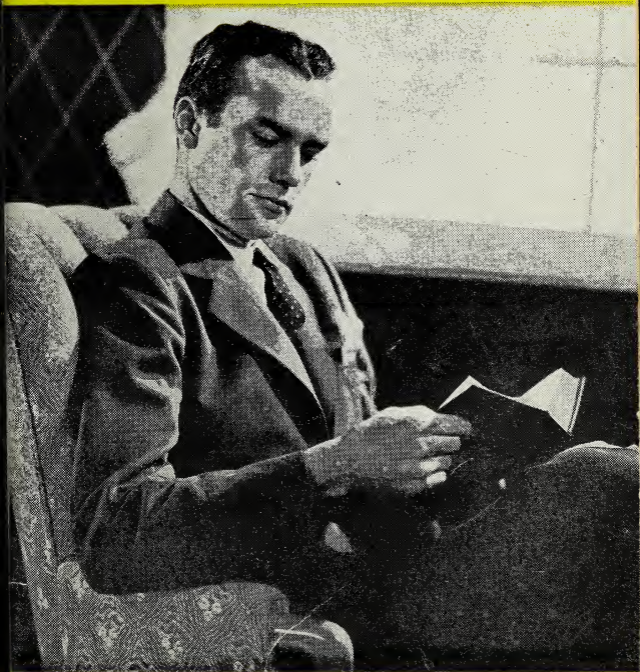


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# WHEN ROMAN CATHOLICS READ THE BIBLE





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# When Roman Catholics Read The Bible



*by*

RICHARD GINDER



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**T**HE members of the Catholic Church have been taught many things which are not mentioned in the Bible. But they are not surprised at that. St. John himself wrote that Jesus did many things "which, if they were written every one, the world itself, I think would not be able to contain the books that should be written." (Jn. xxi, 25)

Catholics have always had ears, as well as eyes — and when the apostles spoke, they listened and remembered. Very few could read in those days, so that St. Paul told them all to hang on to what they had learned, "*whether by word, or by our epistle*" (II Thes. ii, 14; II Tim. i, 13-14). Did you know that St.

Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke and St. Paul never read all of the New Testament?

The Catholic Church has never kept the Bible from the people. It was always to be had by anyone who could read. As soon as printing was invented, the Catholic Church put out edition after edition of the Bible — 124 editions, altogether, in the first fifty years after the press was discovered. There are cheap Catholic editions in every language.

“There are as many sects and beliefs as there are heads. This fellow will have nothing to do with Baptism; another denies the Sacrament; a third believes that there is another world between this and the Last Day. Some teach that Christ is not God; some say this, some that. There is no rustic so rude but that, if he dreams or fancies anything, it must be the whisper of the Holy Ghost, and he himself a prophet.”

No — those words were not written by a Pope of Rome, though they well might be. They were written by Martin Luther, the first Protestant (Grisar, *Luther*, iv. 368-407).

The Catholic Church forestalled all that by putting into her editions of the Bible foot-notes, clearing up problems and helping her believers through difficult spots. St. Peter him-

self wrote that in St. Paul's epistles are "certain things hard to understand, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction." (II Peter iii, 16)

## No Mention of Purgatory

Catholics, not looking for a complete description of their beliefs in the Bible, are not surprised when they do not find such words as "Pope" or "Purgatory" mentioned. But they are surprised at their non-Catholic neighbors who profess to believe in the Holy Trinity — the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost — in spite of the fact that the word "Trinity" is not to be found in the Bible — nor the word "Bible" itself!

They are surprised that non-Catholics should quibble when they call their priests "Father" — when non-Catholics address their own male parent as "Father." Many non-Catholics claim that Christ forbade this.

"And call none your father upon earth: for one is your father, who is in heaven." (Matt. xxiii, 9)

They are surprised that non-Catholics have no priests, in view of Luke vi, 13; Matt. xxviii, 19; John xx, 23; I Cor. xi, 25; Acts xx, 28;

I. Cor. iii, 9; I Tim. iii, 5; Acts xxvi, 22; Titus i, 5.

They are surprised that non-Catholics so completely neglect the woman who gave Jesus to the world (Luke II, 7), whom He loved and obeyed for thirty years (Luke ii, 51), for whom He worked His first miracle (John ii, 3), for whom He thought to provide a home, even during His last hour on earth (John xix, 26-27). Catholics are happy to find 350,000,000 of their fellow-Catholics throughout the world fulfilling the inspired prophecy — “Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.” (Luke I, 48)

Catholics are pained to think anyone should see evil in honoring the Mother of Jesus.

### **In and Out of the Bible**

Catholics know well that the Bible forbids the adoration of saints, images, pictures and relics. That is why they never think of adoring them; and they pray that non-Catholics do not adore the flags in the front of their churches or the pictures of loved ones hanging in their homes.

Catholics are pleased when one of their number retires to a life of prayer behind convent walls. Catholics remember that Christ often went off to pray by Himself.



Catholics regret that outsiders have no way of knowing their sins are forgiven beyond "feeling" all right with God. Catholics do not see how non-Catholics can overlook the words of Christ to His first priests:

"Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins ye shall forgive they are forgiven them; and whose sins ye shall retain they are retained."  
(John xx, 21-23)

They cannot see how anyone could form a judgment on whether or not the sinner is really sorry, really intends to do better, if there were not a listing of the offences for which pardon is asked. It must be rather easy to commit sin when one knows he will never have to describe the sin, beg for pardon, or promise improvement.

Purgatory is a word which — like Trinity — is not in the Bible. Catholics would like to share this belief, too. They know that the good Lord would send no one to hell for stealing a cent, and yet they know that nothing defiled can enter heaven. Where does God put the penny-stealer. They know that non-Catholics believe their dead to be in heaven or in hell. Catholics wonder, then, why some non-Catholics pray for the dead . . .

### **\$1,000 Reward**

Catholics know that the word "Indulgence"

like the word "Bible" is not mentioned in the Bible. A reward of \$1,000 will be paid to anyone presenting the publisher of this leaflet with the name of any priest known to be selling indulgences. Roman Catholics suspect that many non-Catholics who talk much about indulgences often know very little about what an indulgence is.

Catholics are always entertained and amused when they hear their priests described as money-bags, grimly extorting gold for this service or that. They know that the good man has given his life to the Church and that he must eat if he is to work for them. They want their church warm on Sundays and lighted in the evening — so they gladly put their offering on the plate.

"The Lord ordained that they who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel." (I Cor. ix, 13-14)

Catholics have heard both these propositions spoken by non-Catholics from time to time:

"It doesn't matter what a man believes just as long as he does the right thing."

"It doesn't matter what a man does just as long as he trusts in the Lord."

Catholics believe that both of these are false. Catholics believe that a man must both *do* and *believe* the right thing.

Catholics are pleased to find that their Church is spreading and filling the earth. They realize that in our cities they have divine services with a packed church three or four time a Sunday. They don't know what it means to have a falling attendance. They marvel that outsiders should not yet have guessed the secret of the Catholic Church' vitality.

But Catholics wonder why their Church should always be singled out for attack; why Baptists do not write against Lutherans, and Lutherans against Presbyterians, and Presbyterians against Methodists.

### **Catholics Are Not Surprised**

Catholics are never surprised when some celebrity satisfies the longing and need of his heart by entering the Church, Chesterton, Sigrid Undset, Heywood Broun, and others. In fact, statistics show that of 3,000 American converts, 372 were Protestant ministers, 115 were doctors, 126 lawyers, 45 former members of Congress, 12 governors of states, 180 army and navy officers, and 206 were authors, musicians, and persons of cultural prominence.

Catholics know that their Church claims to be the one true Church founded by God Almighty — that it claims to be dead right. They wonder how anyone can safely belong to

a church which did not make that claim . . .

*Catholics, finally, do not believe and have never believed that all non-Catholics go to hell. They believe that every man who follows his conscience sincerely will go to heaven.*

## SUPPLEMENT

### TWO QUESTIONS ANSWERED.

*Q. Was not Luther the first to translate the Bible into the vernacular? Why did Catholics object to it so strongly at the time?*

*A. No, Luther was not the first to translate the Bible into the vernacular. His translation of the New Testament was not published until 1522, and his version of the Old Testament not until 1534. Catholics from 1466 to 1522 had already published fourteen complete editions of the Bible in High German at Augsburg, Basle, Strassburg and Nuremburg, and five in Low German at Cologne, Delf, Halberstadt and Lubeck (Janssen, *History of the German People*, xiv., 388). During this same period — from 1450 to 1520 — Catholics had published 156 Latin and 6 Hebrew editions of the Bible, besides issuing complete translations in Italian (11), French (10), Bohemian (2), Flemish (1), Limousine (1), and Russian (1). (Falk, *Die Bibel am Ausgange des Mittelalters*).*

Catholics objected to Luther's German translation, because, as Emser wrote at the time, "He has in many places confused, stultified and perverted the old trustworthy text of the Christian Church to its great disadvantage, and also poisoned it with heretical glosses and prefaces . . . He almost everywhere forces the Scriptures on the question of faith and works, even when neither faith nor works are thought of" (Janssen, *History of the German People*, xiv., 425). Emser points out 1,400 inaccuracies, while Bunsen, a Protestant scholar, mentions 3,000. Luther ridiculed Ecclesiastes, rejected the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Apocalypse as not Apostolic, omitted the two books of Machabees because they mentioned prayers for the dead, and called the Epistle of St. James "an epistle of straw," because it clearly contradicted his false doctrine on good works. He deliberately perverted the meaning of St. Paul in Romans by adding the words "only" (nur) in Rom. iii, 20 and Rom. iv. 15, and "alone" (allein) in Rom. iii, 28. When this interpolation was pointed out to him by Catholic critics, he wrote: "If your new Papist makes much ado about the word 'alone,' just say straight out to him: 'Dr. Luther will have it so, and says, Papist and donkey are one and the same thing; thus I will and am determined to have it; my will is the reason'" (Ibid., 419).

We can therefore readily understand why Luther's faulty translation was prohibited in the Duchy of Saxony, Austria and the Mark of Brandenburg, while Catholic scholars like Dietenberger (1534), Eck (1537), and Blanchard (1547), published faithful translations of the Bible both in High and Low German.

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*Q. Was not the Bible practically unknown in the Middle Ages when your Church was dominant?*

*A.* No, Luther's statement that before his time "the Bible lay under the bench forgotten in the dust" is simply not true. Indeed the Bible was "the most widely circulated book in the Middle Ages, and had a great influence on the life of the nations" (Michael, *Geschichte der Deutschen Volkes*, iii, 223). The priests used it in preparing their sermons and knew it from their daily reading of the missal and the breviary. The monks copied the Scriptures in their scriptoria, and meditated upon them frequently as we learn from the pages of St. Bernard and Thomas à Kempis (*The Imitation of Christ*, iv. 11; *Luddy Life of St. Bernard*). The laity, before printing was invented

and when Bible manuscripts were rare and costly, knew the Scriptures from listening to sermons, and from studying the sculpture, paintings, frescoes and mosaics that filled their churches. What a comprehensive view of both the Old Testament and the New could be had by a parishioner of St. Mark's in Venice in the thirteenth century. As Ruskin says: "The walls of the Church became the poor man's Bible, and a picture was more easily read than a chapter" (*The Stones of Venice*, ii, 99).

Many non-Catholics have answered the above question in the negative. "It is no longer possible to hold," says Kropatscheck, "as the old polemics did, that the Bible was a sealed book to both theologians and laity. The more we study the Middle Ages, the more does this fable tend to dissolve into thin air" (*Das Schriftprincip der Luth. Kirche* 163). "We must admit," writes Dobschütz, "that the Middle Ages possessed a quite surprising and extremely praiseworthy knowledge of the Bible, such as might in many respects put our own age to shame" (*Deutsche Rundschau*, 1900, 61). "There is," writes Dr. Cutts, "a good deal of popular misapprehension about the way in which the Bible was regarded in the Middle Ages. Some people think that it was very little read, even by the clergy; whereas the fact is that the sermons of the medieval preachers are



more full of Scriptural quotations and allusions than any sermons in these days; and the writers on other subjects are so full of Scriptural allusion, that it is evident their minds were saturated with Scriptural diction" (*Turning Points of English History*, 200).

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Bibliography: Gigot, *Biblical Lectures*; Janssen, *History of the German People*, xiv.; Grisar, *Luther*, v., 536, 542.

(QUESTION BOX—Published by Paulist Press)





*Published by*

**THE CATHOLIC INFORMATION SOCIETY**

**214 West 31st St., New York 1, N. Y.**

**(OPPOSITE PENN TERMINAL)**





