

**PROCLAMATION OF ELIZABETH I AGAINST SEDITIOUS BOOKS; THE CHANCERY WARRANT
WITH THE ROYAL SIGN MANUAL**

1 March 1568/69
Folger Shelf Mark: X.d. 85

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Editorial conventions

<u>Underlined letters</u>	In abbreviated words the missing letters are underlined
< >	Broken brackets enclose deleted letters or words
[]	Square brackets enclose editorial interpolations
“j”	The “j” is used for the long “i”
“3”	This numeral is used for the yogh

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Proclamation of Elizabeth I Against Seditious Books; the Chancery Warrant with the Royal Sign Manual

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By the Quene.

Elizabeth R

Wheras diuers bookes made or translated by certain the Quenes Maeistes subiectes, for the more part remayning on the other side of the Sea without Legall Licence, conteyning sundry maters repugnant to truth derogatory to the Souuerayn estate of her Maieste and styrring and nourishing sedition in this Realm, ar communly in secret sort here dispersed by malicious persons amonges sundry her Maiestes subiectes, to thintent to draw them to errour and withdrawe them sediciously from their dueties and allegeance due to her Maieste as their only Souuerayn for redres herof Likeas of Late tyme sum milde example hath ben made in the starr chambre at westminster in correction of certain persons found fawtye in the secret dispersing buyng and allowing of sundry of the said sedicious bookes: So her Maieste meaning of her clemency neither to haue any advantage taken for thinges herin alreedy past, nor any her honest and quiet subiectes to be entangled with the Like hereafter for Lack of admonition in due tyme, willeth and earnestly chardgeth all maner of persons to forbear vtterly from the vse or dealing withe any such sedicious bokes made or translated by any persoune conteining mat^e derogatory to the souuerayn estate of her Maieste or ympugning the orders and rites established by Lawe for christian religion and diuine service within this realme or otherwise styrring and nourishing mater tendyng to sedition & that such as alreedy haue any of the said bookes shall present or cause to be presented the said bookes within twenty eight dayes after the publishing of this Proclamation to the bisshop of the diocese or ordinary of the place; and to receve of him a testimoniall of the tyme of the deliurey therof, and without express Licence in writting of the said Bishop or ordinary or sum Archebishop or other bisshop of the Realm not to kepe or rede any sedicious bookes vppon pain of her Maiestes greuous Indignation . . .

[Endorsed: *Proclamation for bringing vnto ye B. of vnlawfull & seditious bookes*]

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The Elizabethan religious settlement—a legislative compromise between traditional and reformed dogma—famously settled little. A decade after Elizabeth's accession to the throne in November 1558, the resistance of the old Catholic nobility remained strong, with Mary Queen of Scots retaining her hold on their affections as a rival claimant to the throne, particularly after she had sought asylum in England in 1568 and become Elizabeth's "guest." Hostilities culminated in the outbreak of the short-lived Northern Rebellion in November 1569, when the militant earls of Northumberland and Westmorland marched to Durham and restored the Catholic mass in the Cathedral. In Ripon, they raised the banner of the Five Wounds of Christ, the emblem of the Pilgrimage of Grace, a by then generation-old rebellion against Henry's dissolution of the monasteries. Elizabeth's reprisals were harsh. Northumberland was executed; important rebels were attainted and their lands confiscated; those who held office under the Crown were discharged from their offices; many hundreds were killed, representing every village that participated in the rising. On another front closer to court, a cache of Catholic books was seized from the home of the annalist John Stow. In February 1570, Elizabeth was answered for her actions by Pope Pius V's bull, "Regnans in excelsis," excommunicating her and absolving her subjects from their oaths of allegiance and thus legalising rebellion. Though it was issued too late to affect the rebellion (a copy did not even reach England until May), the bull fixed loyalties in Elizabeth's mind: Catholics were henceforth traitors.

Throughout the period, authorities sought ways of stanching the flow of Catholic books from abroad. Though this proclamation backs away from a charge of treason, it does prohibit the ownership or distribution of any seditious books written or translated by the Queen's subjects. It further provides a grace period for people to turn in any of the proscribed books to the bishop or their diocese. Elizabeth would return to the subject of this proclamation twice more within two years. Her resort to the use of the royal prerogative in matters of religion was characteristic of the Tudor and Stuart monarchies.

The Chancery Warrant is written on parchment. The printed version is catalogued as STC 8014. For more information, consult *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol. 2, edited by Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964-1969); John Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Christopher Haigh, "From Resentment to Recusancy," in *English Reformations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); and Frederic A. Youngs, Jr., *The Proclamations of the Tudor Queens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).