

# **Praeestantia Scripturae**

## **On the Bible Against the Modernists**

**Pope Pius X - 1907**

Motu proprio of Our Most Holy Lord Pius X., by Divine Providence Pope, on the decisions of the Pontifical Commission on the Bible and on the censures and penalties against those who neglect to observe the prescriptions against the errors of the modernists:

In his encyclical letter “Providentissimus Deus,” given on November 18, 1893, our predecessor, Leo XIII, of immortal memory, after describing the dignity of Sacred Scripture and commending the study of it, set forth the laws which govern the proper study of the Holy Bible; and having proclaimed the divinity of these books against the errors and calumnies of the rationalists, he at the same time defended them against the false teachings of what is known as the higher criticism, which, as the Pontiff most wisely wrote, are clearly nothing but the commentaries of rationalism derived from a misuse of philology and kindred studies. Our predecessor, too, seeing that the danger was constantly on the increase and wishing to prevent the propagation of rash and erroneous views, by his apostolic letters “Vigilantes studii memores,” given on October 30, 1902, established a Pontifical Council or Commission on Biblical matters, composed of several Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church distinguished for their learning and wisdom, to which Commission were added as consulters a number of men in sacred orders chosen from among the learned in theology and in the Holy Bible, of various nationalities and differing in their methods and views concerning exegetical studies. In so doing the Pontiff had in mind as an advantage most adapted for the promotion of study and for the time in which we live that in this Commission there should be the fullest freedom for proposing, examining and judging all opinions whatsoever, and that the Cardinals of the Commission were not to reach any definite decision, as described in the said apostolic letters, before they had examined the arguments in favor and against the question to be decided, omitting nothing which might serve to show in the clearest light the true and genuine state of the Biblical questions under discussion. Only after all this had been done were the decisions reached to be submitted for the approval of the Supreme Pontiff and then promulgated.

After mature examination and the most diligent deliberations the Pontifical Biblical Commission has happily given certain decisions of a very useful kind for the proper promotion and direction on safe lines of Biblical studies. But we observe that some

persons, unduly prone to opinions and methods tainted by pernicious novelties and excessively devoted to the principle of false liberty, which is really immoderate license and in sacred studies proves itself to be a most insidious and a fruitful source of the worst evils against the purity of the faith, have not received and do not receive these decisions with the proper obedience.

Wherefore we find it necessary to declare and to expressly prescribe, and by this our act we do declare and decree that all are bound in conscience to submit to the decisions of the Biblical Commission relating to doctrine, which have been given in the past and which shall be given in the future, in the same way as to the decrees of the Roman congregations approved by the Pontiff; nor can all those escape the note of disobedience or temerity, and consequently of grave sin, who in speech or writing contradict such decisions, and this besides the scandal they give and the other reasons for which they may be responsible before God for other temerities and errors which generally go with such contradictions.

Moreover, in order to check the daily increasing audacity of many modernists who are endeavoring by all kinds of sophistry and devices to detract from the force and efficacy not only of the decree "*Lamentabili sane exitu*" (the so-called Syllabus), issued by our order by the Holy Roman and Universal Inquisition on July 3 of the present year, but also of our encyclical letters "*Pascendi dominici gregis*" given on September 8 of this same year, we do by our apostolic authority repeat and confirm both that decree of the Supreme Sacred Congregation and those encyclical letters of ours, adding the penalty of excommunication against their contradictors, and this we declare and decree that should anybody, which may God forbid, be so rash as to defend any one of the propositions, opinions or teachings condemned in these documents he falls, ipso facto, under the censure contained under the chapter "*Docentes*" of the constitution "*Apostolicae Sedis*," which is the first among the excommunications *latae sententiae*, simply reserved to the Roman Pontiff. This excommunication is to be understood as *salvis poenis*, which may be incurred by those who have violated in any way the said documents, as propagators and defenders of heresies, when their propositions, opinions and teachings are heretical, as has happened more than once in the case of the adversaries of both these documents, especially when they advocate the errors of the modernists that is, the synthesis of all heresies.

Wherefore we again and most earnestly exhort the ordinaries of the dioceses and the heads of religious congregations to use the utmost vigilance over teachers, and first of all in the seminaries; and should they find any of them imbued with the errors of the modernists and eager for what is new and noxious, or lacking in docility to the

prescriptions of the Apostolic See, in whatsoever way published, let them absolutely forbid the teaching office to such; so, too, let them exclude from sacred orders those young men who give the very faintest reason for doubt that they favor condemned doctrines and pernicious novelties. We exhort them also to take diligent care to put an end to those books and other writings, now growing exceedingly numerous, which contain opinions or tendencies of the kind condemned in the encyclical letters and decree above mentioned; let them see to it that these publications are removed from Catholic publishing houses, and especially from the hands of students and the clergy. By doing this they will at the same time be promoting real and solid education, which should always be a subject of the greatest solicitude for those who exercise sacred authority.

All these things we will and order to be sanctioned and established by our apostolic authority, aught to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at Rome in Saint Peter's, the 18th November, 1907, the fifth year of our Pontificate.

Pius PP. X.