis.
 A prologue in the second book of Moses, called Exodus.
 A prologue in the third book of Moses, called Leviticus.
 A prologue in the fourth book of Moses, called Numeri.
 A prologue in the fifth book of Moses, called Deuteronomy.
 The practice of prelates.
 The New Testament in English, with an introduction to the epistle to the Romans.
 The parable of the wicked Mammon.
 The obedience of a Christian man.
 The book of Thorpe or of John Oldecastell.
 The sum of scripture.
 The primer in English.
 The psalter in English.
 A dialogue between the gentlemen and the plowman.
 Jonas in English.

Calendar of State Papers V, 18.

Source: *The Reformation*, by Hans J. Hillerbrand, copyright 1964 by SCM Press Ltd and Harper and Row, Inc., Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 64-15480, page 473.

ITEM #6 THE BIBLE PROHIBITED BY THE *INDEX LIBRORUM PROHIBITORUM*

Pope Pius IV had a list of the forbidden books compiled and officially prohibited them in the Index of Trent (*Index Librorum Prohibitorum*) of 1559. This is an excerpt:

Rule I

All books which were condemned prior to 1515 by popes or ecumenical councils, and are not listed in this Index, are to stand condemned in the original fashion.

Rule II

Books of arch-heretics - those who after 1515 have invented or incited heresy or who have been or still are heads and leaders of heretics, such as Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Hubmaier, Schwenckfeld, and the like — whatever their name, title or argumentation — are prohibited without exception. As far as other heretics are concerned, only those books are condemned without exception which deal *ex professo* with religion. Others will be permitted after Catholic theologians have examined and approved them by the order of bishops and inquisitors. Likewise, Catholic books written by those who subsequently fell into heresy or by those who after their lapse returned into the bosom of the Church can be permitted after approval by a theological faculty or the inquisition.

Rule III

Translations of older works, including the church fathers, made by condemned authors, are permitted if they contain nothing against sound doctrine. However, translations of books of the Old Testament may be allowed by the judgment of bishops for the use of learned and pious men only. These translations are to elucidate the Vulgate so that Sacred Scripture can be understood, but they are not to be considered as a sacred text. Translations of the New Testament made by authors of the first sections in this Index are not to be used at all, since too little usefulness and too much danger attends such reading.

Rule IV

Since experience teaches that, if the reading of the Holy Bible in the vernacular is permitted generally without discrimination, more damage than advantage will result because of the boldness of men, the judgment of bishops and inquisitors is to serve as guide in this regard. Bishops and inquisitors may, in accord with the counsel of the local priest and confessor, allow Catholic translations of the Bible to be read by those of whom they realize that such reading will not lead to the detriment but to the increase of faith and piety. The permission is to be given in writing. Whoever reads or has such a translation in his possession without this permission cannot be absolved from his sins until he has turned in these Bibles ...

Rule VI

Books in the vernacular dealing with the controversies between Catholics and the heretics of our time are not to be generally permitted, but are to be handled in the same way as Bible translations. ...

*Die Indices Librorum Prohibitorum des sechzehnten
Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen, 1886), page 246f.

Source: *The Reformation*, by Hans J. Hillerbrand, copyright 1964 by SCM Press Ltd and Harper and Row, Inc., Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 64-15480, pages 474, 475.

ITEM #7 POPE CLEMENT XI ON READING SCRIPTURE

From  [UNIGENITUS](#), The Dogmatic Constitution issued by Pope Clement XI on Sept. 8, 1713:

The following statements are condemned as being error:

- 79. It is useful and necessary at all times, in all places, and for every kind of person, to study and to know the spirit, the piety, and the mysteries of Sacred Scripture.
- 80. The reading of Sacred Scripture is for all.
- 81. The sacred obscurity of the Word of God is no reason for the laity to dispense themselves from reading it.
- 82. The Lord's Day ought to be sanctified by Christians with readings of pious works and above all of the Holy Scriptures. It is harmful for a Christian to wish to withdraw from this reading.
- 83. It is an illusion to persuade oneself that knowledge of the mysteries of religion should not be communicated to women by the reading of Sacred Scriptures. Not from the simplicity of women, but from the proud knowledge of men has arisen the abuse of the Scriptures and have heresies been born.
- 84. To snatch away from the hands of Christians the New Testament, or to hold it closed against them by taking away from them the means of understanding it, is to close for them the mouth of Christ.
- 85. To forbid Christians to read Sacred Scripture, especially the Gospels, is to forbid the use of light to the sons of light, and to cause them to suffer a kind of excommunication.

ITEM #8 POPE PIUS VI ON READING SCRIPTURE

From the Constitution *Auctorem fidei*, Aug. 28, 1794, of Pope Pius VI:

[D. Errors] Concerning Duties, Practices, Rules Pertaining to Religious Worship.

The Reading of Sacred Scripture
[From the note at the end of the decree on grace]

[p. 390]

1567 67. The doctrine asserting that "only a true impotence excuses" from the reading of the Sacred Scriptures, adding, moreover, that there is produced the obscurity which arises from a neglect of this precept in regard to the

primary truths of religion,—false, rash, disturbing to the peace of souls, condemned elsewhere in Quesnel [Unigenitus, quoted above].

Errors of the Synod of Pistoia, Condemned in the Constitution *Auctorem fidei*, Aug. 28, 1794, Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, Translated by Roy J. Deferrari, from the Thirtieth Edition of Henry Denzinger's *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, published by B. Herder Book Co., Copyright 1957, page 390.

ITEM #9 POPE LEO XII CONDEMNS VERNACULAR BIBLES AS HARMFUL

From the Encyclical [UBI PRIMUM](#) of POPE LEO XII, MAY 5, 1824:

17. You have noticed a society, commonly called the Bible society, boldly spreading throughout the whole world. Rejecting the traditions of the holy Fathers and infringing the well-known decree of the Council of Trent,[16] 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![17]

18. To prevent this evil, Our predecessors published many constitutions. Most recently Pius VII wrote two briefs, one to Ignatius, Archbishop of Gniezno, the other to Stanislaus, Archbishop of Mohileu, quoting carefully and wisely many passages from the sacred writings and from the tradition to show how harmful to faith and morals this wretched undertaking is.

19. In virtue of Our apostolic office, We too exhort you to try every means of keeping your flock from those deadly pastures. Do everything possible to see that the faithful observe strictly the rules of our Congregation of the Index. Convince them that to allow holy Bibles in the ordinary language, wholesale and without distinction, would on account of human rashness cause more harm than good.

ITEM #10 POPE PIUS VIII ON UNAUTHORIZED VERNACULAR BIBLES

From the encyclical [TRADITI HUMILITATI](#) of Pope Pius VIII, May 24, 1829

5. We must also be wary of those who publish the Bible with new interpretations contrary to the Church's laws. They skillfully distort the meaning by their own interpretation. They print the Bibles in the vernacular and, absorbing an incredible expense, offer them free even to the uneducated. Furthermore, the Bibles are rarely without perverse little inserts to insure that the reader imbibes their lethal poison instead of the saving water of salvation. Long ago the Apostolic See warned about this serious hazard to the faith and drew up a list of the authors of these pernicious notions. The rules of this Index were published by the Council of Trent;[8] the ordinance required that translations of the Bible into the vernacular not be permitted

without the approval of the Apostolic See and further required that they be published with commentaries from the Fathers. The sacred Synod of Trent had decreed[9] in order to restrain impudent characters, that no one, relying on his own prudence in matters of faith and of conduct which concerns Christian doctrine, might twist the sacred Scriptures to his own opinion, or to an opinion contrary to that of the Church or the popes. Though such machinations against the Catholic faith had been assailed long ago by these canonical proscriptions, Our recent predecessors made a special effort to check these spreading evils.[10] With these arms may you too strive to fight the battles of the Lord which endanger the sacred teachings, lest this deadly virus spread in your flock.

ITEM #11 POPE GREGORY XVI CONDEMNS BIBLE SOCIETIES, VERNACULAR BIBLES

From the encyclical [● INTER PRAECIPUAS](#) (**On Biblical Societies**) by Pope Gregory XVI, May 8, 1844:

1. Among the special schemes with which non-Catholics plot against the adherents of Catholic truth to turn their minds away from the faith, the biblical societies are prominent. They were first established in England and have spread far and wide so that We now see them as an army on the march, conspiring to publish in great numbers copies of the books of divine Scripture. These are translated into all kinds of vernacular languages for dissemination without discrimination among both Christians and infidels. Then the biblical societies invite everyone to read them unguided. Therefore it is just as Jerome complained in his day: they make the art of understanding the Scriptures without a teacher" common to babbling old women and crazy old men and verbose sophists," and to anyone who can read, no matter what his status. Indeed, what is even more absurd and almost unheard of, they do not exclude the common people of the infidels from sharing this kind of a knowledge.

4. Moreover, regarding the translation of the Bible into the vernacular, even many centuries ago bishops in various places have at times had to exercise greater vigilance when they became aware that such translations were being read in secret gatherings or were being distributed by heretics. Innocent III issued warnings concerning the secret gatherings of laymen and women, under the pretext of piety, for the reading of Scripture in the diocese of Metz. [12] There was also a special prohibition of Scripture translations promulgated either in Gaul a little later[13] or in Spain before the sixteenth century.[14]

[Footnote #13: Council of Toulouse (1229), can. 14., as listed at the beginning of this article]

11. ... We again condemn all the above-mentioned biblical societies of which our predecessors disapproved. ... Besides We confirm and renew by Our apostolic authority the prescriptions listed and published long ago

concerning the publication, dissemination, reading, and possession of vernacular translations of sacred Scriptures.

12. ... In particular, watch more carefully over those who are assigned to give public readings of holy scripture, so that they function diligently in their office within the comprehension of the audience; under no pretext whatsoever should they dare to explain and interpret the divine writings contrary to the tradition of the Fathers or the interpretation of the Catholic Church.

ITEM #12 POPE PIUS IX DECLARES BIBLE SOCIETIES "PESTS"

On December 8, 1866, Pope Pius IX, in his encyclical [QUANTA CURA](#), issued a [syllabus](#) of eighty errors under ten different headings. Under heading IV, we find listed:

IV. Socialism, Communism, Secret Societies, **Biblical Societies**, Clerico-Liberal Societies

Pests of this kind are frequently reprobated in the severest terms in the Encyclical [Qui pluribus](#), Nov. 9, 1846, (See #13-14):

13. You already know well, venerable brothers, the other portentous errors and deceits by which the sons of this world try most bitterly to attack the Catholic religion and the divine authority of the Church and its laws. They would even trample underfoot the rights both of the sacred and of the civil power. For this is the goal of the lawless activities against this Roman See in which Christ placed the impregnable foundation of His Church. This is the goal of those secret sects who have come forth from the darkness to destroy and desolate both the sacred and the civil commonwealth. These have been condemned with repeated anathema in the Apostolic letters of the Roman Pontiffs who preceded Us[15] We now confirm these with the fullness of Our Apostolic power and command that they be most carefully observed.

14. This is the goal too of the crafty Bible Societies which renew the old skill of the heretics and ceaselessly force on people of all kinds, even the uneducated, gifts of the Bible. They issue these in large numbers and at great cost, in vernacular translations, which infringe the holy rules of the Church. The commentaries which are included often contain perverse explanations; so, having rejected divine tradition, the doctrine of the Fathers and the authority of the Catholic Church, they all interpret the words of the Lord by their own private judgment, thereby perverting their meaning. As a result, they fall into the greatest errors. Gregory XVI of happy memory, Our superior predecessor, followed the lead of his own predecessors in rejecting these

societies in his apostolic letters.[16] It is Our will to condemn them likewise.

Allocution *Quibus quantisque*, April 20, 1849,
Encyclical ● [*Noscitis et nobiscum*](#), Dec. 8, 1849, (See #14):

14. The crafty enemies of the Church and human society attempt to seduce the people in many ways. One of their chief methods is the misuse of the new technique of book-production. They are wholly absorbed in the ceaseless daily publication and proliferation of impious pamphlets, newspapers and leaflets which are full of lies, calumnies and seduction. Furthermore, under the protection of the Bible Societies which have long since been condemned by this Holy See,[7] they distribute to the faithful under the pretext of religion, the holy bible in vernacular translations. Since these infringe the Church's rules,[8] they are consequently subverted and most daringly twisted to yield a vile meaning. So you realize very well what vigilant and careful efforts you must make to inspire in your faithful people an utter horror of reading these pestilential books. Remind them explicitly with regard to divine scripture that no man, relying on his own wisdom, is able to claim the privilege of rashly twisting the scriptures to his own meaning in opposition to the meaning which holy mother Church holds and has held. It was the Church alone that Christ commissioned to guard the deposit of the faith and to decide the true meaning and interpretation of the divine pronouncements.[9]

Allocution *Singulari quadam*, Dec. 9, 1854,
Encyclical ● [*Quanto conficiamur*](#) (On Promotion Of False Doctrines),
August 10, 1863.

ITEM #13 THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH THE ONLY TRUE GUIDE TO SCRIPTURE

14. ... Wherefore it must be recognized that the sacred writings are wrapt in a certain religious obscurity, and that no one can enter into their interior without a guide[32]; God so disposing, as the Holy Fathers commonly teach, in order that men may investigate them with greater ardor and earnestness, and that what is attained with difficulty may sink more deeply into the mind and heart; and, most of all, that they may understand that God has delivered the Holy Scriptures to the Church, and that in reading and making use of His Word, they must follow the Church as their guide and their teacher. ... the Council of the Vatican, which, in renewing the decree of Trent declares its "mind" to be this—that "in things of faith and morals, belonging to the building up of Christian doctrine, that is to be considered the true sense of Holy Scripture which has been held and is held by our Holy Mother the Church, whose place it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Scriptures; and therefore that it is permitted to no one to interpret Holy

Scripture against such sense or also against the unanimous agreement of the Fathers."[34] ... Hence it follows that all interpretation is foolish and false which either makes the sacred writers disagree one with another, or is opposed to the doctrine of the Church.

15. ... But it is most unbecoming to pass by, in ignorance or contempt, the excellent work which Catholics have left in abundance, and to have recourse to the works of non-Catholics—and to seek in them, to the detriment of sound doctrine and often to the peril of faith, the explanation of passages on which Catholics long ago have successfully employed their talent and their labor. For although the studies of non-Catholics, used with prudence, may sometimes be of use to the Catholic student, he should, nevertheless, bear well in mind—as the Fathers also teach in numerous passages[41]—that the sense of Holy Scripture can nowhere be found incorrupt out side of the Church, and cannot be expected to be found in writers who, being without the true faith, only gnaw the bark of the Sacred Scripture, and never attain its pith.

Source:  [**PROVIDENTISSIMUS DEUS**](#) (On the Study of Holy Scripture), Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII promulgated on 18 November 1893.

ITEM #14 POPE LEO XIII PROHIBITS NON-CATHOLIC BIBLES

From Leo XIII, *Apostolic Constitution Officiorum ac Munerum*, Jan. 25, 1897, art. 1., "Of the Prohibition of Books," chaps. 2,3, trans. in the Great Encyclical Letters of Pope Leo XIII (New York: Benziger, 1903):

[p. 412]

CHAPTER II.

Of Editions of the Original Text of Holy Scripture and of Versions not in the Vernacular.

5. Editions of the original text and of the ancient Catholic versions of Holy Scripture, as well as those of the Eastern Church, if published by non-Catholics, even though apparently edited in a faithful and complete manner, are allowed only to those engaged in theological and biblical studies, provided also that the dogmas of Catholic faith are not impugned in the prolegomena or annotations.

6. In the same manner, and under the same conditions, other versions of the Holy Bible, whether in Latin or in any other dead language, published by non-Catholics, are permitted.

CHAPTER III.

Of Vernacular Versions of Holy Scripture.

7. As it has been clearly shown by experience that, if the Holy Bible in the vernacular is generally permitted without any distinction, more harm that

utility is thereby [p. 413] caused, owing to human temerity: all versions in the vernacular, even by Catholics, are altogether prohibited, unless approved by the Holy See, or published, under the vigilant care of the bishops, with annotations taken from the Fathers of the Church and learned Catholic writers.

8. All versions of the Holy Bible, in any vernacular language, made by non-Catholics are prohibited; and especially those published by the Bible societies, which have been more than once condemned by the Roman Pontiffs, because in them the wise laws of the Church concerning the publication of the sacred books are entirely disregarded.

Nevertheless, these versions are permitted to students of theological or biblical science, under the conditions laid down above (No. 5)

ITEM #15 OUR SUNDAY VISITOR ON BANNING VERNACULAR BIBLES

Is it not an historical fact that the church forbade the reading of the Bible in the vernacular?

It is and it is not. The Church never issued a general prohibition that made the reading of the Bible in the vernacular unlawful; but at various times she laid down certain conditions regarding the matter, which had to be observed by the faithful, so that they might not *wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction*. It was not until the Albigenses, the Wyclifites, and later on the Protestants, issued editions of the Bible that bristled with mistranslations, and the most arbitrary changes of the original text, that the Church made stringent regulations in regard to the reading of the Scriptures. These regulations did not make Bible reading unlawful, but required that only approved editions, well supplied with explanatory notes taken from the writings of the Early Fathers, should be used. In this matter, as in so many others, Protestants failed to distinguish between the actions of the Church and the actions of the Provincial Synods. It is indeed true that the Synod of Toulouse, in 1229, the Synod of Tarragona, 1233, and the Synod of Oxford, in 1408, issued formal prohibitions against the reading of the Bible by the laity, but these prohibitions had only a local application, and were revoked as soon as the danger that threatened the faith in these localities had passed. The Church's legislation in the matter of Bible reading was never prohibitive, but only tended to the enactment of such restrictions as the common good evidently required.

Source: [Our Sunday Visitor, July 5th, 1914, of Huntington Indiana, page 3, Bureau of Information.](#)

ITEM #16 THE 1918 CODE OF CANON LAW ON CENSORSHIP AND PROHIBITING BOOKS

The previous *Code of Canon Law*, quoted here, went into effect in 1918, and was superceded in 1983:

(boldface numbers are paragraph numbers, the Canon numbers are in parenthesis)

TITLE XXIII.

Censorship and Prohibition of Books.

1227. The Church has the right to rule that Catholics shall not publish any books unless they have first been subjected to the approval of the Church, and to forbid for a good reason the faithful to read certain books, no matter by whom they are published.

The rules of this title concerning books are to be applied also to daily papers, periodicals, and any other publication, unless the contrary is clear from the Canons. (Canon 1384).

CHAPTER I.

Censorship of Books.

1128. Without previous ecclesiastical approval even laymen are not allowed to publish:

1. the books of Holy Scripture, or annotations and commentaries of the same;
2. books treating of Sacred Scripture, theology, Church history, Canon Law, natural theology, ethics, and other sciences concerning religion and morals. Furthermore, prayer books, pamphlets and books of devotion, of religious teaching, either moral, ascetic, or mystic, and any writing in general in which there is anything that has a special bearing on religion or morality;
3. sacred images reproduced in any manner, either with or without prayers.

The permission to publish books and images spoken of in this Canon may be given either by the proper Ordinary of the author, or by the Ordinary of the place where they are published, or by the Ordinary of the place where they are printed; if, however, any one of the Ordinaries who has a right to give approval refuses it, the author cannot ask of another unless he informs him of the refusal of the Ordinary first requested.

The religious must, moreover, first obtain permission from their major superior. (Canon 1385.)

1234. Translations of the Holy Scriptures in the vernacular languages may not be published unless they are either approved by the Holy See, or they are published, under the the supervision of the bishop, with annotations chiefly taken from the holy Fathers of the Church and learned Catholic writers. (Canon 1391.)

1241. The prohibition of books has this effect that the forbidden books may not without permission be published, read, retained, sold, nor translated into another language, nor made known to others in any way.

The book which has in any way been forbidden may not again be published except after the demanded corrections have been made and the authority which forbade the book, or his superior, or successor, has given permission. (Canon 1398.)

1242. By the very law are forbidden:

1. editions of the original text, or of ancient Catholic versions, of the Sacred Scriptures, also of the Oriental Church, published by non-Catholics; likewise any translation in any language made or published by them;
2. books of any writers defending heresy or schism, or tending in any way to undermine the foundations of religion;
3. books which purposely fight against religion and good morals;
4. books of any non-Catholic treating professedly of religion unless it is certain that nothing is contained therein against the Catholic faith;
5. books on the holy Scriptures or on religious subjects which have been published without the permission required by Canons 1385, § 1, nn. 1, and 1391; books and leaflets which bring an account of new apparitions, revelations, visions, prophecies, miracles, or introduce new devotions even though under the pretext that they are private; if these books, etc., are published against the rules of the Canons;
6. books which attack or ridicule any of the Catholic dogmas, books which defend errors condemned by the Holy See, or which disparage Divine worship, or tend to undermine ecclesiastical discipline, or which purposely insult the ecclesiastical hierarchy, or the clerical and religious states; ... (Canon 1399.)

Source: *THE NEW CANON LAW, A commentary and Summary of the New Code of Canon Law*, by Rev. Stanislaus Woywod, O.F.M., Published and Copyright, 1918, by Joseph F. Wagner, New York, pages 282-289.

ITEM #17 INDEX OF PROHIBITED BOOKS OF 1930

From Cardinal Merry de Val, "Forward," in the *Index of Prohibited Books*, revised and published by order of His Holiness Pope Pius XI (new ed.; [Vatican City]: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1930), pp. ix-xi:

[p. ix] What many, indeed fail to appreciate, and what, moreover non-Catholics consider a grave abuse — as they put it of the Roman Curia, is the action of the Church in hindering the printing and circulation of Holy Writ in the vernacular. Fundamentally however, this ac- [p. x] cusation is based on calumny. During the first twelve centuries Christians were highly familiar with the text of Holy Scripture, as is evident from the homilies of the Fathers and the sermons of the mediaeval preachers; nor did the ecclesiastical authorities ever intervene to prevent this. It was only in consequence of heretical abuses, introduced particularly by the Waldenses, the Albigenses, the followers of Wyclif, and by Protestants broadly speaking (who with sacrilegious mutilations of Scripture and arbitrary interpretations vainly sought to justify themselves in the eyes of the people; twisting the text of the Bible to support erroneous doctrines condemned by the whole history of the Church) that the Pontiffs and the Councils were obliged on more than one occasion to control and sometimes even forbid the use of the Bible in the vernacular...

[p. xi] Those who would put the Scriptures indiscriminately into the hands of the people are the believers always in private interpretation — a fallacy both

absurd in itself and pregnant with disastrous consequences. These counterfeit champions of the inspired book hold the Bible to be the sole source of Divine Revelation and cover with abuse and trite sarcasm the Catholic and Roman Church.

ITEM #18 CURRENT CODE OF CANON LAW ON VERNACULAR BIBLES

The current *Code of Canon Law*, which went into effect in 1983, reads as follows:

Can. 825 § 1. Books of the Sacred Scriptures cannot be published unless they have been approved either by the Apostolic See or by the conference of bishops; for their vernacular translations to be published it is required that they likewise be approved by the same authority and also annotated with necessary and sufficient explanations.

§ 2. With the permission of the conference of bishops Catholic members of the Christian faithful can collaborate with separated brothers and sisters in preparing and publishing translations of the Sacred Scriptures annotated with appropriate explanations.

Source: *Code of Canon Law*, Latin-English Edition, copyright 1983 by Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City, published by the Canon Law Society of America, Washington DC 20064, ISBN: 0-943616-19-0, page 309.

This is by no means a complete list, but it is what I have for the moment. Far from championing the spread of the Bible, and the translation into the vernacular, the Catholic Church has a history of repression and censorship in this regard. It was really the combination of the reformation and the advent of the printing press that "let the cat out of the bag." It seems that Bibles could be printed faster than they (and their authors or owners) could be burned. Since Catholicism could no longer contain the Bible and keep it out of the hands of the laity, the issue has become one of authority to interpret.

For those Catholics who continue to maintain that the Roman Catholic Church was justified in seizing and burning "faulty" vernacular Bibles, and that grave errors in translation were the primary reason for destroying them, I offer the following challenge:

Tyndale's Bible has recently been republished by David Daniell and Yale University Press and can still be found at some bookstores. Tyndale's New Testament is 0-300-04419-4 for the hardback and 0-300-06580-9 for the paperback. Tyndale's Old Testament in hardback is ISBN 0-300-05211-1. Mr. Daniell has updated the spelling but remained faithful to the original text.

http://wesley.nnu.edu/biblical_studies/tyndale/

The Geneva Bible's 1602 New Testament has also been reprinted in facsimile by Pilgrim Classic Commentaries in 1989 from an original in the Cambridge University Library. The ISBN is 0-8298-0789-6 for the hardback and ISBN 0-8298-0785-3 for the paperback.

The 1611 Authorized Version (King James) Bible has also been reprinted word-for-word with original spelling by Thomas Nelson Publishers in 1993.

In addition, to my knowledge, the Roman Catholic Church was unsuccessful in completely destroying all copies of any "heretical" reformation era vernacular translations of the Bible. Despite their diligence, there are surviving copies existing today that can be studied. I therefore challenge Catholics to produce Catholic documents from the reformation period that cite and explain in detail the grave "errors" in vernacular Protestant Bibles, that warranted not only their destruction, but also frequently the death of the author, as well as those found in possession of said Bibles. It would seem that any charge of grave translation "errors" can still be verified by almost anyone today from either original editions or facsimile reprints. So mere claims of faulty vernacular Bibles proves *absolutely nothing* without providing citations of the exact verse and Bible edition where the alleged error occurs.

I maintain that the objections of the Catholic church to the various attempts to produce a Bible in the vernacular, were not that of faulty translations (although that claim was made), but rather that of "unauthorized heretical" interpretations that resulted from widespread publication and the laity finally being able to read the entire Bible for themselves in their own tongue, as noted in the various items above. The laity was then able to discern the truth for themselves, and the biblical truth was often at odds with Catholic teaching. Dissent flourished with the availability of the Bible, and so persecution of these heretics increased as well, in an attempt by the church to maintain control and assert her presumed authority. It is a sad chapter in history that is quite well documented.



<http://www.aloha.net/~mikesch/>