

## The Counter Reformation & The Catholic Church's Council of Trent

### Central Historical Question:

Was the Council of Trent's Tridentine Index of Banned Books a necessary evil based on the needs of the Catholic Counter Reformation?

### **Document #1 Profession of Faith issued by the Council of Trent, 1545-63**

I recognize the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church as the Mother and mistress of all churches; and I vow and swear true obedience to the Roman Pope, the successor of blessed Peter, the chief of the Apostles and the representative of Jesus Christ. I accept and profess, without doubting the traditions, definitions and declarations of the sacred Canons and Councils and especially those of the Holy Council of Trent.

### **Document #2 Official statements from the Council of Trent**

In order to maintain control of Christian doctrine, the Catholic Church decrees no one shall presume to interpret Christian doctrine contrary to what has been said by the holy mother Church. It is the church's position to interpret Holy Scriptures. Those who break these laws shall be punished with the penalties by law established.

#### DECREE CONCERNING INDULGENCES

The power of conferring Indulgences was granted by Christ to the Church. Christians benefit from the use of Indulgences by the Church. The Church condemns with those who either claim Indulgences are useless; or who deny that the Church the power of granting them. Thus the gift of holy Indulgences may be dispensed to all the faithful, piously, holily, and incorruptly by the Catholic Church and the Roman Pope... Amen.

**Document #3 The Tridentine *Index of Books*, 1564**

**2.** The books of those who originated or revived heresies such as Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Balthasar Friedberg, Schwenkfeld, and others like these are absolutely forbidden. The books of other heretics, moreover, which deal professedly with religion are absolutely condemned.

**4.** If the Sacred Books are permitted everywhere and without discrimination in the vernacular, there will by reason of the boldness of men arise there from more harm than good. Those who read or possess them without permission may not receive forgiveness from their sins until they have handed them over to the authorities.

**7.** Books which professedly deal with or teach things lascivious or obscene are absolutely prohibited, since this is not only a matter of faith but also that of morals. Many people are easily corrupted through the reading of such books. Those who possess them are to be severely punished by the bishops. Ancient books written by heathens may by reason of their elegance and quality of style be permitted, but may by no means be read to children.

**8.** Finally, all the faithful are commanded not to presume to read or possess any books contrary to the prescriptions of these rules or the prohibition of this list. And if anyone should read or possess books by heretics or writings by any author condemned and prohibited by reason of heresy or suspicion of false teaching, he incurs immediately the sentence of excommunication.