STUDIES / STUDII

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND VERNACULAR BIBLE READING, BEFORE AND AFTER TRENT*

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Abstract L'articolo si apre con una panoramica delle diverse, e spesso divergenti, tradizioni locali presenti nella Chiesa latina tardomedievale in merito alla lettura della Bibbia nelle lingue vernacole. Nella seconda parte, il contributo si concentra sulle discussioni riguardanti le traduzioni in volgare delle Sacre Scritture, avvenute durante la quarta sessione del Concilio di Trento, nella primavera del 1546. In quell'occasione, tuttavia, non si prese alcuna decisione, confermando de facto le tradizioni locali. Nella terza sezione, si porrà l'attenzione sulla severa posizione assunta dalle autorità ecclesiastiche nella seconda metà del sec. XVI, declinatasi nelle successive edizioni dell'Index romano. Infine, si analizzeranno l'indice clementino del 1596 e i drammatici cambiamenti che questo provocó sulla mappa delle aeree europee in cui era proibita o permessa la lettura della Bibbia in volgare.
Keywords: lettura della Bibbia in volgare, Medioevo e prima età moderna, Concilio di Trento, Indice dei libri proibiti.

The attitude of the Catholic Church with regard to Bible reading in the vernacular has been subject to many misunderstandings and even prejudices. Often it has been stated that the Catholic Church was very reluctant towards, if not opposed to, the laity's reading of the Bible in the vernacular. This may for example be true with regard to the Roman authorities and their Counter-Reformation reflex in the second half of the sixteenth century, but it should be considered a blunt and uncritical generalization when taking the entire late medieval and early modern Church history into account. This uncritical and biased depiction of the Catholic position may be the result of what the Canadian scholar Andrew C. Gow has called the "Protestant Paradigm", according to which it was mainly, if not exclusively, due to the Protestant Reformation that the Christian faithful were granted the precious right of reading the Bible in the vernacular (See Gow 2005: 161-191). It is the aim of this essay to draw a more nuanced picture of the Catholic position, starting with an overview of the various and often diverging local traditions that existed in

* La Chiesa cattolica e la lettura della Bibbia in volgare prima e dopo Trento.

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late medieval Europe regarding Bible reading in the vernacular. In a second section, we will deal with the discussion concerning vernacular Bible reading at the Council of Trent during the fourth session of the spring of 1546, which ended undecidedly and confirmed *de facto* the local traditions. In the third section, attention will be given to the ever stricter position taken by the Roman authorities in the second half of the sixteenth century, as it was expressed in the succeeding versions of the Roman Index. We will conclude with the Clementine Index of 1596 and the dramatic changes it provoked on the map of the prohibited or sanctioned areas of Europe as far as vernacular Bible reading was concerned.

1. Local Traditions Relating to Vernacular Bible Reading on the Eve of Trent

"One of the most persistent inaccuracies regarding the European late Middle Ages... is the notion that the Catholic Church had forbidden or banned the reading of the Bible in the vernacular." This presumption lingers "both among the general public and even among scholars", and, in a number of his recent articles, has been sharply denounced by the Canadian scholar Andrew C. Gow (Gow 2009: 2).[1] The truth is that there was simply not a central Roman policy pertaining to Bible reading in the vernacular – let alone a ban – that could have been in force everywhere in Western Europe. And the *New Cambridge History of the Bible* volume on the Middle Ages testifies to the manifold copies containing (parts of) the Bible, both in manuscript and print, that circulated and were read in most linguistic regions of late medieval Western Europe. It should, however, be observed that, in comparison with the contemporary conception of the Bible as a closed collection of canonical books, during the Middle Ages, a broader understanding existed concerning what the notion 'Bible' might include: in addition to "pandects" or complete Bibles, it extended to history Bibles (Bibles containing only the "historical" books), Psalters, Gospel harmonies, books containing the Epistle and Gospel readings from mass, *et cetera* (Marsden & Matter 2012). True, in most regions, the practice of vernacular Bible reading by the laity was questioned, but it was only in those areas where the Church had to face popular religious dissidence that the ecclesiastical and civil authorities took a strict stance regarding Bible reading in the vernacular. In all places, the reasoning was that free reading of the Bible and an idiosyncratic interpretation of its content would inevitably lead to errors and even heresy.

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[1] See also Gow (2005: 161-191) and Corbellini (2012: 15-39).

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The most obvious example is England, where vernacular biblical material circulated at the end of the late Middle Ages, mostly, but not exclusively, as paraphrases of parts of the Bible, without leading to any prohibitory measures (Marsden 2012: 217-238).[2] When, however, John Wycliffe and his followers, the Lollards, engaged from the 1370s on in a project of translating the naked text of the complete Bible, with the purpose of giving it a broad readership, while at the same time promoting ideas of the self-sufficiency of the Scriptures, besides other "heretical" ideas, the ecclesiastical authorities took measures.[3] In the wake of the Oxford Synod of 1407-1409, convened by Archbishop Thomas Arundel, the so-called Oxford Constitutions were issued, forbidding any (new) translation of the Bible into English or any other vernacular language without the prior approval of the local bishop or a provincial council.[4] Discussion still prevails as to what degree this ban was effectively enforced, especially given the large number of manuscripts – some 250 – containing the Wycliffite or Lollard texts that are known to have survived and are preserved in libraries and archives.[5] It has in any case been demonstrated that changes to the layout, such as the removal of Wycliffite paratextual material (especially the *Great Prologue* and marginal glosses), and the addition of the Old Testament readings from mass to New Testament manuscripts, as well as a table of contents facilitating the retrieval of the liturgical readings, also made the copies acceptable to a both clerical and lay orthodox readership.[6] Nevertheless, for about 130 years, from 1409 onwards, *in principle*, the mere possession of English books relating to the Bible by ordinary lay people could result in a charge of heresy. The ban on vernacular Bible production had as a result that no editions were printed in England and even that the printing industry lacked any significant development in the country, whereas in other European countries, it was precisely the printing of Bible books that contributed an important boost to such development.[7] This situation is exemplified by the first English Protestant New Testament, edited by William Tyndale, first published in 1526 in Worms, and subsequently reprinted in Antwerp, but which was thereafter immediately affected by pro-

[2] See also the overview of English vernacular Bibles, be it written from a Protestant "Tyndalian" point of view: Daniell (2003).

[3] On John Wycliffe and the so-called "Lollard" Bibles, see the works of Anne Hudson, especially: Hudson (1988: 228-277, esp. 228-247), and Dove (2007).

[4] For a discussion of the *censura*, see, for example, Hudson (1985: 67-84 and 147-148); Watson (1995: 822-864); Gosh (2002: 86-111).

[5] See especially Dove (2007: 46-58); also Hudson (1988: 232-234).

[6] See, amongst others, the recent study by Poleg (2013: 71-91).

[7] Comp. Gow (2009: 21).

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hibitory measures by the English authorities.[8] This would continue until 1538, when King Henry VIII, having broken with the Church of Rome, without however becoming a full-blooded Protestant, would allow an English Bible to be printed (the "Great Bible" of 1539, which was a revision of the so-called Matthew Bible by Myles Coverdale). Given the importance of Anglo-Saxon historiography, the particular English situation was more than once extrapolated to the whole of Western Christianity and contributed to the spread of the ill-famed paradigm that the late medieval (Catholic) Church prohibited vernacular reading by the laity (Comp. Gow 2009: 21).

In the southern part of what is now France (Sneddon 2012: 251-267; Nobel 2011: 207-223; also Bogaert 1991: 13-46), Occitan-language biblical material circulated in both orthodox and heterodox milieus, viz. Waldensian and Cathar, as is evidenced by the extant manuscript material. Measures taken against the Waldensians (also called the "Poor of Lyons"), and especially against the Cathars or Albigenses, also included some serious reservations relating to Bible reading in the vernacular. This was for instance the case with pronouncements at the provincial councils of Toulouse in 1229 and 1246 (Mansi 23/1779: cols. 197 and 724). If the production of vernacular biblical material was slowed down by such measures, it was certainly taken up again in the fourteenth century, when "Catholic normality" was "fully resumed" (Sneddon 2012: 263).

Waldensians were also to be found in more northern regions, especially in the French and German linguistic border areas. When Bishop Bertram of Metz complained to Pope Innocent III of heretical groups being active in his diocese, and convening, discussing, as well as preaching on the basis of French translations of the Bible, the Pope replied with a renowned letter entitled *Cum ex iniuncto* (1199), amongst other documents. The Pope did not denounce vernacular Bible reading as such, but opposed secret religious "conventicles", where the Bible was freely discussed, as well the practice of the ministry of preaching without any explicit ecclesiastical approval. Innocent III's *Cum ex iniuncto* has been included among the *Decretals* of Gregorius IX in 1234 and, as such, became part of the canon law of the Western Church.[9] Adversaries of Bible reading in the vernacular have more than once invoked *Cum ex iniuncto* as an official (papal) ban on vernacular Bible reading, with a validity extending to the entire Western Church, although this was never the Pope's initial intention, as the defenders of vernacular Bible reading did not hesitate to emphasize.[10]

[8] On William Tyndale and his Bible translations, see, for example, Daniell (1994: 108-111, 142-145, and 169); Daniell (2003: 140-159). A summary is to be found in Daniell (2000: 39-50); Latré (2002: 11-24).

[9] See in this regard: Friedberg (1881: cols. 784-787).

[10] For a discussion of the text, see Boyle (1985: 97-107).

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Whatever the case may be: in the heart of France, north of the Loire, manuscripts containing (parts of) the Bible were produced in great quantities, such as the *Old French Bible* or the *Bible (française) du XIII^e siècle* (c. 1220-1260) – "the first complete vernacular Bible translation in Western Europe"(Sneddon 2012: 256) – Guiart des Moulins's *Bible Historiale* (1291-1295),[11] in addition to liturgy-related works such as vernacular Psalters and books containing the Gospel and Epistle readings from mass. A combination of materials from the *Old French Bible* as well as Des Moulins's *Bible Historiale* led in the first decade of the fourteenth century to the creation of the *Bible Historiale complétée*, which was the most important French Bible text of the late Middle Ages and circulated in large quantities of manuscripts. Close study of the original manuscripts has revealed that these biblical books were actually used and read by lay people of all social strata, and that they were even not inaccessible to the middle and lower classes living in an urban setting.[12] A version of the *Bible Historiale complétée*, revised by Jean de Rély, the King's confessor, was first printed c. 1496-1499, with about ten reprints before the beginning of the Reformation era, in addition to two printed New Testaments containing the text from the said Bible. In the very same period, fourteen editions were printed of the *Bible abrégée*, an abridged History Bible, the first in 1473-1474 (Chambers 1983; Delaveau & Hillard 2002; see also Hillard 1999: 68-82, esp. 74-82). However, only a limited number of vernacular books were printed containing the Gospel and Epistle readings from mass, accompanied with sermons and expositions, and reproducing textual material that went back to the late Middle Ages.

However, one should not lose sight of the fact that, among the members of the influential theological Faculty of Paris, the opposition to vernacular Bible reading by the laity was on the increase. Confronted with the Bible-based "heresy" of Wycliffe and that of Jan Hus in its wake, Jean Gerson, the chancellor of the Paris Faculty and one of the most influential theologians of his time, implored the Council fathers at Constance in 1417 to issue a prohibition on Bible reading in the vernacular that would extend to the entire Church. He sustained his warning with a reference to earlier heterodox movements as the Poor of Lyons, and the Beghards. The propensity of the latter for religious literature in the vernacular had obviously also led to vernacular Bibles in France being attributed with the reproach of heterodoxy.[13] The Council of Constance

[11] The term "Bible Historiale" or "History Bible" may be misleading, since all manuscripts of Des Moulins's translation contain also (parts) of the prophetical books.

[12] See especially Hoogvliet (2013: 237-272, esp. 250-271).

[13] See especially Gerson (1973: 57-58). It was possibly as a result of his confrontation in Constance with the Bible-based "heresies" of Wycliffites and Hussites, that Gerson became far more restrictive as regards Bible reading in the vernacular. Earlier state-

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did not issue such a general prohibition, but Gerson's standpoint was taken up by his colleagues of the Faculty of Theology in Paris, who, when Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples published in 1523 his new French translation of the New Testament, struck it with an official condemnation, first in August 1525 and again in February 1526 (François 2009a: 111-139, esp. 126-127).[14] In several documents stemming from the Paris theological milieu, such a prohibition was justified by a reference to the Poor of Lyons, the Beguines and Beghards, as well as to the "Bohemians" and the stance the theologians' historic leader Jean Gerson had taken against them. The *Parlement de Paris*, for its part, officially confirmed the Faculty's prohibitory measures.[15] The aforementioned *Bible Historiale complétée* and *Bible abrégée* were, however, not affected by the aforementioned Paris condemnation of "new" translations and continued to be printed: up until 1545-1546, the first saw twenty additional editions printed, the second seven editions (Hoogvliet 2013: 264). It must nevertheless be admitted that the French culture of Bible reading did not receive an extra impetus from the humanist movement, as was the case elsewhere in Europe, and that it was even vulnerable to attempts of suppression: no more new French translations of the Bible were printed until 1565.[16] It was possible for Lefèvre's French Bible translations to be published, be it outside the sphere of the Paris theologians' influence and outside the immediate range of interested French readers. It was especially in Antwerp, in the Low Countries that Lefèvre's versions were printed (which makes their fate to some degree comparable to that of Tyndale's English editions): the New Testament was published from 1525 onwards, the Old Testament in 1528, and the complete Bible from 1530 onwards. In contrast to Tyndale's editions, however, Lefèvre's versions bore the consent of the Louvain Faculty of Theology, which, by so doing, gave an explicit approval where their Paris colleagues had issued a condemnation.[17] It is another indication that, on

ments ascribed to him are more nuanced. See Posthumus Meyjes (1999: 335-339); Bogaert (1991: 42-43). Also: Hoogvliet (2013: 257-258).

[14] See there for further literature.

[15] See e.g. in the letter of the Faculty's syndic Noel Beda to Desiderius Erasmus, 21 May 1525, ed. Percy Stafford Allen *et al.* (Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami, 6), Oxford, Claredon, 1906, nr. 1579, p. 85 l. 147 – 86 l. 171, and the plea of the Faculty's lawyer Jean Bochard against the Reform-minded bishop of Meaux, Guillaume Briçonnet, on 29 August 1525 (Caesar Egassius Bulaeus, *Historia Universitatis Parisiensis*... vol. 6, Paris: Pierre de Bresche... et Jacob de Laize-de-Bresche..., 1673, p. 182).

[16] When René Benoist published his Catholic, "vulgatized", version of the Geneva Bible in 1566, it was also struck with a condemnation by the Paris theologians.

[17] Still important for the study of Lefèvre's translation, is: Laune (1895: 56-72). See also: Bedouelle (1976: 112-120); Bogaert and Gilmont (1991: 47-106, esp. 54-55).

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the eve of Trent, there was no univocal Catholic position as regards vernacular Bible reading, but only geographically and culturally diverse attitudes. Besides Lefèvre's Bible editions, Erasmus' plea for a vernacular Bible was also affected by a condemnation issued in 1527 by the Paris theologians and published in 1531 (François 2005: 357-405). This pronouncement should be considered a landmark in the Catholic Church's position with regard to vernacular Bible reading, since it was repeatedly cited as a reference by the opponents of such reading in the years to come.

An even more ambiguous picture can be observed in Spain and Catalonia (See Avenoza 2012: 288-306; see also: Fernández López 2003; Reinhardt 1976). Considering the multicultural context of late medieval Spain, Gemma Avenoza, the author of the article in the *New Cambridge History of the Bible*, waxes lyrical about the possibilities of Bible reading in the said cultures: "...Hispanic peoples of diverse languages and nations read, handled, adapted and translated the Bible: Christians, Jews, Albigenses, Waldensians or other sects..." (Avenoza 2012: 288). Given the presence of Jews in Castile, a large group of biblical, viz. Old Testament, texts were translated from the Masoretic Hebrew, for use by both Catholic – often noble – readers, and members of the Jewish community. Other biblical texts were translated from the Latin Vulgate, such as those commissioned by King Alfonso X "the Learned" to be used in his *General estoria* (c. 1270-1284), a kind of world history. The famous *Alba Bible* (c. 1430), for its part, was a translation of the Hebrew Bible. As in the other cultural areas of Europe, the Psalter and books containing the Epistle and Gospel readings of mass, were among the most often translated biblical texts in Castillian. Examples are the fragmentary, handed down manuscript *Evangelios y Epístolas* by Martín de Lucena (1450) or *Las Epístolas y Evangelios* by Gonzalo García de Santa María, published in 1484-1485 and the first printed edition of a biblical text in Castillian.

As regards Catalan Bibles, only scarce manuscript material has been preserved: noteworthy is the so-called *Fifteenth Century Bible* that has its origin in the *Portacoeli* Charterhouse in Valencia and has – incorrectly (Avenoza 2012: 298) – been ascribed to Bonifacio Ferrer. It was the basis for the first printed Bible, the *Valencia Bible* of 1478, as well as for a separate edition containing the Psalms, c. 1480 (Barcelona). No complete copies of the *Valencia Bible* or even of *Las Epístolas y Evangelios* by Gonzalo García de Santa María are extant: this confronts us with another aspect of the Spanish vernacular Bible, viz. that of the harsh oppression and even destruction of copies of the Bible (Avenoza 2012: 293-305; Fernández López 2003: 27-44; also Fernández 2005: 45-68, esp. 50).

In northern Aragon, measures against vernacular Bible reading were already promulgated in 1233 by the synod of Tarragona; this was part of a broader

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reaction against Waldensians, and Cathars or Albigenses, who were also active in the region, which was adjacent to the aforementioned southern-French "Occitania" (Mansi 23/1779: col. 329). Targeting the Beguine movement, another synod in Tarragona issued in 1317 a prohibition of the possession of vernacular books (Mansi 25/1782: cols. 628-629; see also Fernández López 2003: 89-96). More important, however, is the "second" wave of opposition that the Spanish Inquisition unleashed against vernacular Bibles from the fifteenth century onwards. This repression formed part of a reaction against the remaining Jews in Spain, or against the *conversos*, Jews who had converted to Catholicism, but whose loyalty to the faith was questioned. The prohibitions were intended to prevent Jews and *conversos* from clandestinely continuing their Jewish worship, from interpreting the Scriptures according to their former Hebrew traditions and thus from secretly initiating their children in the Mosaic Law. From the midst of the fifteenth century onwards, massive burnings of copies of the Bible both in Catalonia and Castile are recorded. These actions culminated in a harsh prohibition of vernacular Bibles, obviously issued by the Inquisition in 1492 with the consent of the so-called Catholic Kings Ferdinand and Isabella. Such measures by the Inquisition are said to explain the scarcity of extant copies of the complete Bible, both in manuscript and in print (Avenoza 2012: 289-290; Fernández López 2003: 96-111).

Other editions were specifically published with the explicit consent of the Catholic Kings in order to provide orthodox versions that were linked with the liturgy. This was pre-eminently the case with the *Epístolas y Evangelios* by Ambrosio de Montesinos, which were in fact a revision of those by Gonzalo García de Santa María, were first published in 1512, and went through several reprints, amongst other places in Antwerp (Fernández López 2003: 45-46). The same Bible policy was maintained by the Spanish Inquisition under Charles V and his administration when it came to take measures against the upcoming Protestantism in Spain (Fernández López 2003: 112-116). In this context Francesco de Enzinas published his first "Protestant-humanist" version of the New Testament in 1543 outside Spain, in... Antwerp.[18]

A very different picture arises on considering the situation in Germany (Gow 2012: 198-216; Flood 1999: 144-165; also Gow 2009). Building upon a manuscript tradition of centuries, German Bible texts became available for printing, so that between 1466 and 1522, thus before the Reformation, about seventy editions containing such books were printed. Eighteen of them were pandects or complete Bibles, the first being the *Mentellin Bible* of 1466. True,

[18] For further reading on Enzinas' New Testament, see Agten (2013: 218-241); Christman (2012: 197-218); Nelson (1999: 94-116).

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there were efforts to prevent the vernacular Bible from falling into the hands of the uneducated – let alone heretical – people,[19] such as Charles IV's imperial prohibition of 1369, aimed at the Beguines, or Archbishop Berthold's attempts to stop the printing of vernacular religious works, and especially Bibles, in Mainz in 1486, to mention only the most famous. But none of them were able to effectively impede the interest in vernacular versions of the Scriptures in Germany among clerics, nobles, and literate townspeople. When Martin Luther published the first version of his New Testament in 1522 and his complete Bible in 1534, he could rely on this century long interest in vernacular Bible reading in Germany. It must even be admitted that his versions, especially that of the New Testament, preserve reminiscences of the older translation tradition (although Protestant historiography has emphasized the novelty and superiority of Luther's translations). Confronted with Luther's new translation, the Catholic Church in Germany did not react by imposing a strict ban on vernacular Bible editions, but by putting "good" Bibles into the people's hands, viz. Bibles where confessionnally sensitive passages from the Luther Bible had been corrected on the basis of the Vulgate. The best known of these Catholic "Korrekturbibeln" are the New Testament of Jerome Emser (1527), and the Bibles of John Dietenberger (1534) and John Eck (1537).

A similar picture is to be found in the Low Countries. Several parts of the Bible, such as History Bibles, Psalters, translations of the New Testament, Gospel harmonies, as well as books containing the Epistles and Gospel readings from mass, were widespread by the end of the Middle Ages (see Den Hollander, Kwakkel and Scheepsma 2007). The most well-known are the *Herne Bible* (produced between 1359-1384), named after the Carthusian monastery of Herne (near Brussels), the *Northern Dutch Translation of the New Testament* also called the *New Testament of the Devotio Moderna* (c. 1387-1399), as well as the *Psalter of the Devotio Moderna* (c. 1415). The *Devotio Moderna* or Modern Devotion was a Netherlandish spiritual reform movement that had its origin in the same period as those of Wycliffe and Hus, but in contrast to the latter remained within the Church. The origin and, even more, the spread of vernacular biblical material in the Low Countries, owes much to the impetus given by the said spiritual reform movement. Part of the material was eventually printed, beginning with the *Delft Bible* (1477), which was in fact an Old Testament version, without the Psalms, based upon the text of the *Herne Bible*. The edition was immediately followed, in towns as Gouda, Utrecht and Delft, by the supplementary printing of the Epistle and Gospel readings from mass, as well as Psalters. When the first editions

[19] A synod held at Trier in 1231 noticed that a heretical group had resource to Bible translations in German. Obviously the Waldensians are meant (Mansi 23/1779: col. 241).

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appeared, based upon the text of Erasmus and/ or Luther, and the centre of printing activity switched quickly to Antwerp (François 2009b: 187-214; Den Hollander 1997; also De Bruin 1993), the authorities in the Low Countries did not react with a general ban on vernacular Bibles. What was prohibited were especially those Bible editions that contained prologues, marginal glosses, summaries above the chapters and other "paratextual" elements that might influence the interpretation of the reader in a heterodox direction. The discussion, in semi-clandestine gatherings or "conventicles", of the Bible's interpretation was also forbidden.[20] Just as in Germany, the authorities were keen to provide the population with a trustworthy translation, based upon the Vulgate and devoid of all interpretative glosses. This was, for example, the aim of the Dutch Vorsterman Bible, named after the Antwerp printer who published this Bible for the first time in 1528, as well as the (above-mentioned) French Bible of Lefèvre d'Étaples, printed by Martin Lempereur in 1530.

As regards Italy (Leonardi 2012: 268-287; see also Barbieri 1999: 246-259), it may be concluded that biblical texts in the vernacular also played a fairly important role in the devotional life of late medieval burgers, especially in Tuscany and in the northern regions. Many of these burgers may have been members of the religious confraternities that flourished in late medieval Florence, Siena, and other wealthy towns of Tuscany (and, by extension, in other parts of northern Italy). Here also, the Church authorities had no fundamental objections to the reading of the Bible in the vernacular by lay people (Corbellini 2012b: 21-40). Building upon an important manuscript tradition, sixteen printed editions of the Italian Bible translated by the Camaldolese monk Nicolò Malerbi (first edition 1471) were published before the Reformation, and another eleven would follow, up until 1567, when the last Catholic vernacular Bible in Italy came on the market. Before the Reformation, innumerable editions of the Epistle and Gospel readings from mass and about three editions of the Psalter, amongst other vernacular versions, were printed.[21] The Reform-minded Florentine layman Antonio Brucioli was the first to publish a New Testament (in 1530) and a complete Bible (in 1532) that were said to be based upon the original Greek and Hebrew. But this did not cause the Catholic Church authorities to subsequently prohibit Bibles. On the contrary, the same mechanism that was observed at work in Germany and in the Low Countries also arose in Italy: two Dominicans from the Florentine San Marco monastery provided a Catholic translation, in fact a correction of Brucioli's translation, viz. Fra Zaccaria of Florence in 1536

[20] On Bible reading and Bible censorship, see also François (2004: 198-247); Den Hollander (2003: 6-10). Further: François (2006: 69-96, esp. 79-89).

[21] The figures are from Barbieri (1991: 185-272).

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(the New Testament only) and Sante Marmochino in 1538 (complete Bible).[22] Apart from Germany, the Low Countries, and Italy, a similar tradition of permitting Bibles or parts of it in the vernacular, for the readership of people who did not understand Latin, existed for example in Poland, the Czech lands, and in Dalmatia-Croatia.

2. Vernacular Bible Reading at the Council of Trent, Fourth Session, 1546

Such was the situation on the eve of the Council of Trent. The issue of Bible translations in the vernacular was brought to the attention of the Council fathers during the preparatory meetings in the build-up to the fourth session during spring in 1546, when the Fathers had to tackle, amongst other issues, the so-called "abuses" related to the use of the Scriptures. And although the adversaries of the laity's reading of the Bible in the vernacular had the intention of having this practice included among the said abuses, they were opposed by a group who were in favor of lay reading. The adversaries were led by the Spanish Cardinal Pedro Pacheco, Archbishop of Jaen, who was assisted by his theological advisor, the Franciscan friar Alphonso de Castro. Most of the Council fathers coming from Spain, and even the few from France, were said to tend toward this negative viewpoint. Several Council fathers from Italy, but by far not all of them, may have been in favor of Bible reading in the vernacular. This group found an authoritative mouthpiece in no one less than the Cardinal Cristoforo Madruzzo, the Prince-bishop of Trent and host of the Council.[23] In what follows, the main arguments advanced by one group against the other will be discussed.

When Alphonso de Castro spoke in a meeting of an extraordinary committee that had been convened on 8 and 9 March 1546, specifically to debate the lay reading of the Bible, he knew his dossier. In 1534, in his famous book entitled *Adversus omnes haereses* (*Against all Heresies*), he had for the first time given vent to his negative judgment (Edition consulted: De Castro 1565: fols. 63-67). Whilst residing in Trent, early in 1546, De Castro had re-edited this book in Venice and preceded the text with a dedication to Cardinal Pacheco. And although the content of De Castro's discourse at the Council of Trent is not preserved, his ideas can be deduced from what he had written in his book

[22] See, amongst others, Del Col (1987: 165-188). On Brucioli see also Giacone (1999: 260-287).

[23] On the issue of vernacular Bible reading at Trent, see, amongst others, Fernández López (2003: 161-178); Coletti (1987: 199-224); McNally (1966: 204-227); Lentner (1964: 237-264); Cavallera (1945: 37-56). For an edition of the documents of the Council, see CT.

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(Cavallera 1945: 46-48; Lentner 1964: 242-244). It is evident from his writing that, for De Castro, Bible reading in the vernacular was one of the sources of heresy. De Castro hastened to emphasize that it was not the Bible itself, but its mistaken interpretation that should be blamed for the origin of heresies. And he especially pointed the finger at those people who, without any education or background, ventured to interpret the Bible and ran the risk of interpreting its words in an erroneous or even heretical way. In this regard, he also referred to the famous Bible passage that adversaries of vernacular Bible reading often invoked to underpin their standpoint, viz. Matt 7:6: "Give not that which is holy to dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest perhaps they trample them under their feet, and turning upon you, they tear you" (Douay-Rheims Version, henceforth abbreviated as DRV). De Castro felt no hesitance to deny access to the Bible to those people who were said to live as swine, even insinuating that the majority of the simple commoners belonged to that category. He further praised the initiative of the Catholic Kings Ferdinand and Isabella, who were reputed to have forbidden the translation and reading of the Scriptures in the vernacular in Spain (De Castro 1565: fols. 63r-64r.). As mentioned above, the reality in Spain was more complex than this: it was possibly the Inquisition which, with the help of the Catholic Kings, had promulgated such prohibition, which especially targeted (converted) Jews who might have used vernacular Bibles to continue to clandestinely practice their cult and initiate their children in the Jewish Law (Fernández López 2003: 96-111).

The reading and interpretation of the Bible should be reserved, De Castro continued, to those who, besides their faith, commanded the knowledge necessary for gaining insight into the Scriptures. He expressly objected to Luther and the Reformers who had argued that the Scriptures, especially the New Testament, were clear and intelligible to everyone. As a response to the Reformers' arguments, De Castro referred to the classical passage, 2 Petr 3:16, where it was written that in Paul's letters there "are certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction" (DRV). De Castro added that even those skilled in the sacred and profane sciences experienced huge difficulties in the explanation of the Scriptures, especially of those passages that seemingly contradict each other. How much more then would the reading and interpretation of the Scriptures be problematic for the simple man, De Castro continued, and in particular for women, who he said were so obstinate that it was easier to bring a hundred men into line than one single woman (De Castro 1565: fols. 64r-65v).

After having entered into a discussion with Luther and the Reformers, De Castro addressed himself in his book *Against all Heresies* to Erasmus. The humanist had expressed the desire that the Scriptures be translated into all lan-

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guages so that they could be read by the farmer, the smith, and the mason, and even by women. De Castro did not refrain from stating that the Paris Faculty of Theology had condemned Erasmus because of his plea in favor of vernacular Bible reading, a censure with which De Castro indicated his familiarity. He further entered into detail on Erasmus' argument, one that was sustained by references to such Church fathers as, among others, John Chrysostom and Jerome, that in patristic times Bible translations in the vernacular were commonly accepted and widespread. De Castro, however, argued that what used to be permitted should in the newer eras be considered as harmful, since the unfortunate consequence of unrestrained access to the Bible was that it had led several people to heresies (De Castro 1565: fols. 65v-67r).

The proponents of Bible reading in the vernacular found, as has been mentioned, a notable spokesman in Cardinal Cristoforo Madruzzo, who may even have twice taken the floor at the Council, in order to implore the Fathers not to include the reading of the Bible in the vernacular among the abuses. The first occurrence took place in the course of a dispute with Cardinal Pacheco during the general congregation of the Council on 17 March 1546. On this occasion, Madruzzo referred to the Apostle Paul who wished that the Scriptures would never be removed from the people's mouth (Rom 10:8), as well as to the German custom, with which he had become familiar through his German mother, and according to which parents used to teach their children vernacular religious texts such as the Our Father and the Creed, without a scandal ever issuing from that practice. The problems in the Church (of Germany) were, thus argued Madruzzo, not caused by simple people, but by scholars skilled in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Madruzzo therefore implored the Council fathers not to include Bible translations in the vernacular among the abuses.[24]

At that moment the Cardinal Pacheco gave the impression of easing off and replied that he had himself made no pronouncement on whether the debated practice was actually to be included among the abuses or not, but that he had only requested that the question be examined, in the light of the Spanish laws that forbade Bible translations in the vernacular. He even added that Pope Paul II had approved these measures – an allegation that is very difficult to prove (Fernández López 2003: 102-103). In his turn Madruzzo bluntly replied that Pope Paul and the other popes might have been mistaken in this regard – by which statement he did not want to express that they had actually been mistaken – but that the Apostle Paul's instruction that the Gospel would never be

[24] *Herculis Severoli... commentarius* (CT, 1-II), p. 37-38 and *Massarelli Diarium* III (CT, 1-II), p. 514; *Acta. 14. Congregatio generalis* (CT, 5-III), p. 30-31; also M. card. Cervinus to A. card. Farnesio, Trent, 17 March 1546 (CT, 10), p. 421.

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removed from our mouth was in any case free from error.[25] The other bishops had scarcely intervened in the debate, but were apparently impressed by the clash between the two Cardinals Madruzzo and Pacheco, who were said to be friends and belonged both to the "imperial", viz. pro-Habsburg party, at the Council.

Cardinal Madruzzo held an even more fierce discourse in favor of vernacular Bible reading during the general assembly of the Council on 1 April 1546.[26] He cited several scriptural proof texts that were able to sustain his plea for vernacular Bible reading, such as 2 Tim 3:16-17 where it was written that the entire Scripture was given to man for his instruction, guidance, correction, and education in justice. In the light of this and other texts, he expressed his fear of the reaction of the Protestants, who would not hesitate to preach to their followers that the Council fathers had snatched the Sacred Scriptures from the hands of men. Building on a widespread motif, Madruzzo also inquired why simple people should not have any access to the milk, viz. the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue, by which they might be fed and grow in Christ (1 Cor 3:2 and Heb 5:12-14). Another pressing question brought to the fore by the Cardinal was whether the Council fathers would go so far as identifying the laity with the dogs to which that which is holy should not be given, or with the swine before which pearls should not be cast (Matt 7:6). In his view, they should rather be considered as God's adopted children, who are on their way to the Lord, whom Christ had also redeemed by the precious gift of his blood.

After considering a few biblical passages that could sustain his argument, the Cardinal also dealt with a few current motives that were invoked to deny the laity the benefits of the Scriptures. In this regard, he referred to the ancient heresy of the Poor of Lyons – with which the Waldensians are meant – that was said to have been rooted in the popular Bible. But, so replied Madruzzo, Arius, Novatus, Sabellius, Cerinthus, Novatian, Paul of Samosate, Photinus, Eunomius, and the complete phalanx of ancient heretics were scholars and skilled in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Also in the own time, Luther, Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Melanchthon, Bucer and others were remarkably competent in the three languages. Should Hebrew, Greek, and Latin Bibles be abolished in order to root out heresies?, Madruzzo asked his audience. According to the Cardinal, what was clear was that the precarious situation in the Western Church of his time was very analogous to that of ancient Christianity, when heresy seldom had its origin

[25] *Herculis Severoli... commentarius* (CT, 1-II), p. 38; *Acta. 14. Congregatio generalis* (CT, 5-III), p. 31.

[26] Cristoforo Madruzzo, *De vertendis libris sacris in linguam vulgarem* (CT, 12), p. 528-530; for a translation, see Tallon (2000: 105-109); for a discussion, see McNally (1966: 220-221); Lentner (1964: 248-252); Cavallera (1945: 51-52).

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among simple people and among those who only knew their mother tongue, but occurred rather among those who claimed to be learned.

Madruzzo also deemed it to be very beneficial that the old catechisms be re-edited, so that Christian children would not be fed by obscene tales of poets, or silly stories of old women, but, according to 2 Tim 3:15, through the fundaments of the Gospel message itself, as though it were easily digestible milk. This idea, including the term "evangelicis rudimentis", is reminiscent of Erasmus' plea for Bible reading in the vernacular. The Cardinal further proposed the inclusion of explicatory notes for ambiguous and difficult passages in scriptural editions, which could be composed by learned and pious men, to whom the Council would give a mandate for that purpose.

Madruzzo even proposed the wordings of a decree for adoption by the Council, which was to read: "We condemn all corrupt Bible translations. That these [Bible translations] not be printed without the approval of the ordinary, on punishment of ecclesiastical sanctions to be defined, and that these printings would not be sold, without the same approval, on punishment of censures to be defined". Madruzzo's proposition, although negatively formulated, took for granted that certain Bible translations in the vernacular should be permitted, with the explicit approbation of the bishop.

It is obvious that adversaries and proponents of vernacular Bible reading kept each other in equilibrium at the Council of Trent,[27] so that the Fathers,

[27] During the general congregation of 3 April, the question was submitted of whether a Bible version, viz. the Latin Vulgate, should be declared authentic, and, further, whether a version should even be declared authentic in each of the languages ("in uno quoque idiomate"), or whether these words should be limited to the three biblical languages Latin, Greek and Hebrew only. The majority of those participating in the vote, viz. 22 Council fathers, declared themselves in favor of the mere promulgation of the Latin Vulgate as the authentic version of the Church, without pronouncing themselves in favor or against such an authentic version in other languages. Fourteen prelates, with Pacheco as their spokesman, explicitly opposed a promulgation of such an authentic version in each of the (vernacular) languages. Ten prelates, among whom Madruzzo as their foreman, pronounced in favor of the most inclusive formulation, thus fully accepting translations in each of the (vernacular) languages. One of them, Tommaso Sanfelice, the bishop of Cava de' Tirreni, suggested that his vote should be considered in favor of both the vernacular and the three biblical languages, whereas the general of the Augustinian Hermits, Girolamo Seripando, only wished an authentic version in the three biblical languages (obviously without a vernacular language). See *Herculis Severoli... commentarius* (CT, 1-II), p. 43 l. 17-24; 44 l. 13-22; *Acta. 28. Congregatio generalis de 4 abusibus* (CT, 5-III), p. 58-67, esp. p. 66-67. Summary in *Massarelli Diarium* II (CT, 1-II), p. 437 l. 10-12. Comp. Jedin (1957: 70); Lentner (1964: 258-259); McNally (1966: 222-224).

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during the fourth, solemn session of the Council on 8 April 1546, made no definitive pronouncement concerning vernacular Bible reading and thus continued to leave any decision in this regard to local instances. The Council did declare the Latin Vulgate to be the "authentic" version of the Scriptures for the Catholic Church – in the sense of its conformity to sound evangelical doctrine – and that it was the only version to be used in public lessons, disputes, preaching, and exposition. The Council fathers also expressed the wish that an emended version of the Vulgate be published as soon as possible.[28] At the Louvain Faculty of Theology, John Henten commenced work on the emendation of the Latin Vulgate, which resulted in the publication, in 1547, of the *Vulgata Lovaniensis*. In 1548 an official Dutch translation of the Vulgate and, in 1550, a French translation were to follow. In other countries likewise, Catholic vernacular Bibles continued to be published.

3. The Roman Indices and Vernacular Bible Reading

A decade after the Council of Trent not having made any pronouncement on Bible reading in the vernacular, and its leaving the decision to the local ecclesiastical and civil authorities, the adherents of a restrictive approach inevitably gained an increasing influence in Rome.[29] This was undoubtedly due to the seemingly unstoppable success of Protestantism, to which the permissibility of Catholic vernacular Bibles had not proven to be a sufficient alternative. Among the hardliners was Gian Pietro Carafa, former head of the Holy Office of the Roman Inquisition, who, as Pope Paul IV, had ascended the throne of Peter in 1555. In 1559, during the "unfortunate recess" of the Council that lasted for a decade,[30] he had published an Index of Forbidden Books that was prepared by the Inquisition and that was in principle applicable to the entire Church ("Roman Index 1"; see Fragnito 1997: 82-85; De Bujanda *et al.* 1990: 37-39, 128-131, 137, and 307-331, esp. 325 and 331; also Caravale 2011: 71-73). In this document, a general stipulation is given that no edition of the Bible in

[28] From the final decrees, we refer to the *Decretum secundum: Recipitur vulgata editio Bibliae praescribiturque modus interpretandi sacram scripturam etc.* (CT, 5-III), p. 91-92, which is also to be found in CC COGD 3/2010: p. 16-17. For a recent translation, see Tanner & Alberigo (1990: *664-665).

[29] On the evolution of the Roman standpoint after the Council of Trent, see Fragnito (1997), as well as the articles the same author has written in the wake of the publication of her ground-laying book, especially Fragnito (2003: 633-660), and Fragnito (2007: 51-77). Equally important is Frajese (1998: 269-345). A summary is to be found in Prosperi (2010: 185-187), as well as in the English article of Fragnito (2001: 13-49, esp. 14-35).

[30] Comp. McNally (1966: 226).

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the vernacular, nor any edition of the New Testament, should, in whatsoever way, be printed, purchased, read or held in possession, without the written permission of the Holy Office of the Roman Inquisition.[31] It is clear that the Roman Inquisition sought to reserve the judgment of the case for itself. The aforementioned general stipulations were preceded by what was considered a "non-exhaustive" list, forbidding specific editions of the Bible and the New Testament from several linguistic areas in Europe.

The extremely severe Index gave rise to great concern within the Church and received no application whatsoever. Therefore, the Holy Office felt obliged to issue, as early as February 1559, a so called *Instructio circa indicem librorum prohibitorum*. In this document, the stipulations with regard to Bible reading were, to a certain degree, moderated. An absolute prohibition was maintained on Bibles provided with heretical commentaries and marginal glosses. Religious men, non-priests, and even pious and devout lay people (but in no case women, not even sisters of female monastic orders) could obtain permission to read so-called "good" Catholic Bibles in the vernacular. Priests, deacons and sub-deacons should only have recourse to the Latin Bible and should by no means read Bibles in the vernacular. Permission to read books containing the Epistles and Gospels from mass could easily be obtained by those requesting such permission. It is important to note that these authorizations could be given by the inquisitors and their deputies, but in addition, "in places where these [inquisitors] were absent" ("ubi ipsi non sunt"), also by the local bishops, and this was a significant opening in comparison to the centralizing tendencies exhibited by Paul IV (Fragnito 1997: 93-95; De Bujanda *et al.* 1990: 46-49, 100-104, and 138-140).

Confronted with the opposition Paul IV's Index evoked, Pope Pius IV, his successor from the end of 1559, created a commission that would draft a new, more lenient index. As early as 1561, the commission issued a so-called *Moderatio indicis librorum prohibitorum*. As far as Bibles in the vernacular are concerned, the *Moderatio* referred to the conditions that were included in the *Instructio* of 1559. The only difference was that even more authority was granted to the local bishops in making decisions regarding the printing, reading, and possession of Bibles (Fragnito 1997: 95-97; De Bujanda *et al.* 1990: 51-54, 105-106, and 141-142; also Caravale 2011: 73-74). The drafting of a new index was eventually delegated to the Council fathers at Trent, where a committee of prelates took the work in hand.

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[31] Fol. 33v-34r: "Biblia omnia vulgari idiomate, Germanico, Gallico, Hispanico, Italico, Anglico sive Flandrico, etc. conscripta nullatenus vel imprimi vel legi vel teneri possint absque licentia sacri Officii S. Ro. Inquisitionis" (De Bujanda *et al.* 1990: 325 and 331, comp. p. 785).

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The Index of Trent, prepared exhaustively at the Council by a committee of prelates, was ultimately promulgated after the closure of the Council by Pius IV in 1564. The Index has to be considered as a landmark in the Catholic Church's position with regard to vernacular Bible reading ("Tridentine Index" or "Roman Index 2"; see Fragnito 1997: 98-106; De Bujanda *et al.* 1990: 91-99, 143-153, and 814-815; also Caravale 2011: 75). The fourth of the famous ten *Regulae* or *Rules* that were included in the Index asserted, among other things, that the unrestricted authorization to read the Bible in the vernacular had more disadvantages than benefits. When, however, no detrimental effect, but only an increase ("augmentum") in faith and devotion was to be expected from Bible reading, an individual dispensation could be granted by the bishop or the inquisitor, who had to seek the prior advice of the parish priest or the father confessor. The translation had to be made by a Catholic author. The authorization had to be in writing.[32] Booksellers who sold Bibles to people who did not possess the requested permission had to forfeit the received payment to the bishop and exposed themselves to additional punishments. Members of religious orders and congregations could, however, purchase and read Bibles, after having received a simple authorization from their superiors. The list containing forbidden Bibles and New Testaments that was to appear in the Index of 1559 had been removed from this new Index of 1564. The implementation of the fourth rule of Trent through "national" indices or via legislation imposed by provincial councils or diocesan synods was very diverse in the post-Tridentine Catholic world. And frequently, common practice was more tolerant than legislation.

However, only seven years after the promulgation of the Tridentine Index, the new Pope, Pius V, formerly a member of the Inquisitorial apparatus, already considered a revision of the Index. To that aim, he appointed, on 5 March 1571, a committee of Cardinals, which, a year later (13 September 1572), was converted into a genuine Roman congregation by Gregory XIII. During the first fifteen years of its existence, under Cardinal Guglielmo Sirleto, the Congregation of the Index tended to align itself with the rigorist mentality regarding Bible reading in the vernacular that existed especially in the Congregation of

[32] P. 15-16: "Cum experimento manifestum sit, si sacra Biblia vulgari lingua passim sine discrimine permittantur, plus inde, ob hominum temeritatem, detrimenti, quam utilitatis oriri; hac in parte iudicio Episcopi, aut Inquisitoris stetur; ut cum consilio Parochi, vel Confessarii Bibliorum, a Catholicis auctoribus versorum, lectionem in vulgari lingua eis concedere possint, quos intellexerint ex huiusmodi lectione non damnum, sed fidei, atque pietatis augmentum capere posse: quam facultatem in scriptis habeant..." (De Bujanda *et al.* 1990: 815-816). For an English translation, see McNally (1966: 226-227).

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the Holy Office of the Roman Inquisition. The aim was to return to the Rome-centered restrictive approach of 1559. On 5 September 1571, as one of its first decisions, the Committee of the Index decreed that no Bible written in German, French, Spanish, Italian, English, or Flemish could be printed, read or held without the permission of the Inquisition, depriving the local bishops from their prerogative, granted to them by the Tridentine Index. This measure found only gradual acceptance throughout Italy, where a well-established tradition of vernacular Bible reading had existed (Frajese 1998: 272-276; Fragnito 1997: 111-121). And whilst the Congregation of the Index applied itself to the revision of the Index, it was the Congregation of the Inquisition and the Master of the Sacred Palace in particular[33] that, through a series of successive measures, prohibited all kinds of vernacular biblical literature such as books of the hours, Psalters, books containing the Epistles and Gospels read at mass, biblical versifications, and other Bible-based works that had for decades and even centuries nurtured the spiritual life of the Italian faithful. These measures culminated in 1582 and 1583, when several Roman authorities took measures that bluntly and in a quasi-official way abolished the fourth rule of Trent: local bishops and inquisitors were no longer authorized to grant permission for the reading of the Old and the New Testament, but were required to seize them and consign them to the flames.[34]

After fifteen years of debates, in 1587, Pope Sixtus V restructured the Congregation of the Index, giving it thus a renewed impulse. An important part of the Congregation being now prominent members of the secular clergy who bore pastoral responsibilities in their diocese – such as the Cardinals Frederico Borromeo and Agostino Valier –, or in a Catholic community under Protestant rule – as for example the English Cardinal William Allen – favored the model of the 1564 Tridentine Index. These Church leaders were prepared to revoke the prohibitory measures that were taken in the preceding years and to allow once again vernacular versions of the Bible, or parts of it, on the condition that they were made by Catholic authors and approved by representatives of the

[33] The *Maestro del Sacro Palazzo*, who held jurisdiction over book printing in Rome and in the Roman district, was a third instance of censorship, and an *ex officio* member of both congregations.

[34] See especially Cardinal Charles Borromeo who on 4 December 1582, under the instigation of the Inquisition, promulgated from Rome an edict for his diocese Milan, entitled *Che non si tengano Bibbie volgari, ne Libri di controversie con gli Heretici*. The Congregation of the Index for its part decided in a reunion on 26 January 1583 that the reading of vernacular Bibles was not permitted, notwithstanding the fourth rule of Trent, to which decision the Master of the Sacred Palace, Sisto Fabbri, did not hesitate to give a broader application. See Frajese (1998: 275); Fragnito (1997: 121-142).

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Congregation of the Index, and that they were also accompanied by short annotations taken from the Church fathers. The Congregation of the Index was moreover prepared to reconfirm the local bishops and inquisitors' right to judge whether or not individual readers in particular contexts should be allowed to read this biblical material in the vernacular. The examination and permission of biblical paraphrases in the vernacular was left entirely to the local bishops and inquisitors. This was the tenor of the commentary the members of the Congregation gave to the *Regula VII* when it came to commenting on the new rules Sixtus V intended to include in the Index (Frajese 1998: 284-288 and 300-301; Fragnito 1997: 143-156). Sixtus V, having been a member of the Congregation of the Index since its beginning and a persistent proponent of the 1559-approach, was however able to impose his own restrictive viewpoints on the new version of the Index, which was completed in 1590. Hence, the Sixtine Index included the stricter regulations regarding vernacular Bible translations that had been promulgated during the previous decades, stipulating that not only vernacular Bible editions themselves, but also parts of it, were in principle forbidden, even if they had been produced by a Catholic translator. Their reading would only be permitted subsequent to a new and special license issued by the Holy See. Paraphrases in the vernacular were, however completely forbidden ("Sixtine Index" or "Index 3a").[35] After the death of Sixtus V however, in August of the very same year 1590, the Holy Office of the Inquisition suspended his Index, despite its having already been printed. The Inquisition did however confirm, in September of the same year 1590, that all Bible editions, in the Italian language, as well as compendia containing the Gospels and Epistles, were forbidden and should be burned (Frajese 1998: 308-312, esp. 311).

After the inauguration of Clement VIII early in 1592, a thorough revision of the Sixtine Index was anticipated. Clement, whose family originated from Florence, attempted to restore the heritage of biblical humanism as well as the literary traditions that had flourished in his family's town, and he was therefore personally opposed to a harsh prohibition. The revision of the Index was particularly taken to heart by the Jesuit Robert Bellarmine, consulter of the Congregation of the Index, and Bartolomeo de Miranda, Master of the Sacred Palace, who worked under the leadership of the Congregation's prefect Cardinal Agostino Valier. The work resulted in what was to become the third Roman Index ("Sixto-Clementine Index" or "Index 3 b"). As might be expected, the Sixto-Clementine Index quasi-literally repeated the fourth rule of the 1564

[35] F. 8r: "Biblia sacra, aut earum partes, etiam à catholico viro vulgariter quocumque sermone redditae, sine nova & speciali sedis apostolicae licentia nusquam permittuntur: vulgares verò paraphrases omnino interdicuntur" (De Bujanda *et al.* 1994: 344 and 796).

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Tridentine Index, which allowed Bible translations in the vernacular after written authorization by the local bishop.[36] The Index was approved on 17 May 1593 by Pope Clement VIII and, after the completion of its printing, presented to the Pope on 8 July 1593, in order to be promulgated. But the following day, something unprecedented took place: the Congregation of the Inquisition managed to have the new Index blocked, since it did not involve the inquisitors in the process of censuring and expurgating books, allocating this role to the bishops, and moreover it did not include certain prohibitions the Inquisition had already enforced during the preceding years. This protest thus concerned the lenient stipulations regarding Bible reading in the vernacular put forward by the Index. Giving way, later in July 1593, to the protests of the Inquisition, Pope Clement VIII suspended the promulgation of this Index (Frajese 1998: 314-320; Fragnito 1997: 156-161).

In order to find a solution during the following months, discussions took place between Pope Clement VIII and the Roman Curia in general and the Congregation of the Index in particular. All kinds of arguments were brought forward in the debates. Cardinal William Allen, for his part, continuously pleaded for the granting of the right to Catholics in Germany, England (and elsewhere) to read the Bible in the vernacular, so that they might be able to face up to the confrontation with the Protestants. Paolo Paruta, the ambassador ("orator") of Venice to the Papacy, fiercely defended the interests of the Venetian printing industry (Fragnito 1997: 162-170, also 224). The Pope eventually promulgated another version of the third Index, on 27 March 1596, which was

[36] F. 6v-7r: "Cum experimento manifestum sit, si sacra Biblia vulgari lingua passim sine discrimine permittantur, plus inde, ob hominum temeritatem, detrimenti, quam utilitatis oriri, hac in parte iudicio Episcopi, aut Inquisitoris stetur: ut cum consilio Parochi, vel Confessarii Bibliorum, a Catholicis auctoribus versorum, lectionem in vulgari lingua eis concedere possint, quos intellexerint ex huiusmodi lectione non damnum, sed fidei, atque pietatis argumentum capere posse, quam facultatem in scriptis habeant..." (De Bujanda *et al.* 1994: 856). Notice that *Regula IV* of the Tridentine Index read "fidei atque pietatis augmentum", viz. if an "augmentation" or "increase" of faith and piety was to be expected, an individual license for reading the Bible in the vernacular could be granted. In the Sixto-Clementine Index, reference was made to a "fidei atque pietatis argumentum". Although this may be an error in writing, the term "argumentum" should probably be considered as a reflection of the change in view concerning the (possible) effects of reading the Scriptures: not an "increase" of faith and piety, but "a reason" or "argument" for the faith and piety should be anticipated. This change may have been the outcome of the role scriptural arguments were deemed to play in the controversy with the Protestants, especially in the Northern and Central areas of Europe where Catholics and Protestants had to live together (and to a far lesser degree in Southern Europe).

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sent to all corners of the Catholic world. But precisely its reaffirmation of the fourth rule of Trent[37] provoked again the ire of the Inquisition and led the Congregation to take the same measures as three years before. Since the Index did not include the prohibitions the Inquisition had decreed subsequent to the Tridentine Index, its prefect, the famous Giulio Antonio Santori, called the Cardinal of Santa Severina, managed on 7 April to force the Pope to suspend his own Index and to send instructions to the nuncios and the inquisitors not to publish the Index until new instructions followed. The most important lacuna that provoked the Inquisition's irritation concerned precisely the reading of the Bible, and parts of it, such as compendiums and summaries, in the vernacular (Frajese 1998: 324-341, esp. 339-341; Fragnito 1997: 173-198; comp. 277-278; Fragnito 2003: 638-644; also Caravale 2011: 211-214). To provide a "solution" for this omission, the Inquisition had persuaded the Pope to finally include a so-called *Observatio circa quartam regulam*, which not only bluntly revoked the local bishops' and inquisitors' right to allow the buying, reading, or possessing of vernacular versions of the Old and New Testament by individual lay people requesting that favor, but also extended the prohibition to summaries and compendiums containing historical matter taken from the Scriptures.[38] The latter prohibition had the intention of eliminating the *Compendio istorico del Vecchio e del Nuovo Testamento*, composed by Bartolomeo Dionigi from Fano and published in 1586, which had the explicit aim of circumventing the already existing ban on reading the complete text of the Bible in the vernacular. In addition, the *observatio* aimed at the *Sommario historico raccolto della Sacra Bibbia* by

[37] F. b4r-c1v: "Cum experimento manifestum sit, si sacra Biblia vulgari lingua, passim sine discrimine permittantur, plus inde, ob hominum temeritatem, detrimenti, quam utilitatis oriri, hac in parte iudicio Episcopi, aut Inquisitoris stetur, ut cum consilio Parochi, vel Confessarii, Bibliorum, a catholicis auctoribus versorum, lectionem in vulgari lingua eis concedere possint, quos intellexerint, ex huiusmodi lectione non damnum, sed fidei, atque pietatis argumentum capere posse, quam facultatem in scriptis habeant..." (De Bujanda *et al.* 1994: 921). Notice again the use of the term "argumentum", instead of the Tridentine "augmentum".

[38] [F. e1r]: "...Nullam per hanc impressionem, et editionem de novo tribui facultatem Episcopis, vel Inquisitoribus, aut Regularium superioribus, concedendi licentiam emendi, legendi, aut retinendi Biblia vulgari lingua edita cum hactenus mandato, et usu Sanctae Romanae et universalis Inquisitionis sublata eis fuerit facultas concedendi huiusmodi licentias legendi, vel retinendi Biblia vulgaria, aut alias sacrae Scripturae tam novi, quam veteris testamenti partes quavis vulgari lingua editas; ac insuper summaria et compendia etiam historica eorundem Bibliorum, seu librorum sacrae scripturae, quocunque vulgari idiomate conscripta: quod quidem inviolate servandum est" (De Bujanda *et al.* 1994: 346 and 929).

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Cristoforo Miliani, which was first published in 1590. The Clementine Index was promulgated in its definitive version on 17 May 1596 ("Index 3 c").

4. The Clementine Index and a "Geography" of Vernacular Bible Reading

The 1596 or Clementine Index did not, however, have the same impact in all parts of Europe, but resulted in a reshaping of the "geography" of vernacular Bible reading, as the Parmanese historian Gigliola Fragnito has demonstrated, and whom we will follow in the last part of our essay (Fragnito 2007). In Italy, where the Inquisition had been able to develop an elaborate network, the prohibition on vernacular Bible editions confirmed the measures already in vigor for about a quarter of century, aiming to end a longstanding tradition of Bible-based devotional works in the Italian language. The possession and reading of such literature was considered as a token of heresy, and many copies of the Bible and of Bible-based devotional works were seized and consigned to the flames. Instructions in this regard were also communicated to local inquisitors and confessors. Cardinals and bishops from everywhere in Italy, as well as printer-editors in Venice, however induced the Congregation of the Index and its Prefect, the Cardinal Agostino Valier, to negotiate with the Pope and with the Holy Office so that finally several exemptions to the harsh prohibition could be obtained. Authorization was still granted, even in 1596, for the reading of editions of the Epistle and Gospel lessons of mass, subject to license by the bishop or the inquisitor, with the proviso that they were accompanied by comments written by authors of unquestionable orthodoxy, especially those of Remigio Nannini. Under the same conditions, vernacular Psalters provided with good commentaries, viz. those by Francesco Paningarolo and Flaminio de' Nobili, were permitted. These were texts against which there was traditionally the least opposition. An array of collected meditations and sermons on New Testament texts, and, in the same vein, some Lives of Christ were even allowed without any prior permission (Alfonso de Villegas, Ludolphe of Saxony, Joachim Perion, Vincenzo Bruni, Meditations by Andrés Capilla).[39] Translations of the "naked" text of the Scriptures or parts of it, continued to be strictly forbidden, as well as the aforementioned *Compendio istorico*; permission for the *Sommario historico* was expected if an expurgated version was published, which in the end does not seem to have happened. Fragnito emphasizes, however, "that notice of this relaxation – from January 1597 onwards – reached peripheral officials when

[39] See Fragnito (2003: 645-658); Fragnito (1997: 199-216, also 227ff.); further Fragnito (2000: 135-158). A good English summary in Fragnito (2001: 33-34); comp. Barbieri (2001: 111-133, esp. 124-127).

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most of the vernacular biblical texts... had already been consigned to the flames."[40]

The distinguished Parmanese historian is unambiguous regarding the impact of the Bible burnings on the the Italians' frame of mind:

> The prohibition compelled them to deprive themselves of texts used at home (and often also at school) to follow sermons and the liturgy in Latin and which had nourished their faith for generations. This loss constituted – the sources are explicit in this regard – a veritable trauma for the common people; a trauma made more painful by the fact that, during the periodic book burnings which lit up the piazzas of Italy with their sinister glare, they were obliged to watch their Bibles, their lectionaries, and their sacred stories fed to the flames together with books by the transalpine Reformers.[41]

In other European countries, the implementation of the Clementine Index was an even more complex one, the details of which are described by Fragnito after a careful study of the Vatican Archives. The blunt prohibition of Bible reading in the vernacular was often regarded as one of the major obstacles to a full acceptance of the Clementine Index. In addition to Italy, Portugal seems to be the only country where the Clementine Index was unconditionally implemented. In Spain, the Index was not introduced, but the Spanish Inquisition maintained the already century-long reticence regarding Bible reading in the vernacular. As a consequence, the picture emerges that the Mediterranean countries Italy, Spain, and Portugal were the countries where Bible reading in the vernacular became strictly prohibited (Fragnito 2007: 58-64).

In the countries of Northern and Central Europe, where the Catholics had to face the constant allurements of a Bible-centered Protestantism and had to be able to adduce biblical arguments when entering into controversy with the reformers, a different strategy was adopted. Given the protests against Rome's harsh ban on vernacular Bible editions, the papal nuncios in the Northern and Central European countries were forced to negotiate large exemptions of the said prohibition. In October 1596, the Pope, Clement VIII himself, gave permission for the printing of a Bible in the Czech language that was in the process of being finalized for use in Bohemia, followed early in 1597 with the authorization for the further circulation of the German "Korrekturbibeln". In 1598, the Pope gave permission for the printing of a Polish Catholic Bible translation edited by the Jesuit Jakob Wujek. At the beginning of the seven-

[40] Fragnito (2001: 34). Also Fragnito (2003: 658); Fragnito (2000: 152).

[41] Fragnito (2001: 34); a comparable Italian version of the quotation in Fragnito (2000: 153).

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teenth century, permission was similarly given for Hungarian translations. Earlier, in 1597, a somewhat different decision was taken regarding Bible translations in Croatian: old translations were permitted, but new ones were not tolerated, which meant that a translation by the Jesuit Bartolomeo Kašić was ultimately forbidden in 1634.[42]

As regards the English situation, Cardinal William Allen, member of the Congregation of the Index, had deemed the translation of the Scriptures in the vernacular necessary, legitimate, and even helpful to the Catholic missionaries who were to be sent to England to preach the Catholic faith – and by extension useful to the faithful themselves – and who were to respond to the Protestant doctrines (Fragnito 2007: 68, 76-77; Fragnito 1997: 168-170). The English New Testament, translated by Gregory Martin in Rheims, was ready by 1582; the Old Testament was added in 1609-1610, after the return of the English College to Douai. The so-called Douai-Rheims Version was to become the official English-language Catholic Bible for centuries to come.

In 1599 a revised version of the Dutch Catholic Bible version was published in Antwerp. This so-called Moerentorf Bible contained largely the text of the Louvain Bible, published for the first time about half a century before, under the auspices of the Louvain theologians, although it was now revised on the basis of the Sixto-Clementine Vulgate Bible of 1590-1592.

In short, in the Western-European countries north of the Alps especially, where Catholics had to face the constant challenge of a Bible-based Protestantism, the peninsular decision to snatch the Bible out of the hands of the Catholics was deemed to be a catastrophic one. It is especially to the merit of the nuncio in Switzerland, Giovanni della Torre, that the question was brought unremittingly to the attention of the Roman authorities, so that a more general dispensation for the countries concerned was eventually issued. Pope Clement VIII, who was personally in favor of Bible translations in the vernacular, described the question raised within the Northern countries as a "gravissimum negotium" – not as an "abuse", as the Congregation of the Inquisition had previously done – and he entrusted the Congregation of the Index with the task of developing a definitive solution. The cardinal members of the Congregation determined as early as the spring of 1603 that the reading of the Scriptures in those countries where, due to the stipulations of civil law, Catholics had to live together with "heretics", the former should be granted the right of reading the Bible in the vernacular. Such Catholic Bible editions were considered as a

[42] Fragnito (2007: 65-67); Fragnito (1997: 218-219), with a reference to Molnár (2004b: 155-168), and Molnár (2004a: 99-133).

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counterweight to the many so-called falsified translations of a Protestant origin that circulated in these countries. There are indications that the Congregation took the situation in the Germanic countries,[43] France,[44] England, and Poland particularly into consideration. For France and Germany there was even a need for a new and trustworthy translation, based upon the Sixto-Clementine Vulgate of 1590-1592, and the assignment of making such translations was entrusted to the theologians of the Universities of Paris and Freiburg. This decision of the cardinals of the Congregation of the Index was later approved by the Pope, during the autumn of 1603, and made public in a general consistory in July 1604. It was communicated subsequently to the nuncios.[45] It seems that even the Congregation of the Inquisition had accepted the "fait accompli", since in a reunion of 25 April 1608, it decreed that the "abuse" of Bible translations in the vernacular should also be tolerated in Flanders – probably the entire Low Countries are meant here – since it was stated that the "abuse" was already widely spread there and that the presence of heretics in the country demanded such toleration (Fragnito 2007: 71, n. 59). This should of-course not be considered as the authorization of a completely free reading of the Bible in the

[43] The Peace of Augsburg (1555) stipulated that German princes and free cities had the right to impose their religion upon their subjects, be it Catholic or Lutheran (*cuius regio, eius religio*); free cities could accept both confessions. Inhabitants who refused to adhere to the established Church were allowed to emigrate.

[44] After years of civil war, the French Calvinists (or Huguenots) were given some elementary rights by the Edict of Nantes (1598), as the right of worship, in particular in their strongholds in the south and the west of France. The Edict of Nantes was eventually revoked by the Edict of Fontainebleau (1685).

[45] On these countries, see Fragnito (2007: 68-72); Fragnito (1997: 220-224). Three documents attached to the process of permission and written by the members or experts of the Congregation give us a good insight in the motives that lay at the basis of the pragmatic attitude. First, the authors realized that a blunt prohibition of vernacular Bibles would give weapons into the hands of the Protestants, who might accuse the Catholic Church of falsification and of concealing the Bible. Further, it was deemed necessary for apologetic and missionary reasons that "heretical" editions be compensated by high quality Catholic translations, so that the recourse by Catholics to Protestant editions may be minimized. On the other hand, the authors of the said documents realized that the motives that had inspired the prohibition included in the Index should be used as a warning against "immoderate" reading. It was the task of the confessors to make the Catholics aware of the ecclesiastical prescriptions and to channel their reading intrest to just a few, specific books (and not to the entire corpus of the Bible). The benefits enjoyed by printers' and booksellers' as a result of the commerce in Bible books, should be limited. Finally, a treatise should be published informing the flock about the dangers of reading the Bible. Comp. Molnár (2004a: 107).

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vernacular, but rather a return to the regime imposed by the fourth rule of the Tridentine Index, which left it to the local bishop or the Inquisitor to grant consent in individual cases.

5. Conclusion

Looking back the aforementioned evolution, we find that the Roman dispensation for Bible reading in the vulgar tongue, in the wake of the publication of the Clementine Index, was certainly applicable to those Catholics living in Germany, Switzerland, the Low Countries, Bohemia, Poland, Hungary and Dalmatia, where, as far as possible, a longstanding tradition of vernacular Bible-reading continued to be upheld. It must, however, be observed that the production of Catholic vernacular Bibles, was, in several countries, on the decrease in comparison to the first half of the sixteenth century. On the other hand, the controlled access to vernacular Bibles was now extended to the Catholics of the British Isles and France, for whom it was in a certain sense a return to the prevailing attitude of a particular period of the Middle Ages that was more open toward Bible reading, before the struggle against "heresies" had given occasion in these regions to, respectively, prohibition or reticence toward lay reading of the naked text of the Bible.[46] The Catholics in the Mediterranean countries of Italy, Spain, and Portugal were, however, largely deprived of vernacular Bibles, which implied especially for Italy a dramatic rupture with a long tradition of lay people having easy access to Bible texts in the vernacular. The conclusion must inevitably be that the growing reluctance toward Bible reading in the vernacular was not due to the fourth session of the Council of Trent (1546) and not even to the Index of Trent (1564), but to the Counter-Reformation reflex that had taken possession of several authorities within the Catholic Church during the course of the sixteenth century and that had led to their distrust of vernacular Bible reading as a spiritual exercise, one that came precariously close to Protestant practice. Such an attitude should, however, in no way be generalized or applied to the entire history of early modern Catholicism, let alone to that of the medieval Church.

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[46] This has rightly been observed in Fragnito (2007: 72-77).

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