

Papal Authority: Letter to the prefect Acerbius and the nobles of Tuscany, 1198:

«Just as the founder of the universe established two great lights in the firmament of heaven, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night, so too He set two great dignities in the firmament of the universal church..., the greater one to rule the day, that is, souls, and the lesser to rule the night, that is, bodies. These dignities are the papal authority and the royal power. Now just as the moon derives its light from the sun and is indeed lower than it in quantity and quality, in position and in power, so too the royal power derives the splendor of its dignity from the pontifical authority....»

On Heresy: Letter to the Archbishop of Auch, 1198:

«The little boat of St. Peter is beaten by many storms and tossed about upon the sea, but it grieves us most of all that, against the orthodox faith, there are now arising more...ministers of diabolical error who are ensnaring the souls of the simple and ruining them. With their superstitions and false inventions they are perverting the meaning of the Holy Scriptures and trying to destroy the unity of the catholic church. Since we have learned from you and others that this pestilential error is growing in Gascony and in the neighboring territories, we wish you and your fellow bishops to resist it with all your might, because it is to be feared that it will spread and that by its contagion the minds of the faithful will be corrupted. And therefore by this present apostolic writing we give you a strict command that, by whatever means you can, you destroy all these heresies and expel from your diocese all who are polluted with them. You shall exercise the rigor of the ecclesiastical power against them and all those who have made themselves suspected by associating with them. They may not appeal from your judgements, and if necessary, you may cause the princes and people to suppress them with the sword.»

On Usury: Letter to the French bishops, 1198:

«We believe that you know how pernicious the vice of usury is, since, in addition to the ecclesiastical laws which have been issued against it, the prophet says that those who put their money out at interest are to be excluded from the tabernacle of the Lord [Psalms 15:5] And the New Testament, as well as the Old, forbids the taking of interest, since the Truth [Christ] himself says: "Lend, hoping for nothing again." [Luke 6:35].... We command you all by this apostolic writing not to permit those who are known as usurers to clear themselves by any subterfuge or trick when they are charged with the crime.»

Letter to German Bishops (1198):

«The pope has this authority because he does not exercise the office of man, but of the true God on earth.»

On Church Independence/Tithes: Letter to a bishop, 1198:

«Since it is improper and contrary to reason that laymen, who are bound to pay tithes to the clergy, should presume to extort tithes from them, to the utter confusion of the established order of things, we grant your petition, and give all the monasteries, churches, and clergy of your diocese permission to

refuse to pay any tithes which may be demanded of them be laymen, no matter under what pretext such a demand may be made. And if laymen, contrary to this writing, shall attempt to collect such tithes by violence, you shall put them under ecclesiastical interdict and deprive them of the right to appeal.»

On the Crusade and Trade with Saracens: Letter to the Venetians, 1198:

«In support of the eastern province [i.e., the Crusader states], in addition to the forgiveness of sins which we promise to those who, at their own expense, set out thither, and beside the papal protection which we give to those who aid that land, we have renewed the decree of the Lateran Council [of 1179], which excommunicated those Christians who shall furnish the Saracens with weapons, iron, or timbers for their galleys, and those who serve the Saracens as helmsmen or in any other way on their galleys and other piratical craft..... We furthermore excommunicated all those Christians who shall hereafter have anything to do with the Saracens either directly or indirectly, or shall attempt to give them aid in any way so long as the war between them and us shall last. But recently...your messengers came and explained to us that your city was suffering great loss by this our decree, because Venice does not engage in agriculture but in shipping and commerce. Nevertheless, we are led by the paternal love which we have for you to forbid you to aid the Saracens by selling them, giving them, or exchanging with them, iron, flax, pitch, sharp instruments, rope, weapons, galleys, ships, and timbers, whether hewn or in the rough. But for the present and until we order to the contrary, we permit those who are going to Egypt to carry other kinds of merchandise whenever it shall be necessary. In return for this favor you should be willing to go to the aid of the province of Jerusalem and you should not attempt to evade our apostolic command. For there is no doubt that he who [tries] shall be under divine condemnation.»

On the Jews: Decree of 1199:

«We decree that no Christian shall use violence to compel the Jews to accept baptism. But if a Jew, of his own accord, because of a change in his faith, shall have taken refuge with Christians, after his wish has been made known, he may be made a Christian without any opposition. For anyone who has not of his own will sought Christian baptism cannot have the true Christian faith. No Christian shall do the Jews any personal injury, except in executing the judgements of a judge, or deprive them of their possessions, or change the rights and privileges which they have been accustomed to have. During the celebration of their festivals, no one shall disturb them by beating them with clubs or by throwing stones at them. No one shall compel them to render any services except those which they have been accustomed to render. And to prevent the baseness and avarice of wicked men we forbid anyone to deface or damage their cemeteries or to extort money from them by threatening to exhume the bodies of their dead....»

Source:

Thatcher and McNeal, A Source Book for Medieval History (New York, 1905).]

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Interdict of France, 1200:

«Let all the churches be closed; let no one be admitted to them, except to baptize infants.... We permit Mass to be celebrated once a week, on Friday, early in the morning, to consecrate the host for the use of the sick, but only one clerk is to be admitted to assist the priest. Let the clergy preach on Sunday in the vestibules of the churches, and in place of the Mass let them deliver the word of God. Let then recite the canonical hours outside the churches where the people do not hear them...and let them not permit the dead to be interred, nor their bodies to be placed unburied in cemetaries. Let them, moreover, say to the laity that they sin and transgress grievously by burying bodies in the earth, even in unconsecrated ground, for in so doing they assume to themselves an office pertaining to others....

Let them forbid their parishioners to enter churches that may be open in the king's territory, and let them not bless the wallets of pilgrims, except outside the churches. .. Let no vessel of holy water be placed outside the church, nor shall the priest carry them anywhere...Extreme unction, which is a holy sacrament, may not be given.»

Papal Decree on the choice of a German King, 1201:

«It is the business of the pope to look after the interests of the Roman empire, since the empire derives its origin and its final authority from the papacy; its origin, because it was originally transferred from Greece by and for the sake of the papacy...its final authority, because the emperor is raised to his position by the pope who blesses him, crowns him, and invests him with the empire....Therefore, since three persons have lately been elected king by different parties, namely, the youth [Frederick, son of Henry VI], Philip [of Hohenstaufen, brother of Henry VI], and Otto [of Brunswick, of the Welf family], so also three things must be taken into account in regard to each one, namely: the legality, the suitability, and the expediency of his election.

[There follows an examination of each candidate according to these criteria]

Far be it from us that we should defer to man rather than to God, or that we should fear the countenance of the powerful...On the foregoing grounds, then, we decide that the youth should not at present be given the empire; we utterly reject Philip for his manifest unfitness, and we order his usurpation to be resisted by all.... since Otto is not only himself devoted to the church, but comes from devout ancestors on both sides...therefore we decree that he ought to be accepted and supported as king, and ought to be given the crown of empire, after the rights of the Roman church have been secured.»

Charter of Submission from the King of England, 1213:

«John, by the grace of God king of England, lord of Ireland, Duke of Normandy...etc.

By this charter attested by our golden seal we wish it to be known to you all that...we offer and freely

yield to God and to SS Peter and Paul...and to the Holy Roman Church our mother, and to our lord Pope Innocent III and his catholic successors, the whole kingdom of England and the whole kingdom of Ireland with all their rights and appurtenances for the remission of our sins and the sins of our whole family.... And now, receiving back these kingdoms from God and the roman Church, and holding them as a feudatory vassal...we have pledged and sworn our fealty henceforth to our lord aforesaid, Pope Innocent III...and we bind in perpetuity our successors and legitimate heirs that without question they must similarly render fealty and acknowledge homage to the Supreme Pontiff holding office at the time... ..in lieu of all service and payment which we should render for them [the fiefs], the Roman Church is to receive annually...one thousand marks sterling....»

Pope Innocent III, sermon on the First Anniversary:

«Therefore, “he who has the bride is the bridegroom.” But am I not the bridegroom and each of you a friend of the bridegroom? Certainly I am the bridegroom, since I have as my bride the noble, rich, sublime, beautiful, chaste, beloved, sacrosanct Roman church, which is instituted by God to be the mother and teacher of all the faithful. She is Sarah more mature, Rebecca more prudent, Leah more fruitful, Rachel more pleasing, Hanna more devoted, Susanna more chaste, Judith more courageous, Esther more beautiful. “Many daughters have amassed riches; this one alone has surpassed them all.” My sacramental union is with her, with her my nuptial consummation. A wondrous thing, that I who promised celibacy have contracted marriage. But this union does not hinder celibacy, nor does the fruitfulness of this union take away the chastity of virginity. John was pleasing in celibacy; Abraham was pleasing in marriage. Would that I may be pleasing in both, so that I may joyfully carry home the harvest of both!

It is customary to say of carnal marriage between a man and a woman that it is initiated, ratified, and consummated: initiated in betrothal, ratified in consent, consummated in intercourse. So also the spiritual marriage, which is between a bishop and his church, is said to be initiated in election, ratified in confirmation, consummated in consecration. However, the marriage which I the bride-groom have contracted with this my spouse was initiated and ratified simultaneously, because the Roman pontiff, “when he is elected, is confirmed, and when confirmed, is elected.” Do you not remember what you taught about this in a canon? “Since he is elected, as true Pope he obtains authority for ruling the Roman church and administering all its powers.” . . . Principally there are three goods in marriage: fidelity, offspring, and sacrament. Fidelity refers to chastity, offspring to fruitfulness, sacrament to stability. Indeed, such fidelity do the Roman pontiff and the Roman church always safeguard for one another, that the words of Truth [himself] in the Gospel can be fittingly applied to them: “I know my sheep, and mine know me.” “They do not follow the stranger, but flee him, since they do not recognize the voice of strangers.” “Strangers” are heretics and schismatics, whom the Roman church does not follow, but rather pursues and puts to rout. However, they hear and recognize their own—not the apostate, but the apostolic; not the Cathar, but the Catholic—receiving and returning the conjugal duty; receiving from him the duty of prudent care and returning the duty of reverence. For “a husband

has no power over his own body, but his wife does. In the same way the wife has no power over her own body, but her husband does.” Further, since the Roman church may give the duty of reverence to no one other than the Roman pontiff, who has no other superior except God, why is it that the Roman pontiff is obliged to render the duty of prudent care not only to the Roman church in particular, but also universally to all the other churches? “To the wise and to the unwise I have a duty,” the Apostle says, and “My daily urgency is solicitude for all the churches.” Perhaps this can be judged comparable to what is written in the Old Testament: that one husband may have many wives, but a wife may have but one husband? Have you not read that Abraham had Sara as his wife, and it was she who brought her maid Hagar to him, but he did not commit adultery by this, but rather fulfilled his duty? So also the Roman pontiff has as his spouse the Roman church, which “brings in to him” the churches subject to her, so that they may receive from him the same duty of care, because the more he has been given, the more he must pay out. Now, however, what was previously done in the flesh, is done in the spirit, since “It is the spirit that gives life; while the flesh can gain nothing. . . . The sacrament between the Roman pontiff and the Roman church perseveres so firm and unshakable that they cannot be separated from one another ever, except by death. The Apostle says that after her husband dies, a wife “is released from the rule of her husband.” A husband joined to this wife, does not seek a release, does not leave her, and cannot be dismissed, for “it is according to his Lord that he either stands or falls—and it is the Lord who judges.” The Roman church can dismiss the Roman pontiff only because of fornication—I mean not carnal, but spiritual fornication, for the marriage is not carnal but spiritual—and this fornication is the sin of heresy. For “Whoever does not believe is already condemned.” In that sentence you can understand what is written in the Gospel you have heard, “You are the salt of the earth, if the salt loses its savor, how shall it be salted?” I, however, can hardly believe that God would permit the Roman pontiff to sin against faith, because he prayed specifically for him in the person of Peter himself. “I,” he said, “have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith may not fail, and you, being once converted, confirm your brothers.” »

Pope Innocent III, sermon In Council of Priests:

«Many actions are trifling for subordinates that are serious for prelates, and many sins are venial for the laity that are mortal sins for the clergy. For “Who will heal the charmer struck by a serpent”? And if a priest sins, who will pray for him? Certainly, the higher the status, the heavier the fall, for to whom more is entrusted, from him more is demanded. “There shall be a severe judgment for those who rule.” . . . Assuredly the priest is worthy of as many deaths as the examples of moral ruin he gives to the people.»

Pope Innocent III, sermon On the Consecration of the Supreme Pontiff:

«In fact, unless I am grounded in faith, how can I make others firm in faith? It is certain that faith belongs especially to my office. The Lord publicly proclaimed it: “I,” he said, “have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith may not fail, and you, once being converted, must confirm your brothers” [Luke 22:32]. He asked, and he received, because “He was heard in all things by virtue of his reverence”

[Hebrews 5:7]. For that reason the faith of the apostolic seat has never failed even during turbulent times, but has remained whole and unharmed, so that the privilege of Peter continues to be unshaken. So necessary is faith for me as Pope, that, while I have God alone as the judge of my other sins, I can be judged by the church only for any sin committed against the Faith. For “he who does not believe, is already judged” [John 3:18].»

Pope Innocent III, sermon On the First Anniversary:

«The sacrament between the Roman pontiff and the Roman church perseveres so firm and unshakable that they cannot be separated from one another ever, except by death. The Apostle says that after her husband dies, a wife “is released from the rule of her husband.” A husband joined to his wife, does not seek a release, does not leave her, and cannot be dismissed, for “it is according to his Lord that he either stands or falls—and it is the Lord who judges.” The Roman church can dismiss the Roman pontiff only because of fornication—I mean not carnal, but spiritual fornication, for the marriage is not carnal but spiritual—and this fornication is the sin of heresy. For “Whoever does not believe is already condemned.” In that sentence you can understand what is written in the Gospel you have heard, “You are the salt of the earth, if the salt loses its savor, how shall it be salted?” I, however, can hardly believe that God would permit the Roman pontiff to sin against faith, because he prayed specifically for him in the person of Peter himself. “I,” he said, “have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith may not fail, and you, being once converted, confirm your brothers.”»

Pope Innocent III, sermon On the Consecration of Pontiffs:

«Since the Roman Pontiff has no other lord than God, then who can throw him out or trample him underfoot, no matter how much he may lose his savor? When it can be said to him. “Enfold your justification into your own heart”? Nevertheless he should not mistakenly flatter himself about his power, nor rashly glory in his eminence or honor, for the less he is judged by man, the more he is judged by God. I say “less” because he can be judged by men, or rather shown to be judged, if he clearly loses his savor to heresy since he “who does not believe, is already judged.” It is only in this case that it should be understood of him that, If the salt loses its savor, it is good for nothing anymore, to thrown out and to be trodden on by men.»

Pope Innocent III, sermon On the Consecration of the Supreme Pontiff:

«“Who, do you think, is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord has appointed over his family, to give them food in season?” [Matthew 24:45] For I am that servant whom God constituted over his household, and I pray that I may be faithful and prudent, so that I may give it food in season! Entirely a servant—even more: “the servant of servants.” I pray that I am not one of those of whom Scripture says, “Whoever has committed sin is the slave of sin”; of whom it says, “You worthless servant, I forgave you all the debt”; and again, “The servant knowing the will of his lord and not doing it, shall be beaten with many blows”; but rather one of those to whom the Lord

says, “When you have done all things well, say that we are useless servants!” I acknowledge myself to be a servant and not a lord. As the Lord says to the Apostles, “The kings of the nations lord it over their people, and those who have power among them are called benefactors. However, not so with you! For whoever is greater among you will be the servant of all, and he who leads will be a minister.” For that reason I claim for myself a ministry; I do not usurp a dominion, in the example of my first and chief predecessor, who says, “Not as lording it over those allotted to you, but becoming an example for the flock with all your soul,” and also in the example of the one who said, “They are the servants of Christ; as I say less wisely, I am more.” It is a great honor that I am constituted over the household; but a great burden that I am the servant of the whole household.»

Pope Innocent III, sermon On the Consecration of the Supreme Pontiff:

«Here now you see who that servant is who has been constituted over the household: clearly the vicar of Jesus Christ, successor of Peter, anointed of the Lord, the god of Pharaoh; constituted mediator between God and mankind; on this side of God, but beyond man; less than God, but greater than man; who judges all cases but is judged by no one, declaring in the voice of the Apostle, “He who judges me is the Lord.”»

Pope Innocent III, sermon On the Consecration of the Supreme Pontiff:

«Moreover, absolutely all who are of the Lord’s household have been placed under his care. Clearly the Lord does not distinguish between this or that household, nor is it said in the plural, over “households,” as if there are many; but it is said in the singular, over the household, as only the one, so that “There shall be one fold and one shepherd.” “One,” he says, “is my dove, my perfect one,” and one also is the seamless tunic undivided. There was only one ark, and those within it, gathered under one leader, were saved in the cataclysm; those left outside it, all perished in the flood. For this purpose, indeed, is he constituted over the household: that he may give them food in season. The Lord Jesus Christ constituted the primacy of Peter, before the passion, during the passion, and after the passion: before the passion when he said, “You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church . . . and whatever you shall bind on earth, will be bound also in heaven, and whatever you loose over the earth will be loosed also in heaven;” during the passion when he said, “Simon, Satan has desired you that he may sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail, and you, once converted, confirm your brothers;” and after the passion when he commanded three times, “If you love me, feed my sheep.” In the first is expressed the sublimity of the power, in the second the constancy of the faith, in the third the pasturing of the flock. These duties are very clearly shown in regard to Peter in our text: constancy of faith when it is said, He is constituted over the household; pasturing the flock when it is said, that he may give them food.»

Pope Innocent III: Between God and Man:

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