

Acts of the Council of Trosley (909)

An English Translation

Edited by D.J. Stride

Titles of the Chapters

- I. On the honour and worship of the churches of God.
- II. On the condition of the realm and the fidelity of the king.
- III. On the regular state [of monasteries], now almost collapsed.
- IV. On sacrilegious persons and their condemnation.
- V. On the vexation and dishonouring of priests.
- VI. On the endowments and tithes of churches, and on rent not being exacted for them.
- VII. On robberies.
- VIII. On abductions, and secret marriages, and incest.
- IX. On the access to, and frequent association with, and cohabitation of priests and clerics with women.
- X. On shunning lust.
- XI. On restraining perjuries.
- XII. On the discordant, the irascible, and the litigious.
- XIII. On murderers and liars.
- XIV. On not plundering the goods of the Church upon the death of a bishop.
- XV. An epilogue to the bishops, and generally to all.

Preface

The holy Council of Nicaea, celebrated by God as its author, universally and without any exception, orders (canon 5) that, when all the bishops of a province have assembled together, necessary questions are to be discussed, and that what regularly pleases all in common, all bishops – both metropolitans and the others – are to follow.

In like manner the Council of Antioch (canons 9 and 14) orders that, if there are matters to be dealt with, the provincial bishops are to carry them out by the counsel of their metropolitan, and the metropolitan by the counsel of the provincial co-bishops. Not only in the case of any person – if a question concerning any matter arises among the bishops, the primate of the province shall appoint the bishops as judges.

The Roman laws, and blessed Pope Gregory, having often learned the truth by these judgements, show that disputes among ecclesiastical men, or between any persons and ecclesiastical persons, ought to receive a salutary end, in accordance with ancient authority.

Therefore, in the year of the Lord's Incarnation 909, in the twelfth indiction,¹ on the sixth day before the Kalends of July [26th June], there assembled the venerable Fathers and doctors of the Church: namely Heriveus,² archbishop of the holy metropolitan see of Reims, servant of the whole people of God, and the co-bishops of the diocese of Reims, whose names are written below, in the pagus [district] of Soissons, in the place called Trosley, to deliberate on the condition of the holy Church and the welfare of the whole realm.

After the solemn greeting had been made, and as is the custom, all were seated in order, the archbishop thus began.

¹ The twelfth indiction ran from 24th September, 908 to 23rd September, 909.

² Heriveus of Reims (900-922).

Address of Archbishop Heriveus

For several years, partly due to the invasion of the pagans, partly due to the most serious disturbances of the kingdom and the assaults of certain false Christians, we have been prevented, according to the decrees of the canons, from assembling. Now, with the Lord's consent, the ability to assemble according to the decrees of the canons has been granted to us. By the grace of God those suitable have come together, cooperating with Him in whose name we are gathered. Dwelling in one mind, above all it is necessary for us to preserve "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. IV), so that we may think as one, and all may speak as one in Christ, and, according to the salutary words of the martyr Cyprian, charity of heart, honour of the college, bond of faith, concord of the priesthood may be observed by us. Thus, considering the regular constitutions of our Fathers, no one of the metropolis may be led away from his regular custom.

According to canonical definition, a synod is to be considered perfect when the metropolitan is with his suffragans. It is expedient and fitting that whatever good, by grace (from which comes "every good gift, and every perfect gift" (James I)), we are able to conceive in mind and bring forth by mouth, we may strive to carry to perfect completion in deed, without which we can accomplish no good.

It is necessary that you provide aid with your counsel and episcopal authority as soon as possible, for the Christian religion now totters and already falls headlong, and "the world lies in evil" (1 John V). You see how evident is the fury of the Lord and His hand stretched out to strike.

Behold, every year, we see our land condemned by sickly sterility, and we see the people perish daily from disasters. Cities laid waste, monasteries destroyed or burned, fields reduced to wilderness. We can truly say "the sword has reached to the soul" (Jer. IV).

Indeed, the sword reaches to the soul, when by the just judgement of God, having lost outward goods, and exhausted by scourges and afflictions in body, the very strength of the soul seems to fail, and nothing vital remains in it.

These things do not happen by chance, or from a sudden change of times or elements, for it is written: “Nothing on earth happens without cause, and from the ground no sorrow goes forth” (Job V). Sorrow does not go forth from the ground, for, as blessed Gregory says (Book V of the *Moralia*, ch. 6), “punishment is by no means born of the creature which strikes, but of that which, by sinning, has extorted the power of striking.”

Behold, we see that for our correction, rain is often withheld from the burning land, the foggy air dries as the sun burns, the sea rages with swelling storms so that some are destroyed in crossing, and others find the desired journey opposed by the raised wave. The land is diminished not only in the germ of fertility, but also consumes the received seeds.

In all these things we see what a certain wise man testifies of the Lord: “The world will fight for Him against the foolish” (Wis. V).

Sorrow does not go forth from the ground, because the insensitive element is not stirred by its own nature, but for the merits of men, and to afflict sinners. The prophet says of the Lord: “If there be evil in the city which the Lord did not do” (Amos III); and the Lord Himself says through Isaiah: “I am the Lord, making peace and creating evil” (Isa. XLVII). That is, leisure and war. Here evil does not signify the opposite of good, but a certain medium, that is, affliction, which is certainly done by the Lord, for He permits it, so that the people sinning may be brought low, that those who would not follow God in peace may fear through afflictions and be converted, according to what is written: “Only by affliction will understanding come to hearing” (Isa. XXVIII).

These things happen to us, and to the people whom we govern, because our iniquities have multiplied, and our crimes have grown up to the heavens. Fornication and adultery,

sacrilege and murder have overflowed, and blood has touched blood. Blood indeed touches blood, when the sinner adds a greater evil to his evils, and sets no limit to wicked acts, but according to the Apostle [Paul] proceeds daily to worse.

It is almost as if we groan with the prophet Isaiah, saying to the Lord: “Why, O Lord, hast Thou caused us to err from Thy ways? Hast Thou hardened our hearts that we might not fear Thee? We were at the beginning, when Thou didst not rule over us, nor was Thy name invoked upon us” (Isa. 63).

For when God deserts in just judgement sinful men who not only sin but choose to persist in sins, and allows them to depart after the perversity of their evil hearts, it is as if He makes them err – those whom He would otherwise, mercifully, save [from sin] by hidden inspiration so that they might be converted. The first men were restrained from doing evil by neither law nor fear. They freely served their belly, the pleasures of the eyes, and other vices. Now, with the fear of human or divine laws set aside, and episcopal edicts disregarded, each man does what he wills, the stronger oppressing the weaker. Men are like fish of the sea, devouring one another, and in trampled injustice iniquity flourishes and grows strong.

We see throughout the world robberies of the poor, and the pillaging of ecclesiastical goods. Hence the continual tears, and the mourning of orphans. The clamour, like that of Sodom, ascends to heaven, and what is said by the Psalmist in the voice of the Lord is fulfilled: “Because of the misery of the poor, and the groaning of the needy, now I will arise, says the Lord” (Ps. XI). Nearly every order, and every state of the Church, has been confused and rashly shaken.

Finally, lest we seem to spare ourselves who ought to correct the errors of others – we are called bishops but do not fulfil the episcopal office. We leave the ministry of preaching; we see those entrusted to us desert God and lie in evil deeds, and we are silent, nor do we stretch out the hand of correction to them. If sometimes we say things which displease carnal

minds, they say of us what the Lord said in the Gospel of those sitting in Moses' seat: "They bind heavy and intolerable burdens, and lay them on men's shoulders, but will not move them with their finger" (Matt. XXIII).

While we are silent, the flock of the Lord perishes, and by the precipices of vice they are exposed to the bites of savage wolves. There is none to teach them the ways of life, and they walk freely in the paths of error, and what is said by the prophet is fulfilled in them: "Zeal seized the unlearned people," and elsewhere: "Therefore, my people went into captivity, because they had no knowledge" (Isa. V).

Consider who through the ministry of our tongue has turned from a perverse deed and done penance; who has left luxury by our preaching, who avarice, who pride?

Therefore, for us, who are counted bishops in name, the greatest and almost intolerable burden of pastoral office rests. The reckoning of the business entrusted to us presses, and, the coming of that terrible majesty is imminent, when all will come with their flocks before the Eternal Shepherd, bringing increase from the flock, profit from business, sheaves from the harvest.

What shall we do, here called pastors, there coming without sheep? What may be presented? Here we are sent to business with the talent received, there we return empty to our Lord after business. Here we are directed to the harvest as workers, there we present empty hands, without sheaves?

Let us therefore consider, in that great judgement, what account we shall render, lest before the whole assembly of the angelic host, and the numerous multitude of the elect, we be eternally confused, God forbid. Considering and fearing the imminent danger to us of the perdition of many, we gather together in the name of Almighty God. Through His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, let us consult together.

Having been entrusted with the flock, concerning the state of the holy Church and the kingdom, and the fidelity of our king, and also the state of the monasteries, whose anciently established order and religion is nearly destroyed, concerning robberies and sacrileges, as well as abductions and perjuries, and other crimes, let us pronounce judgement according to the decrees of the sacred canons and episcopal statutes.

Doing such things, by episcopal office or pastoral exhortation, let us provoke men to penance and amendment, or, if they prove impenitent and unwilling to be corrected, let us strike their bodies and souls with the double-edged sword of the Word of God, and punish them with eternal anathema. That is, alienation from Christ and the Church, both in the present and in the future. Unless they repent from the snares of the devil by which they are held captive to his will, and turn to the living and true Lord through correction and suitable amendment.

Chapter I

Therefore, we have decreed that the worship and honour of the churches of God be religiously preserved in all things and by all, and that due reverence be shown to their immunities and ministers.

But it also behoves the king and princes to strengthen the privileges granted from ancient times to the churches of God, and to command that they be observed steadfastly, and that, just as they were honoured by preceding kings, or augmented in resources, or enriched, so henceforth they shall remain intact in all respects, with the reason of equity preserved.

Let also the priests, and the male and female servants of God, obtain ecclesiastical vigour, and let royal power and the strength of illustrious men, or the administrators of the republic, assist them, so that they may carry out their ministry worthily and contribute in all things reasonably and justly.

For if the king and the powers of the age preserve the honour of God and the Church, their own honour and power will be increased, strengthened, and established, and victories will be ministered to them from heaven, and both they and their successors, for their sake, will endure in glory and dignity with God's favour.

But if they act otherwise, and despise God, God will despise them, and render them contemptible and miserable, and will blow them from the throne of the kingdom, and they will be cast out as dust from the face of the earth, according to what we read in the Book of Kings concerning Ahab and the other kings who transgressed the law of God. As the Lord speaks to Eli, prince of the Hebrew people: "Whoever glorifies me, I will glorify; but those who despise me shall be dishonoured" (1 Kings II).

Chapter II

We are required to give an account of all things, both of princes and of subjects, to Him who judges persons without partiality, and for the kings themselves. We shall render an account to the King of kings.

A word of exhortation to your excellence, lord king.³ In doing this, we exercise pontifical authority in such a way that we do not forget that royal dignity is established by God, the Apostle saying: “Be subject to the king, as to one above you” (1 Pet. II).

Just as royal power devoutly submits itself to the priestly religion, so too priestly authority, with every duty of piety, ought to yield to royal dignity, as the holy Pope Gelasius shows in writing to Anastasius the Emperor (Epist. 10): “There are two by which this world is principally governed: the sacred authority of the pontiffs, and the royal power. The weight of the priests is all the heavier, because for the kings themselves they shall render an account in the divine judgement,” etc.

The king needs the pontiffs for eternal life, and the pontiffs need the king for the temporal course of affairs. The king must obey the pontiffs when they advise rightly, holily, and justly; and in turn the pontiffs must obey the king, serving piety with religion, justice, and consolation.

We therefore exhort your excellence, lord king, to stand firm in piety and integrity, in sacred, truthful, and good customs, so that you may be counted among those of whom it is sung in the Psalm: “In gathering peoples into one, and kings to serve the Lord” (Ps. CI); and so that you may know how, as a man, and how, as a king, you ought to serve God. For as the blessed Augustine says (Epist. 50): “The king, because he is a man, serves God by living faithfully; because he is king, he serves the laws, commanding what is just and forbidding

³ Charles III the Simple (898-922).

what is contrary, enforcing them with appropriate rigor,” and so on, as he continues at greater length in his letter to Boniface.

It is therefore necessary that the king first interpret his name, and strive to make that which is said “by name” true. For the king is called to rule. The king must first govern his own life with even moderation, and, as a certain wise man says, restrain lust, despise pleasures, control anger, and repel other evils of the soul. He may truly be called king, and will be able to rule others worthily, when he himself has ceased to obey the basest masters, shame, or disgrace.

After this, he ought to be solicitous for the peace of the people, and for the quiet and security of the whole kingdom. Let him be lovable to the good, terrible to the wicked; let him relieve the oppressed, console the poor, defend widows and orphans. Let him strive to fulfil what Solomon says of a good king: “The king who sits on the throne of judgement disperses all evil with his gaze” (Prov. XX).

Indeed, the king ought to be endowed with such virtue and the authority of justice that he disperses any planning of injustice or evil by the mere glance of his awe-inspiring majesty, lest they dare to proceed to the deed they have contemplated.

Finally, the king ought to live justly and faithfully according to the good pleasure of God’s will. We propose this to you for your knowledge and action, looking out for your welfare as is fitting, in a few sentences collected from the holy Fathers.

To show what a king is called and what he ought to be, Isidore writes in the *Book of Sentences*: “The king,” he says, “is called to act rightly. For if he rules piously, justly, and mercifully, he is rightly called king; if he lacks these, he is not a king, but a tyrant.”

Although formerly all kings were called tyrants, later the title of king was given to those ruling piously, justly, and mercifully, whereas those ruling impiously, unjustly, and cruelly were assigned not the title of king but of tyrant.

Hence the blessed Gregory says (Book II of the *Moralia*, ch. 9): “We have learned from sacred discourses that holy men are called kings, because they act rightly, govern their own faculties well, and regulate rebellious impulses to themselves with reasonable discretion.”

They are rightly called kings who know how to pacify both themselves and their subjects by ruling well. Truly the royal office is especially to govern and rule the people of God with equity and justice, and to strive for peace and concord.

For he must first be the defender of the Churches and of the servants of God, of widows, orphans, and all other poor, and of all in need.

His terror and vigilance in such matters ought, as far as possible ensure:

First, that no injustice be done; second, that if it happens, he shall allow it in no way to persist, nor leave to anyone the hope of hiding or the audacity to act badly, but that all shall know that if anything evil comes to his notice, it will not remain uncorrected or unpunished, but according to the nature of the act will see just correction.

Hence it is necessary that he, who is the judge of judges, takes up the cause of the poor himself and inquires diligently, lest those appointed by him, and acting in his stead among the people, allow the poor to suffer oppression unjustly or negligently. And every man of whatever rank must know this, if he shall render an account to God.

He should also strive to imitate the manner of the wise king, as Job the just man shows in himself:

“And when I sat as king, with an army around me, I was nevertheless the consoler of those who mourned. The ear hearing blessed me, and the eye seeing gave testimony to me, that I had delivered the poor who cried out, and the orphan who had no helper. Blessing came upon me from those about to perish, and I comforted the widow’s heart. I was clothed with justice, and dressed myself as with a garment and diadem with my judgement. I was a blind

eye and a lame foot; I was father to the poor, and diligently investigated the cause I did not know. I broke the teeth of the wicked, and from their jaws I removed the spoil” (Job XXIX).

By acting thus, he fulfils what Solomon says: “Mercy and truth shall preserve the king, and justice shall establish his throne” (Prov. XX). And thus, by imitating just and elect kings, he will also become, in the heavenly kingdom, a sharer of glory and a partaker in immortal rewards.

Let kings attend to what Wisdom says: “Love justice, you who judge the earth” (Wis. I). Likewise: “Hear, O kings, and understand; learn, you judges of the ends of the earth; give ear, you who govern multitudes and delight in the crowds of nations. For power has been given to you by the Lord, and strength by the Most High, who will question your works, and examine your thoughts. For when you are His ministers, and you have not judged rightly, nor kept the law of justice, nor walked according to His will, terribly and swiftly the Lord will appear to you. The severest judgement shall be executed on those who preside. Mercy shall be granted in small measure, but the powerful shall endure torment mightily. For the Lord will not show partiality to anyone, nor respect the greatness of anyone, since He made the small and the great, and cares equally for all” (Wis. VI).

There are many other testimonies of the holy Scriptures appropriate to the royal name and office, of which a few, drawn from the sayings of the blessed martyr Cyprian (*On the Abuses of the World*, ch. 9), will show how much adversity a king’s injustice brings upon the kingdom, and how much his justice benefits the kingdom.

After describing how a king ought to behave, he adds: “But whoever does not administer the kingdom according to this law suffers many adversities of the empire. Therefore, the peace of the peoples is broken, and even minor offenses arise from the kingdom; the fruits of the lands are diminished, and the labours of the people are hindered. Many and varied sufferings impair the prosperity of the kingdom; the deaths of loved ones

and children bring sorrow; the incursions of enemies lay waste the provinces everywhere; beasts tear apart the flocks of cattle and sheep; storms of air and disturbed hemispheres hinder the labours of land and sea; and sometimes the strikes of lightning burn the crops, the flowers, and the vines of trees.”

And he says also: “Behold how much the justice of a king benefits the world, it is clearly seen by observers. The peace of the people is the protection of the country, the immunity of the populace, the defence of the nation, care of the weak, joy of men, temperateness of the air, calm of the sea, fertility of the land, consolation of the poor, the inheritance of children, and the hope of future blessedness for himself. Let the king know that just as he was first established on the throne of men, so too in punishment. If he does not do justice, he will have primacy. For all he had under him as sinners, he shall have above him in future punishment.”

With such a man asserting so much, who could say with the Apostle Paul: “Do you seek proof of the one who speaks in me, Christ?” (2 Cor. XII).

The justice of a good king confers great benefits both upon himself and the kingdom, while the perversity of an evil king brings great harm both to himself and the kingdom. Venerable king, you must exercise caution in all your actions!

We pray that you receive these things with a calm ear, and that it may please you to adhere to the salutary admonitions, so that, by your good and justly regulated conduct, and that of others through you, this entrusted administration may be carried out properly, and from Him who gave you the temporal kingdom you may deserve to receive the eternal.

But it is also necessary for us and for all who stand in your kingdom to preserve just fidelity toward you, to show royal honour, and, when seeking the good of the kingdom, to offer true and useful counsel, according to our knowledge and ability.

Chapter III

Concerning the state of monasteries, or rather their fall, what we ought to say or do we almost hesitate to determine. With the weight of crimes pressing, and judgement beginning from the house of the Lord, some have been burned or destroyed by pagans, some plundered of their possessions and reduced almost to nothing. If the traces of some [monasteries] still appear to remain, in none of them are the institutes of regular form preserved.

For whether they be monks, or canons, or nuns, they lack rulers competent and rightfully assigned to them. Contrary to all authority of the Church, prelates are strangers among those dwelling therein, partly through want, partly through malevolence. Through the unfit rulers assigned over them, they live with disorderly morals; and those who ought to be intent upon holiness and heavenly religion forget their purpose and devote themselves to worldly affairs. Some, compelled by necessity, abandon the walls of the monasteries, and, willingly or unwillingly are joined to the secular, and practice secular affairs. Even as the Apostle [Paul] says the opposite: “No one serving God entangles himself with worldly affairs” (2 Tim. II).

They are rightly removed from the life of the common people, and, on account of the lowly actions they pursue, are exposed to the mockery of contempt. We are compelled, like the prophet Jeremiah, to lament the losses of our city, that is, the holy Church, and to proclaim publicly with voice: “How has gold grown dim? The finest colour has changed; the stones of the sanctuary are scattered at the head of every street” (Lam. IV).

Pope Gregory explains as follows: The gold is dimmed, because the life of the priests and spiritual men, once bright through the glory of virtues, now through base actions is shown to be rejected. The finest colour has changed, because that habit of holiness, through

worldly and abject works, has come to shame and contempt. The stones of the sanctuary, which never needed to be seen outside, represent those who ought never to be seen in external actions. Yet the stones of the sanctuary are scattered at the head of every street, because those who ought always to have been inside through life and prayer, through a corrupt life, are now outside. In holy habit they are set forth externally, as if the stones of the sanctuary lay outside, etc.

Just as gold without a goldsmith cannot be restored to its former and finest colour, so also monastic life without the provident oversight of a regular abbot cannot be restored to the former and best order of living.

Royal power, called to act and to order rightly, should consider how to dispense these matters by correct judgement, according to the will of Him to whom an account of all judgements and arrangements must be rendered, and according to the sanctions of the sacred canons and the constitutions of ancient kings.

The sacred canons forbid that any layperson presume [to act] over religion. Likewise, the institutions of the canons, together with the subsequent capitular ordinances of kings, as contained in the first book of the Imperial Capitularies, chapter twenty-eight, state:

“Clerics and monks, if they have any dispute among themselves, are to be judged by their bishop, and not by laymen. For it is not right that ministers of the divine office be subject to the judgment of temporal powers.” Also (chapter 31): “Laypersons, however religious, have no authority to dispose of the matters of the Church.” And again: “Places once dedicated to God, or monasteries, shall remain perpetually monasteries, and may not henceforth become secular dwellings.”

However, in monasteries dedicated to God for monks, canons, and nuns, lay abbots now dwell with their wives, sons, and daughters, with soldiers and dogs.

It is also read in the Capitularies (Addit. I, ch. 1) that abbots, examining the Rule of the monks word by word, should read it fully. Understanding it, they should strive to apply it effectively with their monks, with the help of the Lord.

How will he examine it? How will he read it? How will he understand it? If such a codex is offered, he will answer with that of Isaiah: “I do not know letters” (Isa. XXIX).

When the abbot of the monks is filled with the holy Rule and the Holy Spirit of the most blessed Father Benedict, he says: “In teaching, the abbot must always preserve that apostolic form, in which he says: ‘Rebuke, exhort, reprove’ (2 Tim. IV).”

How, then, ignoring the Apostle, utterly unknowing the institutes of the rule, or even the alphabetic lines themselves, will he hold a spiritual measure of discretion?

And what more? At the very beginning of the reading of the holy Rule, it is read concerning the election of the abbot and what sort he ought to be. In the capitulary of Charlemagne, first book, chapter eighty-one (86), it is written: “How we arranged the cause of the monks on our part, and how we granted them the permission to elect abbots from among themselves, and how, God assisting, they might live quietly and keep their purpose untiringly, we have carefully recorded in another schedule.”

In the Council held at Tours, after the section concerning the canonical clerics of the cities who dwell in episcopal residences, it follows (Council of Tours III, can. 24): “In like manner, the abbots of monasteries in which canonical life existed formerly, or now appears to exist, should diligently provide for their canons, so that they have cloisters and dormitories, sustenance, and clothing, etc.”

“Let the abbots,” it says, “be leaders and guides to those subject to them, living well, and show the way by which, walking rightly, they may attain a better life.”

Likewise concerning the monasteries of monks, after a few things that have been premised, it follows: “It seems good that they return to their former state, and that their abbots, in their habit and life, as the Rule itself prescribes, strive to walk and live,” and so on.

It is finally prohibited that a layperson be led into the refectory for the sake of eating and drinking. How will he be abbot over those over whom he will have no permission, even to eat?

In the second book of the Capitularies, chapter forty-two (42): “In convents of girls, such women should be appointed, and abbesses created, who know how to keep themselves and their subordinate flock with great religion and holiness, and not fail to benefit those over whom they preside; but also keep themselves and them as vessels consecrated for the service of the Lord. For such a one must present herself to her subordinates in vesture and in all conduct, so as to provide leadership to them who are going on to the heavenly kingdoms; she must also know that she shall give account before the Lord for those whom she has received in governance.”

These things, after the initial ordination by the holy Fathers, led by the Holy Spirit, and after canonical authority on these matters, were decreed and observed by the earlier emperors and kings. As long as the privileges of the ecclesiastical state were preserved, the state of the kingdom, maintained by God, advanced.

But these things began to be despised, weakened day by day. Reduced almost to nothing is that which once flourished and prospered in the state of this kingdom. So evil grew, which had begun in years past, and now the power of Princes thinks it may intervene contrary to the divine authority in ecclesiastical causes, and, despite the Holy Spirit, overturn the order established by the Fathers of the Church.

It is our task to admonish. If this cannot presently be corrected in every respect, we must henceforth labour with the lord king and his faithful until his good intention and our

devotion (necessary to us, to him, and to the entire kingdom), with God cooperating, reaches the fullness of perfection.

We dare not be silent concerning these matters, lest of us it be said prophetically: “Dogs, mute, unable to bark” (Isa. LVI). And again: “You did not ascend from the opposite, nor did you set up a wall for the house of Israel” (Ezek. XIII).

To the God-fearing, in hearing it is grievous, in speaking improper, in action horrible, when, against all preparedness and all authority and custom of the Christian religion, laypersons in regular monasteries, in the midst of priests and other religious, render judgements as lords and masters, with perversely disordered authority, concerning abbots whose life and conduct and Rule are entirely unknown to them.

This is certainly that abomination which the Lord foretells in the Gospel: “When you see the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not, let him who reads understand” (Matt. XXIV).

For this is truly the abomination of desolation. Not only of the subordinates, or of those who exercise dominion to their own ruin, but also of the king, and of the whole kingdom, and of all who favour so detestable an arrangement.

We therefore judge that the state of monasteries should be preserved inviolate, according to the ancient tradition of the Rule and the constitutions of the canons, so that abbots may be religious persons who know the regular discipline. And the monks or nuns, according to their profession, should live soberly, piously, and simply, and pray for the welfare of kings, the peace of the kingdom, and the tranquillity of the Church. They should not be occupied with secular cares or affairs, or seek worldly pomp, disturb ecclesiastical rights, but, according to the propriety of their calling, quietly embrace their leisure.

For it is heard that, despising humility and monastic abasement, they devote themselves to ornaments, and even to things improper and disgraceful for good laypersons.

By no means content with communal goods, they serve their own and shameful profits. This vice, like the worst cancer, must be utterly uprooted so that it spreads no further. Let it be cut off by the vigilant care of abbots and bishops.

So that no opportunity is given to monks to roam or to presume, abbots or superiors of monasteries shall provide, time and place permitting, all things necessary in food and clothing, as the Rule prescribes, supplying it at the proper time.

Chapter IV

Against sacrilegious persons, it is also just that canonical censure proceed.

First, it must be said what sacrilege is. Sacrilege is the violation of sacred law. Which, since it is divided into many kinds of crime, includes the sacrilege of schism, of which the blessed Father Augustine says: “The most evident sacrilege arises from schism, if there was no cause for separation.”

There is also sacrilege of blasphemous speech, and of any action usurped against sacred law; but more specifically, sacrilege is denoted as that which is committed by plunderers against the property of the Church. For this is sacrilege: to take away sacred things of the Church, possessions pertaining to the right of the Church, or anything consecrated or given to the Church, to seize, defraud, or carry off.

Those who do this are truly sacrilegious and homicidal, of whom St Anacletus also says (Epistle I): “Whoever takes anything from father or mother is a participant in murder. Our Father without doubt is God, who created us; our mother is the Church, who spiritually regenerated us in baptism. Therefore, whoever seizes or defrauds the goods of Christ and the Church is a murderer.”

It is also said: Whoever seizes the money of his neighbour commits injustice; but whoever seizes money or property of the Church commits sacrilege, and is to be judged as a sacrilegious person. And St Pope Urban (Epistle unica) says: “The things and faculties of the Church are called offerings because they are offered to the Lord, and they are the vows of the faithful, and the prices of sinners, and the patrimonies of the poor: if anyone seizes them, he will be a partaker of the damnation of Ananias and Sapphira, and it is necessary to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that the spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord (1 Cor. V).”

And so that these may be briefly indicated, according to what Scripture says and as pertains to the matter at hand: all who act against the law, and plunder things of the Church, or vex churches and priests against divine sanctions, are sacrilegious and undeniably infamous sacrilegious persons.

Alas! how many, knowing, how many because they do not wish to know, or pretending not to know what sacrilege is, ignorantly fall into this most evil deed, and daily fall into it! And because this anathema is in the midst of the Christian people, God is not with them, nor can they stand against their pagan enemies, but they flee. I ask each to consider, if because of the sacrilege committed by Achan son of Carmi, Israel could not stand before its enemies, and fled, the Lord intervening: “I will not be with you until you have destroyed him who is guilty of this crime (Josh. VII),” if therefore one sinner provoked the fury of God against the entire people until he and his entire household were destroyed, what do we suppose will happen to us, who in our time see so many sacrileges committed, so many sacrilegious persons acting evilly with impunity, and not only fear nothing, but even exult in their impieties?

It must be considered, lest perhaps because of these things the wrath of God be most justly imposed upon us, and when prayed to in secret, God does not hear. For He has opposed Himself like a cloud, so that prayer may not pass. And as to Joshua it was said: “Why do you cry to me?” so to us also, when we pray, it is said: I will not hear you until sacrilege is removed from among you, and he who is polluted with this crime is taken from the midst.

Yet we, like blessed Joshua, will not cease to cry to Him, and to admonish the sacrilegious, that through confession and amendment of their guilt they may give glory to God; and since, as the saint says in Job, “God gave them a place of repentance (Job XXIV),” let them see that they do not abuse it in pride.

Such is the divine dispensation: it tolerates wickedness, so that it may be restrained; but if, after the time granted for repentance, men turn to guilt, and according to their hardness and unrepentant heart store up wrath for themselves on the day of wrath, the strict Judge will turn the arguments of mercy into punishment, and by the prerogative clemency of the judge, they will be accursed.

They must not flatter themselves, because, sustained by the long-suffering of God, they remain with impunity among the good. Let them consider Judas, not the apostle, but the apostate, the sacrilegious thief like themselves: let them hear what the blessed Father Augustine says about him (in John, Tract. L): “Behold, among the saints is Judas, behold Judas is a thief, and do not despise, a thief and sacrilegious, not a thief of any kind; a thief of places, but of the Lord’s; of places, but sacred.”

And also: “It is not judged thus the theft of private property as that of public property; how much more violently must the sacrilegious thief be judged, who dared not to take from anywhere, but from the Church; whoever takes or steals anything from the Church, is compared to Judas lost. Such was this Judas, and yet he entered with the holy disciples of Christ, he went out, and partook together at the very Lord’s Supper.”

These are the words of St Augustine.

For persons who pretend not to know in what matters such crime is committed, it is to be noted that all things offered to the Lord are consecrated. Not only the sacrifices offered over the altar by priests are the offerings of the faithful, but whatever is offered to Him by the faithful, whether man, or animal, or field, or any craft, building, clothing, whatever movable or immovable, which can provide support and ornament to the holy Church of God and its ministers, is undoubtedly consecrated to the Lord. Whoever, by any means, alienates, seizes, invades, devastates, diminishes, or plunders anything from the Church (Christ and His

Church are one person, and whatever belongs to the Church belongs to Christ), without doubt commits sacrilege.

Wherefore in the second book of Capitularies, chapter four hundred and twenty-seven (Book VI, c. 321), it is thus decreed:

“Correcting ourselves in all things, and giving an example to our posterity, we generally forbid that any lay person, whether emperor, king, or bishop, or any of the prefects, or counts, supported by secular power, presume by violence to seize for himself, or claim as pertaining to him, or in any way invade a monastery, or its lands, or any things, or anything belonging to the monastery of an abbot or abbess, and govern in place of the abbot, and have monks under him, and possess money which was acquired by the blood of Christ.”

Such a man the ancient Fathers called a plunderer and sacrilegious person, and a murderer of the poor, and a wolf of the devil entering the sheepfold of Christ, and most justly to be condemned with the bond of anathema before the tribunal of Christ.

Be mindful of such persons what the holy apostle Paul says to Timothy: ‘Command the rich of this age not to be proud, nor to hope in uncertain riches, but in God, who provides all things (1 Tim. VI).’

Such persons, if they do not receive correction from the Church, are like pagans and publicans, with whom the Church of God communicates neither living nor dead. Let us sound the trumpet of God against such, so that we may not be condemned in silence, but perish together with them. If, however, he who acts impiously is so horrible to God, he is separated from God, and is rightly subjected to anathema.

For anathema signifies nothing else but separation from God, as the Old and New Testament judgements signify. And no sacrilegious person shall possess the kingdom of God, except through pure, proven, and public penance, and satisfaction to the holy Church, especially that which he has harmed, and by the imposition of hands of bishops, and

reconciliation. And so that he may know he is to be alienated from the kingdom of God, and from the company of the saints who reign with Christ and will reign with Him forever, he is also alienated from the present Church, which is itself the kingdom of God, and from the society of its faithful in God.

Let him know this: such a one, unless through fitting satisfaction, neither living nor dead, communicates with the Church; but as it is said in the book of blessed Job: 'He shall be buried in destruction,' that is, in perpetual punishment. 'The burning wind shall carry him away (Job XXVII),' that is, the malignant spirit, which incites the living to the crimes of sacrilege, drags the dying to torments. According to Jeremiah, 'The pot was heated, and its face was from the north (Jer. I),' that is, the heart fervent with the heat of plundering, and inflamed by the breath of diabolical suggestion, seized by that very burning wind (the devil), shall burn in the pot of eternal combustion.

Therefore, we also, gathered with the Holy Spirit, just as Jeremiah lamented the sinful people in fourfold alphabet, so we strike the sacrilegious, contemners of God and the Church, with the fourfold curse of anathema. Let the gate of heaven be closed to them, the door of hell opened, so that they may have no part nor society with any Christian. Nor shall any portion of the remains of those foods be given to the poor, but rather thrown to the dogs, until, through worthy and humble penance, and fitting amendment, they bring joy to the Church, which they have aggravated through sacrileges and nefarious crimes.

There are some who fear temporal death rather than eternal. Let us examine what the laws of this age command concerning such. In the above-mentioned book, chapter four hundred and thirty-first, it is first ordered that those who commit sacrileges, adulteries, depredations, or devastations, be punished with capital penalty, and that all their possessions, movable as well as immovable, be joined to the king's treasury, or to the Church whose property they have devastated, alienated, or taken.

These are concerning sacrilegious plunderers of churches.

Chapter V

No faithful person doubts that the Church of God consists in the pontiffs and priests, to whom the people of the Lord are entrusted, and that it rests upon them as a house rests on its columns. But in the minds and morals of perverse men, who wish to appear in the house of the Church in name rather than by upright conduct, there is such folly that they do not understand that if the priests are shaken by any impulse (God forbid) it is weakened. Just as if the columns of a house are shaken, the ruin of the entire structure is threatened. They not only do not fear their own fall, but, vexing those priests of God, they precipitate and push themselves to fall together with the collapsing. Nor do they consider that those who inflict injury upon the priests are injurious and contemptuous to the Lord God our Jesus Christ, in whose stead they act. Since all who vex churches and priests against divine sanctions are sacrilegious, they are called infamous sacrilegious persons.

And lest anyone say that we invent things from our own heart, let them hear the holy judgements concerning those who act thus. Clement, taught by the very most holy mouth of the apostle Peter, in the second letter to James, the brother of the Lord, concerning those who sin against the Fathers, says thus (Epist. 1):

“What kind of condemnation, and what curse threatens those who sin against the Fathers, divine Scripture teaches us. For Cham, the son of Noah, when he saw his father naked, did not cover his father’s bodily nakedness but went out and reported it to his brothers, and they covered it with clothing, and he indeed, Cham, and those born from him, were placed under a curse, while those who covered it deserved a great blessing. How much more are those worthy of a greater and larger condemnation, who strive to oppose or rise up against the Fathers; for he who resists them resists God, and he who injures or insults them, does so to God, in whose legation they act.”

Also in the third epistle, the same Clement concerning the honour of bishops:

“If not all presbyters, deacons, or subdeacons, and the rest of the clergy, obey you bishops, and all princes, both of the higher and lower order, and the remaining people of the tribes and tongues do not comply, they will be not only infamous but cut off from the kingdom of God, and alienated from the fellowship of the faithful, and from the thresholds of the holy Church of God. For it is yours to instruct them; it is theirs to obey you as to God, in whose legation you act, the Lord saying: ‘He who hears you hears me, and he who despises you despises me; and: He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives Him who sent me (Luke X).’”

Nothing is more unjust or dishonourable than children rebelling against fathers, or clerics or laypeople being disobedient or arrogant towards teachers or masters. The first man fell through disobedience. Therefore, we strongly warn all to avoid this vice, and because “the Lord resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (1 Pet. V),” our Lord, sending us in His stead to the place of the apostles to preach, commands us to teach all, and all faithfully obedient to us so that they may go out.

From the decrees of Pope Anacletus (Epist. 2), that bishops are to judge by God, not by human or perverse men:

“It is clear that the highest priests, that is, bishops, are to judge by God, not to be torn by men of human or perverse life, but rather to be borne by all the faithful, God Himself giving example. ‘He drove out those selling and buying, overturned the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling, and drove them out of the temple (Matt. XXI).’ And as it is said elsewhere: ‘God stands in the congregation of the gods, and judges among the gods (Ps. 81).’ And elsewhere: ‘I said, You are gods, and all sons of the Most High (ibid.).’

No one desires his servant to be judged by anyone other than himself. If it is presumed otherwise, either he becomes very angry with indignation, or seeks vengeance. If

this occurs among men, what do you think God of gods, and Lord of lords, who promised vengeance for His servants will do? He also speaks through the Prophet saying: ‘The Lord God of vengeance executed vengeance freely,’ and so forth (Ps. XCIII).”

And the Apostle says: “Who are you to judge another man’s servant? It stands or falls to his own master (Rom. XIV).” And he himself: “Do not judge one another, but rather judge so that you do not put a stumbling block or scandal before your brother (ibid.).” And the Lord, through the prophet, says: “He who touches you touches the pupil of my eye (Zech. II).”

For if anyone sets their eyes upon the evil of some prince, he is manifestly guilty of majesty, and becomes infamous, or is subject to capital sentence. These things, brothers, must be carefully guarded. What men do not wish to be done to themselves, they must not inflict upon the God of gods, lest the Lord become angry and take vengeance upon those who have not sinned; for the righteous often perish for the wicked.

Also in the same decree, so that no one may dare accuse a bishop: “The apostles and the successors of the apostles have considered and decreed that the columns of the holy Church of God, which are rightly called apostles and their successors, should not be easily moved, torn, or accused; but if anyone is moved against them or their churches, let him first approach them with zeal for charity, so that by familiar conversation he may be reminded and heal what is to be healed, and correct with charity what ought justly to be corrected. But if anyone, before having done this, presumes to tear, accuse, or assault them, let them be excommunicated, and not absolved until they have made suitable penance, for their injury pertains to Christ, in whose stead they act.

Nor is this surprising: for if any one of us were imposed upon by a servant of ours, and were hindered, or despised by one of our subordinates, he would quickly become indignant and angry, or seek vengeance, and would consider it as injury and insult, and render

retribution in future times if not presently. If this occurs in matters of men, what do you think God of gods and Lord of lords, who promised vengeance for His servants, will do? He also speaks through the prophet Nahum, saying: “God is jealous, and the Lord takes vengeance; the Lord takes vengeance, and is full of wrath; the Lord takes vengeance on His enemies, and He is angry with His foes (Nah. I).”

From the decrees of Pope Evaristus, concerning the honour of bishops (Epist. 2): “It is necessary for a bishop to teach his Church appropriately and without pause, and to govern and love it wisely, so that he may abstain from vices and attain eternal salvation; and the Church must receive his teaching with such reverence, and love and cherish him, as the legate of God and herald of truth, for the Truth testifies: ‘Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matt. XVI).’

Too much fear is due, brothers, to this judgement, and you must foresee so as not to offend those who have such power from the Lord. Therefore, they are to be obeyed, loved, and highly venerated, not disparaged, torn, or cast out, but carried and loved, the Lord Himself saying: ‘He who hears you hears me, and he who despises you despises me (Luke X).’

Therefore, we write to you and all the faithful, brothers, that you beware, and leave to your posterity not evil, but good example, for the injury done to bishops pertains to Christ, in whose stead they act.”

From the decrees of Pope Alexander, concerning not vexing priests (Epist. I): “It has come to the conscience of the Apostolic See that some are so foolish that they do not observe the precepts of the Lord’s day, nor the statutes of the apostles and their successors. Concerning those of whom the Lord says: ‘He who touches you touches the pupil of my eye (Zech. II),’ they do not hesitate to touch them, and do not fear to persecute them. And although they persecute us, we are the disciples of Him who commanded to lay down life for

brothers (1 John III), and we have not dared to conceal their dangers and perditions, lest by prophetic sentence, which God forbid, we be condemned: ‘If you announce the iniquity of the wicked, you have delivered your soul; but if you do not announce it, I will require his blood from your hand (Ezek. III).’

Who, by sacrilegious persuasion, persecutes and strives to tear apart bishops, or those who rightly sacrifice to the Lord, undoubtedly persecutes and ravages the Lord, in whose stead they act. Hence the Lord says through the prophet Joel: ‘Will you repay vengeance to me? And if you avenge yourselves against me, I will quickly repay to your head (Joel III).’

Considering these dangers to souls, together with all the priests of God who have come with us to this holy city, and with all we have received from the blessed apostles, and the holy Fathers, and their successors, we decree and determine that all who persecute the holy Fathers, or strive to remove or tear them, are infamous, and alien from the thresholds of the Church until satisfaction is made. God hates those who arm themselves against the Fathers, so that the invaders or destroyers of the Fathers are made infamous, because they persecute the Fathers.”

Also: “Brothers, no one doubts that the good are always persecuted and afflicted by the wicked. Therefore, we must humble ourselves under the mighty hand, so that He may deliver us in time of tribulation. For ‘the roaring lion goes about seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. V).’ The devil does not cease to seek whom among the faithful he may destroy, especially those whom he finds more ardent in the service of the Saviour and familiar to Him. By ‘familiar’ I mean those whom He wished to consecrate to Himself, and establish in the order of the apostles. They intercede for the people, and take away the sins of the people, for through their prayers and offerings they consume and remove them, and the more worthy they are, the more readily their petitions are heard. ‘The persistent prayer of a righteous man is very powerful,’ as says James the apostle (Jac. V).

But he who persecutes you, persecutes Him in whose stead you act, because just as He, the Son of God, was mediator of God and men, so also you are established in His stead in the Church, to act by legation between God and men. But if anyone hinders your legation, he hinders not one, but many, and just as he harms many, so should he be reprov'd by many, and kept from the fellowship of the good; and because he obstructs the cause of God, and disturbs the state of the Church, therefore he must be kept away from its thresholds. Such a one must also be avoided by all, and not received into the communion of the faithful until satisfaction is made. For it was formerly decreed that he who disturbs the state of the Church is to be kept away from its thresholds, nor communicate with the faithful, who diverts their goods.”

From the decrees of Pope Telesphorus, concerning bishops not being accused or reprov'd (Epist. I): “It is just that all teachers of the law throughout the world should understand what is of the law, and not profane the priests of the Lord with their lips, or by any machinations. For while they wish to profane, they rather profane and injure themselves. He accuses the ordinance of God who accuses priests, or wishes to condemn them. All the faithful must beware, for not only those who act, but those who consent to the acts, are participants in the deed.”

From the decrees of Pope Pontian, concerning the honour of bishops, and that they are not to be assaulted but venerated (Epist. I): “Priests are not to be assaulted, but honoured. In them also the Lord is honoured, in whose stead they act. If they happen to fall, they are to be supported and carried by the faithful. But they are not to be accused by infamous or wicked men, nor enemies, nor men of another sect or religion. If they sin, they are to be reprov'd by the remaining priests and restrained by the highest pontiffs, and not accused or restrained by secular or evil men.”

These are the decrees of the apostles, even the words of Christ Himself. If anyone attempts to oppose or contradict, he proves himself not a Christian, but an Antichrist.

Therefore, priests of God are not to be assaulted, not grieved, not accused, not judged by seculars, not reprov'd, not condemned, not restrained, not profaned, torn, disparaged, or injured in any way. Much less are they to be persecuted, blinded, or killed.

For concerning the injury or dishonouring of priests, in the Capitular book VI, chapter 91 (98), it is written: "If anyone does any injury or unjust dishonour to a bishop, let him make satisfaction with his life; and all that he has seemed to have shall be entirely joined to the Church, over which the bishop is deemed to preside, and paid to us in triple our standard, that is sixty solidi, or he shall be kept in the service of our treasury, always joined, until he redeems himself in triple according to his assessment.

The holy Church consists in priests. Great punishment must be inflicted on those who do injury or insult to bishops or priests. For the detracting of priests pertains to Christ, in whose stead they act in the Church."

Also from the same book, chapter 297 (304): "If anyone breaks out into this kind of sacrilege by rushing into churches, and by invading their goods, inflicting injury upon priests and ministers, or upon the worship itself, or upon the place, let them be judged by capital sentence if found guilty. It is not to be expected that the bishop demand vengeance for his own injury, since holiness has left glory only to forgive. But it is not only free but praiseworthy for all to pursue publicly the atrocious injuries done to priests or ministers, and for such offenders to deserve vengeance."

Concerning those who injure the clergy, from the Capitular of Emperor Charles (lib. V, c. 121): "Whoever, as judge or secular authority, presumes to inflict injury upon a presbyter, or deacon, or the juniors, without the hearing of the bishop, or archdeacon, or archpriest, let him be under anathema from the whole fellowship of Christians."

Chapter VI

There are some who are inflamed by the torch of such great greed that they not only make poor use of what has been granted to them by God, but even seek after what has not been granted, as though it were lawful. From those things offered to divine worship, and which, according to the law of the Lord, are *holy of holies* to the Lord and pertain to the right of the priests, they demand exactions and rents from the priests, and afflict presbyters with gifts-in-kind, and feasts, or relay-horses, or the fattening of horses.

From those things which, as a dowry or devotion of the faithful, have been handed over to each church, they ought to demand no service of any kind except a spiritual one. We must restrain presumptions of this sort by every means, because they are done contrary to canonical authority.

From ancient times, it has been established by the holy Fathers and by our forebears that just as the bishop in his ordination has the whole parish in general, together with all rural parishes, held uninterruptedly for thirty years, so also each presbyter in his ordination and in the care of his administration should have his own parish together with its endowment and the tithes of the church, with the counsel and disposition of his bishop. According to rules established of old and divinely, as the holy Basil demonstrates, he shall expound the verse of the psalm: "*I will measure the valley of tabernacles*" (Ps. 59).

"The valley of tabernacles," he says, "will be measured – that is, the whole orb of the earth, called the valley of tabernacles on account of bodily dwellings; this is, divided and measured by an allotment through individual places into the parishes and habitations of the Churches of God," etc.

Hence it is written: “*Distribute its houses*” (Ps. 47), that is, those of the universal Church, through the parishes of guardianship preach, “*that you may recount it to another generation,*” and the rest.

But since the disposition of properties and endowments pertaining to churches, according to the ancient constitution of the canons, pertains solely to the ordination of bishops and to the administration of presbyters, the Council of Toledo makes this clear (Third Council of Toledo, c. 19):

“Many, contrary to the constitutions of the canons, demand that the endowment they have bestowed upon churches does not pertain to the bishop’s ordination. This deed displeases the past and is forbidden for the future; but all things, according to the ancient constitution, are to pertain to the ordination and power of the bishop.”

If it is asked what “all things” signifies, it means the tithes, the first-fruits of produce, and their offerings, and those things which the faithful have offered to parishes in lands, vineyards, slaves, monies, or any possessions whatsoever. All of which must remain undisturbed, under immunity from fiscal tributes and free from every lordly exaction, under the authority and disposition (as we have said) of the bishops, and under the governance and administration of the presbyters.

This also the lord emperor Louis established concerning a manse given to a church and other things pertaining to it, in his capitulary (Book I, ch. 61):

“It has been decreed,” he says, “that to each church one whole manse be assigned without any service, and that the presbyters established in them perform no service from tithes, nor from the offerings of the faithful, nor from houses, nor from atria or gardens placed near the church, nor from the aforesaid manse, except ecclesiastical service. If they should have anything beyond this, from that let them render the service owed to their lords.”

Yet on the contrary they presume to coerce and injure, or even expel, presbyters from the churches committed to them, or to despoil them of tithes or possessions, not fearing to despise so many statutes of the holy Fathers, whereas the Council of Carthage says (Carthage I, canon 14):

“If anyone, having transgressed the statutes, corrupts them or thinks they are to be regarded as nothing, if he is a layman, let him be deprived of communion; if a cleric, of honour.”

And in the often-cited Book VII of the Capitularies, chapter 139 (154):

“That no judge shall coerce or presume to condemn either a presbyter, or a deacon, or a cleric, or a junior of the church, on his own authority without the knowledge of the pontiff; and if he has done so, let him be separated from the church to which he is known to have inflicted injury, until he recognises and amends his fault.”

Likewise in the same book, chapter 165:

“It has been decreed that without the authority or consent of the bishops, presbyters are neither to be appointed nor expelled in any churches, and if anyone hereafter attempts to do this, let him be strictly struck by synodal sentence.”

And in Book II, chapter 47 (36), that churches established of old are not to be deprived either of tithes or of any possession.

But in bringing these matters forward, we in no way take lordship away from the seniors over them, as though they could not have the title of lordship in the things granted to them by God. Rather, we designate that churches ought to belong to bishops, and we assert the governance of the bishop, not claiming for ourselves the power of the Lord.

And because we are disciples of a gentle and humble Master, we must give to our presbyters examples and admonitions of humility. They shall render fitting honour and due obedience, that is, spiritual and ecclesiastical obedience, to those under whose authority their

churches stand, and this without any arrogance or contention or rebellion. For while the right of their ministry is preserved, they ought to show themselves gracious toward their seniors and parishioners, from whose offerings they live, and to minister spiritual services to them with due humility – services they ought to perform freely, even if they were to receive no temporal support.

Let presbyters know, according to the Apostle, to render to all their dues: *“to whom honour, honour; to whom fear, fear,”* so that what follows may apply to them: *“Owe no one anything, except to love one another”* (Rom. 13).

But there are some who, ignorant (or rather despising) of the justice of God, establish the injustice of their own tenacity, and with sacrilegious audacity steal and defraud the portion of tithes owed to God. They say to their own destruction that they are not bound to give tithes from military service, from trade, from craftsmanship, from the shearing of wool, and from any other forms of commerce lavishly granted to them by God. Let them hear, not our commands, but those of God through the Holy Scriptures concerning such matters, and the examples of the holy Fathers. Let them know we are in no way demanding something new, but rather reclaiming what has been established by the laws of God and granted by the devotion of the ancient Fathers.

Let them attend to this: that for the cause of God alone they ought to give their offerings and tithes to the priests [so that] they give them to God Himself. In giving them faithfully they confer nothing upon God, who has no need of our goods which He Himself has bestowed upon us, but rather they return what is His; and in exchange for small things in the present they acquire great things which will profit them in the future.

It is written in Leviticus: *“All the tithes of the land, whether from grain or from the fruits of trees, are the Lord’s, and are consecrated to Him”* (Lev. 27).

Likewise in the same book: *“All tithes of oxen and sheep, and whatever passes under the rod, every tenth that comes shall be consecrated to the Lord. You shall not exchange it, good for bad or bad for good”* (Lev. 27).

In Deuteronomy: *“In the place which the Lord your God shall choose, that His name may be there, you shall bring all the things which I command you: holocausts and sacrifices, tithes and first-fruits of your hands, and whatever is most choice among the gifts which you vow to the Lord”* (Deut. 12).

Likewise in the same book: *“You shall set aside a tenth part of all your produce which the land brings forth year by year: the tithe of grain and wine and oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks, that you may learn to fear the Lord your God”* (Deut. 14).

In the Book of Numbers: *“All the marrow of oil and of wine and of grain, and whatever they offer as first-fruits to the Lord”- that is, to Aaron – “I have given to you; all the first-fruits of produce which the soil brings forth and are brought to the Lord shall fall to your use. Everything which the sons of Israel render by vow shall be yours”* (Num. 18).

Likewise in the same book: *“To the sons of Levi I have given all the tithes of Israel as a possession, in return for the ministry by which they serve Me in the tabernacle of the covenant”* (ibid.).

Behold, you have heard whose they are, and to whom they are sacrificed, and to whom they are to be given (namely, to God) tithes are owed.

Also, what He commands to be given to Himself: namely, not only all the tithes of everything born from the earth, but all the first-fruits of crops which the soil produces, and likewise the tithes of oxen, sheep, and all herds, together with their firstborn. Also, the tithes and first-fruits of your labours. Moreover, vows and gifts – all of which He commands you to offer to the place of His temple, so that they may pass into the use of the priests for the ministry by which they serve in the tabernacle of the Lord.

Perhaps someone will say: “I am not a farmer; I cannot give tithes of earthly fruits, or even of herds.” Let whoever he may be hear this, whether he be a soldier, a merchant, or an artisan: the skill by which you are sustained is from God. From it you must give Him tithes.

Concerning military service, hear what is said in the book of Genesis about the patriarch Abraham, after he returned from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him. “When Melchizedek, priest of the Most High God, had blessed him,” Scripture says, “Abraham gave him tithes of everything” (Gen. 14).

Likewise in the same book it is read that the blessed Jacob, setting out for Mesopotamia of Syria to Laban, whom he served twenty years as wages, spoke thus: “If the Lord,” he says, “shall be with me on the journey on which I walk, and shall guard me, and shall give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, and I shall return prosperously to the house of my father, the Lord shall be my God, and this stone which I have set up as a pillar shall be called the house of God, and of all that You shall give me I will offer tithes to You” (Gen. 28).

It is also read of holy Tobit that he went to Jerusalem to the temple of the Lord, and there worshiped the Lord God of Israel, faithfully offering all his first-fruits and tithes (Tob. 1).

Behold, you have examples of the holy Fathers to imitate, who faithfully offered tithes to God from everything they possessed.

And why do we propose this from praiseworthy patriarchs, when we hear the Pharisee (rejected by God for the swelling of his boastfulness) saying in the Gospel: “I give tithes of all that I possess” (Luke 18), and God Himself reproaching the scribes and Pharisees because, “passing over the commandments of God, they tithe even dill and cumin and every herb” (Matt. 23)?

Let it shame us Christians who are unwilling or unable to imitate the Pharisees even in this respect, when we hear Christ Himself threatening us: “Unless your justice shall

abound more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5). And yet these gave tithes of all that they possessed.

But perhaps, you will still say, although many things have been enumerated, no divine command has yet been named expressly concerning the shearing of wool. Could it not suffice for you that it is said “of everything”? But since (shamefully) some raise objections even concerning this tithe, let them hear the Lord saying in Deuteronomy: “This shall be the judgement of the priests from the people and from those who offer victims: whether they sacrifice an ox or a sheep, they shall give to the priest the shoulder and the stomach, the first-fruits of grain, wine, and oil, and a portion of wool from the shearing of sheep. For the Lord your God has chosen him from all his tribes to stand and minister to the name of the Lord” (Deut. 18).

Moreover, we recall to memory for those who do know, that (as we may use the words of the blessed Pope Gregory) we ought to give to God not only the tithes of things, but also the tithes of days, which each of the faithful strives to do annually during the time of Lent.

In rendering to God the dues of tithes or first-fruits, let all know the law concerning foods. It is written in Deuteronomy: “When you have entered the land which I shall give you, and have eaten of the bread of that region, you shall separate first-fruits to the Lord from your food. Just as you separate first-fruits from the threshing floor, so also you shall give first-fruits from your dishes to the Lord” (Num. 15).

And lest anyone dare in any way (not to say withhold, but even to defraud, or even to delay) what must be offered to God the giver of all good things, let him hear God in Exodus: “You shall not delay to offer your tithes and first-fruits to Me” (Exod. 22).

If it is a transgression of the law to give late, how much worse is it not to have given at all?

If you fulfil what has been commanded, you will rejoice to receive the rewards promised by Him through the prophet Malachi: “Bring,” He says, “all the tithe into My storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and test Me in this, says the Lord, whether I will not open for you the floodgates of heaven and pour out for you blessing unto abundance; and I will rebuke for you the devourer, and he shall not destroy the fruit of your land, nor shall the vine in the field be barren, says the Lord of hosts; and all nations shall call you blessed” (Mal. 3).

And Scripture says: “Honor the Lord from your substance, and from the first-fruits of all your crops, so that your storehouses may be filled with grain and your winepresses overflow with wine” (Prov. 3).

Behold, your tithes profit you more than God. You shall receive them back most swiftly with a hundredfold interest.

Again Scripture says: “Each shall give a ransom for his soul, and there shall be no sickness or disaster among them” (Exod. 30).

Behold, together with abundance of produce, you also obtain bodily health.

By fulfilling divine commands you earn heavenly rewards. By violating them you acquire infernal torments as a transgressor, unless you make fitting satisfaction to God and the Church through repentance and amendment.

If we deny to God the first-fruits of things, by His just judgement we are overturned in our own first-fruits, and we ourselves are reduced to the tenth, so that, with nine withheld, we scarcely receive the tenth part. Our harvest fails barren, the blessing of rains having been withdrawn; hail strikes the vintage, or frost destroys it; and because we are unwilling to give to God and His priest what is owed, we give from what is not owed to the pagan and impious soldier.

Therefore, with these matters diligently considered, as Scripture admonishes, let us devoutly honour God in giving the first-fruits and tithes of all the things we possess, so that we may merit to receive from Him both the advantages of temporal good and the rewards of eternal happiness.

Chapter VII

Concerning those who, devoted to acts of robbery, lay snares for the innocent, or inflict losses and deaths upon them, and fill their houses with plunder – who eat the bread of impiety and drink the wine of iniquity; whose feet run incessantly to evil and hasten to shed blood, or kill the innocent by hunger; and lie in wait for another's blood, or think that they must live by fraud, as Solomon says, "they themselves lie in wait against their own blood, and plot deceits against their own souls" (Prov. 1).

They act against their own blood, because, as though there were a judge who exacts just judgment, they are punished by temporal death. They also act against their own souls, because they will be condemned to eternal perdition. Those who, out of love of money, devote themselves to the robberies and slaughters of the innocent, destroy themselves.

Them the Lord rebukes through the prophet Isaiah, saying: "You have devoured my vineyard," that is, the Christian people; "the plunder of the poor is in your house" (Isa. 3) – that is to say, in the house of your dwelling, and in the house of the body, since from it you fill not only yourselves unto excess, but also your treasuries.

But what threatens such men, the Lord does not keep silent about: "Woe," he says, "to the wicked unto evil, for the recompense of his hands shall be done to him" (ibid.). And likewise: "Woe to those who join house to house and add field to field," etc. (Isa. 5).

Of these (grievous to say) the number is such, and they have imbibed a love of robbery, as though it were lawful and noble to live by plunder. Nor do these wretched and pitiable men consider how many thousands of innocent people they destroy daily, not by the sword (which would indeed be lighter), but by the harshest and most atrocious death of famine. Can the wretched be secure even for a single hour while guilty of so many homicides?

Not giving bread to the hungry is damnable, since the Lord Himself will say at the final judgement: “I was hungry, and you did not give me to eat,” etc. (Matt. 25), to whom he adds: “Depart from me, accursed, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels” (ibid.).

From this, it must be inferred with what condemnation those who seize what belongs to others are to be punished, if those who held their own goods indiscriminately and without mercy are struck by such judgement.

How manifold robbery is, moreover, and by how many methods it is committed, Job briefly enumerates: “Some have moved boundary markers; they have seized flocks; they have driven away the ass of the orphan; they have taken the ox of the widow as a pledge; they have overthrown the way of the poor; together they have oppressed the meek of the land; they reap a field not their own, and gather the vintage of the vineyard of the one whom they oppressed by force; they send men away naked, stripping off garments from those who have no covering in the cold; they used violence, plundering orphans, and stripped the crowd of the poor. From the naked and those walking without clothing, and from the hungry, they took ears of grain. They made men groan in the cities, and the soul of the wounded will cry out, and the Lord will not allow it to go unavenged” (Job 24).

Concerning such people it is said through the prophet: “Woe to him who multiplies what is not his and heaps upon himself thick clay” (Hab. 2). To heap thick clay upon oneself is to pile up earthly gains together with the weight of sin. And in the Gospel the Lord says: “What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world, but suffer loss of his soul?” (Matt. 15). That is, what does it profit if he gathers everything that is outside himself, if he condemns what he himself is? For the things they seize they leave behind in this world; but with them to judgement they carry the causes of their robbery and their own condemnation.

Let robbers hear what the vessel of election, Paul, caught up to the third heaven, said concerning them: “Nor,” he says, “shall the rapacious possess the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6). No robber, no plunderer of the poor, shall possess the kingdom of God, unless he has done perfect penance and restored what was unjustly taken.

Certain people wish to repent, but do not wish to restore what they have seized. The worst kind of men, to whom the medicine of repentance is of no benefit at all. For if the seized property, when it can be restored, is not restored, repentance is not being done but feigned.

Such men, as St Augustine says (Ep. 54 to Macedonius), desire that the crime be forgiven, and that they continue to possess the very thing for the sake of which the crime was committed. The sin of robbery will not be remitted unless what was taken away is restored – when it can be restored. Often the one who takes loses it, either by suffering other evils or by living badly himself, and has nothing from which to make restitution.

Let every robber know that the sin of robbery is not forgiven unless, when he is able, he restores what he seized. Even Zacchaeus the tax collector, who had received the Lord as a guest, suddenly changed into a holy life, said: “Behold, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore fourfold” (Luke 19).

Thus let every robber act: let him first restore what he unjustly took away, if he desires to do true repentance and to obtain true mercy from God.

But if he does not have the means by which to restore it, we cannot say to him: “Restore what you took.” If he endures torments while he is thought to have what he might restore, there is no injustice. If he does not have the means to restore the stolen money, while he is compelled to repay it through bodily sufferings, he pays the penalties of the sin by which it was wickedly taken.

Innumerable robberies and plunderings have been committed in this realm without regard for the fear of God, and are still being committed before the eyes and ears of the Lord of hosts. For this reason we now suffer devastation and sterility, which the Lord once threatened to the people of Israel: “Unless great and beautiful houses are left deserted without inhabitant, ten yokes of vineyards shall produce one scant measure,” etc. (Isa. 5).

By the just judgement of God, the punishment of our sin demanding it, we have come into such madness that we neither feel the blows by which we are struck nor wish to recognise correction. We rightly experience a double captivity – barbarian captivity, and, what is more grievous, demonic – just as the Lord testifies through the prophet Isaiah: “Therefore my people have been led into captivity, because they had no knowledge” (ibid.).

Knowledge of divine judgement, or recognising their correction, or doing good.

And again: “Hell has enlarged its soul and opened its mouth without measure” (ibid.): namely, so that with insatiable greed it may devour those to be punished forever. “And the mighty of the land, and the people, and its lofty and glorious ones shall descend to it” (ibid.).

Let them awaken to so great a thunderclap; let them hear the Lord terribly threatening through the prophet: “Every violent plunder with tumult, and garment mixed with blood, shall be for burning and fuel for fire” (Isa. 9).

Every wicked and violent plunder, and the tumult and crowds by which they have oppressed the poor and all who were beneath them, and mixed blood with blood, shall be for the burning of Gehenna and the fuel of eternal fire.

And He speaks through the Psalmist: “Because of the misery of the needy and the groaning of the poor, now I will arise, says the Lord” (Ps. 12). That is, now, very soon, I will carry out vengeance. And again the prophet Isaiah says: “The Lord will not despise the prayer of the orphan, nor that of the widow if she pours out the speech of her groaning. Do not the

tears of the widow run down her cheek, and her cry ascend above them? From the cheek they rise up to heaven, and the Lord who hears will not delight in them” (Sirach 35).

This impiety rages not only against outsiders but against its own entrails, and each devours the flesh of his own arm. Beware lest that saying of the Apostle befall such people: “Take heed,” he says, “lest while you bite and devour one another, you be consumed by one another” (Gal. 5). For he who devours himself soon perishes.

To whom does the Psalmist say: “To you, Lord, the poor man is left; you will be a helper to the orphan” (Ps. 10)? “He himself will rescue the needy from the hand of his strong ones, the poor and the destitute from those who plunder them” (Ps. 34).

The statutes of the ancient Church command that the gifts of those who oppress the poor are to be rejected by priests (Council of Carthage IV, ch. 94). Rightly so, since they are abominable before the Lord. Scripture testifies on this matter: “He who offers sacrifice from the substance of the poor is as one who slaughters a son in the sight of his father” (Sirach 34).

Concerning the rich and the powerful who oppress the poor, Book VI of the Capitularies, chapter 418 (31), reads as follows: “Judges or powerful men who oppress the poor, having been admonished by their bishop, if they do not then amend themselves, are to be excommunicated.”

Indeed, unless they have performed worthy repentance for such deeds, as blessed Paul testifies concerning robbers, they “shall not possess the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6).

Royal authority ought to punish such men according to the sanctions of ancient kings promulgated concerning those who commit robbery within the realm (Book VI of the Capitularies, ch. 288), or in the place where the crime is recognised and part of the plunder is found. It is prescribed in Book VI of the Capitularies, chapter 384 (289), that the one who provided the means for plundering, or divided the spoils already taken, is to be burned alive.

And likewise capital punishment is to be inflicted upon the one who is found to have committed violence.

Chapter VIII

There is an execrable kind of theft, or rather sacrilege, which rustic people call “abduction.” How great an evil it is, and how it is condemned not only by divine but also by human authority, we shall show, for the caution of all Christians entrusted to us.

First, concerning girls abducted and not yet betrothed, what the sacred canons prescribe, we deem necessary to recount.

In the Council of Chalcedon, where six hundred and thirty Fathers were present, chapter 27, it is stated:

“Those who abduct girls under the name of living together, cooperating, and conniving with the abductors, the holy synod decrees: if they are clerics, let them fall from their rank; if laymen, let them be anathematised.”

By these words it is clear how the authors of this evil ought to be condemned, when participants and connivers are struck by so great an anathema. According to canonical authority they can in no way lawfully claim for themselves girls abducted for marriage.

As for girls already betrothed, and abducted by others, it is read thus in the Council of Ancyra, chapter 10:

“Betrothed girls, and afterwards abducted by others, should be rescued and returned to those to whom they had been betrothed, even if force had been applied to them by the abductors.”

It was decreed by the holy assembly that the abductor be punished by public penance, and the abducted girl, if her fiancé will not take her back, and she herself has not consented to the crime, should not be denied permission to marry another.

If she has consented [to the crime], let her be subject to a similar sentence. If after this she presumes to join with him, let both be anathematised.

As for what the law of the emperors commands concerning such abductors, one may find it in Book V, chapter 239. Also in book VII, chapter 247, concerning abductors of widows or virgins:

“It is ordained that abductors of widows or virgins be expelled from the communion of the Church.”

Also, concerning those who abduct women, for they may not have them as wives, and what is to be done regarding the abducted, from the same book, chapter 395:

“Those who abduct women, or steal them, or seduce them, shall in no way have them as wives, even if afterwards it would suit them, and even if they have dowered them or received them in lawful marriage with the consent of their parents. If anyone wishes to have a wife, let him take her canonically and legally, and not abduct her. Whoever has abducted, or stolen, or seduced her shall never have her as a wife, but shall return her to her relatives according to the law, and pay triple the Lord’s penalty, and moreover perform public penance canonically. To this all cried with one voice, saying: ‘We wish everyone to hold these firmly, and we desire that they be preserved forever by all.’”

We also decree, according to the ancient constitution, that no one shall contract secret marriages, or commit abduction, or marry a woman who is his kinswoman. One who wishes a wife shall take one who is dowered and given by her parents, with the blessing of priests, as in the aforementioned book, chapter 179 (127):

“It is ordained that public marriages be conducted by those who wish to marry, because often in secretly conducted marriages grave sins increase or accumulate, both in others’ brides and in kinswomen or adulterous unions, and, worse, among consanguineous relations. From these are often born the blind, the lame, the hunchbacked, and the crippled, or others marked with ugly spots, and this is to be guarded against by all in the future.”

A priest must be assembled, in whose parish the marriage is to take place, in the church before all the people. There the priest must inquire, together with the people, whether she is his kinswoman or not, or another's wife, or fiancée, or adulteress.

If all things are found lawful and honest, then through the counsel and blessing of the priest, and consultation with other good men, he ought to marry and lawfully dower her.

For the blessed Augustine writes concerning lawful marriage thus:

“She who is to be a wife must be chaste in virginity according to the law, lawfully dowered, given by her parents to the husband, and received by the paranymphs, and thus, according to law and the Gospel, honoured in public marriage, to be lawfully taken in marriage, and all the days of her life, and unless by consent and for the purpose of leaving to God, never to be separated for the sake of a man. If she has committed fornication, and her husband wishes it, she is to be dismissed, but while she lives, another is not to be taken, because ‘adulterers will not possess the kingdom of God’ (1 Cor. VI), and penance is to be accepted by her.”

Do not, men, take as wives those whose former husbands are living, for such unions are adulterous.

And as we have said, she may not be a near relative, because it is written:

“No man shall approach near of his own blood, to uncover his shame” (Leviticus XVIII).

Similarly, it is written:

“You shall not lie with the wife of your neighbour, nor be defiled with the mixture of his seed” (ibid.).

And in the decretals of Pope Gregory (Gregory II in the Roman synod I):

“If anyone shall marry a deaconess, or a nun, or a spiritual godmother, or the wife of a brother, or a niece, or a stepmother, or his daughter-in-law, or a cousin, or from his own kin,

or one whom he has as a relative, let him be anathema. And all three responded: Let him be anathema.”

Also:

“If anyone has abducted a widow, or stolen a wife, with their consent, let him be anathema. And if anyone has abducted or stolen a virgin, unless he has betrothed her, with their consent, let him be anathema. And all three responded: Let him be anathema.”

And elsewhere in the canons it is commanded that no one shall enter into marriages up to the line of affinity, and the closeness of his own blood, nor presume to marry virgins without the blessing of a priest. These things are to be guarded against so that they do not occur.

But once all these things have been verified, and nothing hinders, then if she is a virgin, with the blessing of a priest as contained in the sacramentary, and with the counsel of many good men, she is to be taken publicly and not secretly as a wife, so that good children may be generated from them by the mercy of the Lord, and not such as was mentioned above.

Also in book VI, chapter 419 (306):

“If anyone shall join himself not in equal rank, but in an incestuous order, with those persons with whom it is prohibited by divine rules, let them be tested after penance by sequestration, both deprived of communion. Neither shall have military service in the palace, nor licence to act in the forum of legal cases.

For if they have joined themselves in the aforementioned incest, bishops or priests, in whose diocese or district the act has occurred, shall report the crime to the king or judges, so that when it has been reported, they may be sequestered from communion or cohabitation.

Their property shall reach the first parents up to sequestration, on this condition: that before they are segregated, by no skill, nor by parents, nor by purchase, nor by royal

authority, shall they come to their own property, unless they confess the aforementioned crime to sequestration, separation, and penance.”

Also, from the book of the laws of Theodosius III, chapter 12 (Codex Theod. lib. III, tit. 12):

“The incestuous shall not be legitimate heirs, but both persons shall be marked with infamy.

By ecclesiastical authority we forbid, as the ecclesiastical canons prohibit, that anyone takes as a spouse a virgin devoted to God. Nor anyone under the habit of religion, or professing the continence of widowhood, or near of kin, or one who might bear the mark of illicit intercourse, by unlawful marriage, or by force, or by consent;

It cannot be a true marriage. It is drawn from a better purpose to a worse, and is perpetrated under the fault of a false name, by incestuous pollution and the uncleanness of fornication.

This crime, if people of either sex attempt to commit it, let them be exiled permanently, completely separated from each other.”

Also, in book VI, chapter 412 (309):

“You should know that he blasphemes God who defiles himself with a woman consecrated to God, or veiled.”

Also, chapter 413 (310):

“If a cleric defiles himself with a veiled woman, or with one consecrated to God, let him be deprived of his honour.”

Also, chapter 414 (311):

“It must be known to all that the bodies of women consecrated to God, through the vow of their own espousal and the words of a priest consecrated to God, are temples, as

confirmed by the testimony of the Scriptures. Those who violate them are sacrilegious, and according to the Apostle are known as sons of perdition (1 Cor. III).”

Chapter IX

This plague not only seizes lay people, whether of higher or lower rank, but truly – which we confess not without shame and with the greatest pain – defiles ecclesiastical dignities. Even the priests, who ought to have cut away the corruption of this disease from others, rot in the filth of lust. Not content with their own shameful ruin alone, they wound the life of good priests by their infamous reputation, when it is said by secular people: “Such are the priests of the Church”.

Giving offence to others, they bring reproach upon the holy ministry, and violate the canonical statutes of the holy Fathers, by which access, frequent association, and cohabitation of clerics with women are forbidden. We are compelled to recall decrees of the earlier Fathers, and, against the ever-new kinds of diseases that are breaking out, to seek new trials of remedies.

We shall now set forth those things concerning such matters, as written by our predecessor of good memory.

Bishop Hincmar,⁴ in an assembly of priests held in the metropolitan city of Reims, in the year from the Incarnation of the Lord 852, in this manner (Hincmar to the priests, ch. 21; from here up to chapter X is Hincmar):

“Concerning the access, frequent association, and cohabitation of clerics with women – which, according to the sacred canons, we specially forbid in all synods – it must be firmly, explicitly, and carefully inquired into by us and by our fellow ministers.

For just as the sacraments are different, according to the condition of the times, for those who preceded the coming of the Lord in the flesh and for those who follow after, yet they return to the religion of one and the same faith and salvation; and, as it is written, ‘Many

⁴ Hincmar of Reims (845-882).

shall pass through, and knowledge shall be multiplied' (Dan. XII). Through the increments of time, both by Himself and also through angels in the Old Testament, but in the New likewise by Himself and through Catholic teachers and masters of the Church, called angels by the testimony of the prophet (Mal. II), there has been an increase in the sublimity and multiplication of precepts.

By Himself indeed the Lord gave commands in paradise to Adam, and after the flood to Noah, and to Abraham gave the command concerning circumcision; but He gave the Law through angels to Moses, the mediator between Himself and the people, as the Apostle shows.

But in the New Testament, incarnate Himself, saying: 'You have heard that it was said: You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say to you: love your enemies' (Matt. V); and: 'Unless your justice shall abound more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven' (ibid.); and: 'It was said to the ancients: Whoever kills shall be liable to judgement' (ibid.), etc.; and through His saints, of whom it is said: 'It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you' (Matt. X).

Through the increments of time He taught that the virtue of chastity should grow, and especially among the ministers of the Church, decreeing in this manner through the mystical Nicene synod (canon 3): 'The great synod has altogether forbidden that neither bishop, nor presbyter, nor deacon, nor anyone at all who is in the clergy, may have a woman brought in to live with him, except perhaps a mother, or sister, or aunt, or only those persons who escape suspicion.'

And from this a law was promulgated by the Christian emperors in this manner (Codex Theodosianus, On Bishops, Churches, and Clerics, law 44): 'Whoever exercise the office of cleric are forbidden to have familiarity with women not of their household; they are

to know that only mothers, sisters, or daughters are granted to them as comforts within their own house.’

But because under the pretext of these persons other women began to be brought in, the holy African canons decreed (Council of Africa, canon 3) that not even bishops or presbyters are to have private access to widows or virgins or to any women whatsoever, unless either clerics are present, or certain grave Christians.

Hence, as blessed Gregory wrote to the ministers of the Roman Church (book VII, indiction 2, letter 39), blessed Augustine did not even consent to live with his sister, saying: ‘Those women who are with my sister are not my sisters.’ And from this St Gregory says: ‘The caution of learned men ought to be a great instruction for us. For it is of unguarded presumption that what a strong man fears, a weaker one does not fear. For he wisely avoids unlawful things who has learned even not to use things that are permitted.’

With the faith still new, clerics were made from those legitimately married, and from those converted from marriage to continence. The Apostle also commands that, if one from among the married is to be chosen, a man of one wife be selected for the highest priesthood (1 Tim. III; Tit. I). From this the Christian emperors decreed a law, saying (Novel of Justinian 123, ch. 29): ‘We also forbid, according to divine rules, that presbyters, deacons, subdeacons, and others enrolled in the clergy who do not have wives, should have a woman in their house, except a mother, daughter, sister, and other persons who escape every complaint.’”

But if anyone, contrary to this observance, shall have a woman in his house who can give rise to suspicion of impropriety, and he has heard from his fellow clerics that he ought not to live with such a woman, and he has been unwilling to expel her from his house, or, an accuser emerging, he has been proved to associate dishonourably with such a woman: then the bishop, according to ecclesiastical canons, shall expel him from the clergy and hand him over to the curia of the city of which he is a cleric.

And, as St Innocent and his predecessor Siricius write (Innocent, letter 2, to Victricius), in former times the priests of God did not depart from the temple in their weekly rotations, as we read of Zechariah, nor did they touch their own house at all – although to them the use of a wife was permitted on account of the succession of offspring, since from another tribe and apart from the seed of Aaron no one was commanded to approach the priesthood. How much more ought these priests or Levites to preserve chastity, to whom either the priesthood or the ministry is without succession, and for whom no day passes in which they are free either from divine sacrifices or from the office of baptism?

Paul writes to lay people, saying: “Abstain for a time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer” (1 Cor. VII). Much more must priests, for whom there is a continual duty of praying and sacrificing, always abstain from such association. And if one of them has been contaminated by carnal concupiscence, with what modesty will he dare to offer sacrifice? Or with what conscience, or by what merit, does he believe himself to be heard, when it is said: “All things are clean to the clean, but to the defiled and unbelieving nothing is clean” (Tit. I)?

And lest anyone say, “If I live with women, my conscience suffices for me,” citing the Apostle: “This is our glory, the testimony of our conscience” (2 Cor. I), let him consider that the same Apostle also says (through whom, as he himself confesses, Christ truly speaks) “Providing good things not only before God, but also before men” (Rom. XII).

As Augustine teaches, the conduct of the saints, to whom the Lord says “Be holy,” must not only be holy, but also cautious, lest perhaps, even if it is not evil through wantonness, it be evil through negligence.

Likewise, the Apostle commands: “That we be without offence to all” (1 Cor. X), “giving no offence to anyone, so that our ministry may not be blamed” (2 Cor. VI). And: “Lest a brother perish in our conscience, for whom Christ died. Thus,” he says, “sinning against the brethren and striking their weak conscience, you sin against Christ” (1 Cor. VIII).

Filled with the Holy Spirit, our holy Fathers established that ministers of the altar should not cohabit with women, nor bring women into their company, lest they either burn with concupiscence, or pollute themselves by most evil consent, and lest they stain the consciences of the weak even by evil suspicion.

Accordingly, we do not trouble ourselves to inquire, through parishioners or neighbours of any presbyter whatsoever, concerning sexual intercourse of presbyters with women. For the old heresy has been abolished, which was called Cynic (that is, canine) on account of its shamelessness, which said that intercourse is natural and therefore ought to be done publicly without shame; whereas we read that the first human beings, after the sin of disobedience, felt concupiscence in their genital members and covered themselves from mutual sight.

The blindness of the human mind in the practice of shameful acts cannot be hidden from the divine, angelic, and heavenly eyes of the saints. Nevertheless, any rustic lying with his own wife, as far as he can, avoids the sight of many. How much more will a presbyter, if he has human sense, take care to conceal an evil deed, on account of which, once revealed, he knows that he would lose not only his ecclesiastical rank but also whatever he possesses in the world?

Therefore, we do not inquire shamelessly into this matter, which even the Apostle, speaking not with a bare but with a veiled name, established among lawfully married people, saying: "Return again to the same" (1 Cor. VII); and: "That no one overreach his brother in this matter" (1 Thess. IV).

But concerning access, frequent association, and cohabitation of presbyters with women against the canonical prohibition we will inquire, through such persons as the holy African canons command (Council of Africa, canons 96, 98). That is, those whom public

laws admit to accusation or to testimony. And those witnesses shall be examined after the example of Daniel, and as the laws command.

If any presbyter, not only in our parish but in our diocese, confesses to, or is convicted by lawful and regular judgement of cohabitation, frequent association, or access with women contrary to the canons – the Apostle says: “If anyone does not obey our word, whether by speech or by letter, mark him, and do not associate with him” (2 Thess. III). By all means, according to the decrees of blessed Gregory, he shall be deposed without restoration of his rank, in accordance with the chapter of the great Pope Leo, in which he says (Letter 1, to the bishops through Campania):

“This admonition of ours makes known that if any of the brethren should go against these constitutions and dare to admit what is forbidden, let him know that he is to be removed from his office. Nor will he be a partner of our communion who was unwilling to be a partner of discipline. Lest there be anything omitted by us, we command that all decretal constitutions, both of blessed memory Innocent and of all our predecessors, promulgated concerning ecclesiastical orders and canonical discipline, be so observed by you that, if anyone should commit anything against them, let him know that pardon will henceforth be denied.”

“Even blessed Augustine wrote thus to his archbishop concerning Abundantius, a presbyter of his parish (Epistle 216):

‘Because he was not walking in the ways of the servants of God, he began not to have a good reputation. I was alarmed by this, yet did not rashly believe anything. I became more anxious, and applied myself to see whether I might arrive at indications of his bad conduct. First, I discovered he had misappropriated money of a certain rustic entrusted to him for wine, so that he was able to give no plausible account of it. Then he was convicted and confessed that, having no cleric with him, he had dined and supped with a woman of bad

reputation, and had stayed in the neighbourhood and in the same house. What he denied I left to God; what he was not permitted to conceal I judged.”

As Gregory decreed, inquiry shall be made by suitable witnesses, as we have set forth above, under oath, concerning a presbyter of bad reputation; and those who are to swear shall swear in this manner:

“Concerning this matter about which you question me, regarding this presbyter, of what I know thereof, knowingly I will neither lie to you, nor conceal the truth; so help me God and these saints of God.”

After this oath, he must be questioned in this manner:

“The holy canons command that a presbyter not have such access, frequent association, or cohabitation with women, from which bad suspicion and a reputation unbecoming to a priest may arise. Tell me whether you have seen, or know for certain, that such access or frequent association or cohabitation with women exists with this presbyter, from which bad suspicion may exist and bad reputation may arise – by that oath have just sworn – so that you neither conceal the truth nor speak a lie concerning it.”

Excepting accusers, let there be seven suitable witnesses who shall speak the truth under oath, of whom six shall swear, and the seventh, if the condition or quality of the person permits, shall go forth to judgement that those six have spoken the truth under oath. Many have already been found among us who, having been hired for a price, have perjured themselves.

And if in this manner a presbyter shall have been convicted of improper cohabitation with women, he shall be deposed, as Pope Zosimus decreed (Epistle to Hesychius, chapter 2):

“Let whoever has neglected this, setting aside the authority of the Fathers and of the Apostolic See, know that it must be strictly punished by us, so that he may not doubt that the standing of his office does not remain to him, if he thinks that this can be attempted with

impunity after so many prohibitions. For whatever is so often usurped though forbidden is done with the intention of contumely.”

It is established in the Law, and confirmed in the Gospel, that every word shall stand in the mouth of two or three witnesses (Matt. XVIII). The Apostle commands Timothy (1 Tim. V) – in whose person, as Leo says, he instructed the whole number of the priests of Christ – that an accusation against a presbyter is not to be received unless under two or three witnesses. The sacred Council of Nicaea commands that a neophyte bishop, reproved by two or three witnesses, abstain from the clergy (Canon II).

In the history of Susanna (Dan. XIII) we read that two witnesses who seemed suitable bore false testimony, and likewise in the history of Naboth (3 Kings XXI), and indeed in the history of the Passion of the Lord (Matt. XXVI). Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God, says: “By me the founders of laws decree what is just” (Prov. VIII), etc.

St Gregory frequently commands in his letters that the cause of ministers of the Church be defined legally and regularly. St Augustine, expounding the sentence of the Apostle (“If anyone is named a brother who is a fornicator” [1 Cor. V]), says:

“The Apostle did not wish a man to be judged by a man according to the arbitrariness of suspicion, or even by an extraordinary and usurped judgement, but rather according to the law of God, according to the order of the Church, whether having confessed of his own accord, or having been accused and convicted – wishing that ‘naming’ be understood as that which is made against someone when sentence is pronounced in judicial order and with integrity. If naming alone suffices, many innocents must be condemned, since often a crime is falsely named against someone.”

In accusations of presbyters, the authority of the laws concerning the number of suitable witnesses must be followed. Namely, that seven suitable witnesses, as we have said

above, shall be required. If reason or cause compels, fourteen or twenty-one witnesses may be sought, so that the truth, once revealed, may be shown.

(Hincmar, *ibid.*, chapter 23)

If bad reputation has arisen from verisimilitude throughout the parish concerning a presbyter, and accusers and legal witnesses are lacking, lest the hearts of the weak be struck by the bad reputation of the presbyter, and lest our ministry be brought into disrepute, and lest presbyters, becoming more secure, fall more freely into sin, according to the decree of Gregory the Younger (Epistle 9), let there be an oath set in the midst. Let the presbyter of bad reputation, in the oath of his purgation, have as witness the one whom he will also have as judge. (Hincmar, *ibid.*, ch. 24.)

We read in the letters of blessed Gregory that a priest often defamed offered only an oath in the purgation of his reputation. Legal, apostolic, and canonical authority accepts the testimony of three witnesses for condemnation, so it does not seem beside the point if it is accepted for purgation. In sacred history also, and in the epistle of blessed Gregory, we read that blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles, when he was reproached by the faithful because he had entered among the Gentiles, appeased them by a humble explanation, and even in the cause of his reproach employed witnesses: “And there came with me these six brothers” (Acts II).

The Carthaginian canons decree (Council of Carthage, ch. 20) that if presbyters or deacons are accused, their own bishop, together with colleagues from neighbouring places in the lawful number (six with him in the case of a presbyter, three in the case of a deacon) shall examine their case.

We say that it accords with authority that if a presbyter has been defamed and accusers or suitable witnesses are lacking, according to the quality and magnitude of the cause and of the person, and the usefulness and safeguarding of the hearts of the weak, either

alone, or with two other witnesses, or with six other witnesses, he should purge himself by oath from the bad opinion. Nor is this contrary to the decree of Gregory the Younger, if more witnesses are required for the purgation of a defamed presbyter; because the same pontiff, writing to Boniface, bishop of Mainz, through the presbyter Denuald, says that if the defamed presbyter cannot be proved by suitable witnesses, let there be an oath set in the midst. He did not define whether he should swear alone or together with others. (Hincmar, *ibid.*, ch. 25.)

It is written (Job IV) that in the angels wickedness has been found also; and according to the testimony of the prophet Malachi (Mal. II) and the evangelist John (Apoc. I), priests are called angels. We have experienced that certain persons have conspired together to help one another in their purgation, but in truth to harm one another, just as presbyters full of iniquitous intent conspired against Susanna (Dan. XIII). It does not seem incongruous that, with a trustworthy envoy of the bishop present, presbyters who offer themselves in the purgation of a defamed priest, and together with him to the oath, should undergo an examination through the advocate of the defamed presbyter, that they may not lose themselves to God in the oath. We have already discovered certain persons here to have been convicted. (Hincmar, *ibid.*, ch. 26.)

As St Augustine says, new kinds of diseases compel the seeking of new remedies, instructed by the aforesaid authorities, not prejudging, if there be any, the opinions of those who understand more soundly. We have judged that these matters should be conducted in this manner: so that we may both recall presbyters from the precipice of lust, and in some way vindicate the oft-repeated prohibition of the canons from transgressors, and that we may not be judged guilty of lax correction, just as the priest Eli was condemned because he corrected his sons more sluggishly and lightly than he ought to have done, and both he and his sons perished (1 Sam. II). For, as Leo says (Epistle 3 to Januarius), "The faults of lower ranks are to be referred to none more than to slothful and negligent rulers, who often nourish a great

pestilence while they neglect to apply the necessary medicine.” And St Gregory says: “He who does not correct what must be cut away commits it.” And again Leo, writing to Bishop Januarius, says to each of us: “Let you not doubt that we, if those things which we decree for the safeguarding of the canons and for the integrity of the faith are neglected, must be stirred more vehemently.”

As Pope Hilarius says, one sins no less against the sanctions of holy traditions than one rushes into injury against the Lord himself. How those are to be dealt with who through contempt sin against the sanctions of holy traditions, or rush into injury against the Lord himself, St Leo decrees to Bishop Rusticus:

“For those who have fallen, private withdrawal is to be sought in order to obtain the mercy of God, where their satisfaction, if it be worthy, may also be fruitful. From this rule of discernment promulgated by the Holy Spirit it is not permitted to us to depart by any undue leniency; for although compassion is owed to neighbours, rectitude is owed to vices.”

Holy Scripture always joins rectitude to simplicity, because simplicity without rectitude is folly. Simplicity towards vices, as Catholic teachers say, is lax and foolish; and rectitude toward neighbours, without the simplicity of mercy, is harsh and severe.

Chapter X

To every order of the faithful we announce that lust must be guarded against most carefully, the Lord commanding through the Gospel: "Let your loins be girded" (Luke XII). It is necessary for us to resist all other vices with all our strength, but against lust it is not so much expedient to oppose it as to flee it.

Hence the apostle Paul commands: "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man commits is outside the body; but he who commits fornication sins against his own body" (1 Cor. VI); and again: "Fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. XIII); and when he says: "You are the temple of God, which is holy" (1 Cor. III); likewise: "You were bought with a great price, glorify and bear God in your body" (1 Cor. VI); far be it that, by a brief delight of the miserable flesh, taking the members of Christ, we make them the members of a harlot.

For lust of the flesh, being hateful to God, is evident to all good men. It is in itself disgraceful. Its first snares are of the eyes, the second of words; but he who is not seized by the eyes can resist words, and he who restrains the delight of lustful suggestion does not pass to the consent of lust.

Lust is strengthened by wealth, inflamed by excessive satiety of the belly, and pierces the soul with the spur of drunkenness. Chastity is kept with difficulty amid pleasures. The satiety of food and drink moves the mind to play, the flesh to lust.

Nor, because these are the pleasures of the powerful, should the caution of the poor be less; for both in silk and in rags, lust exercises the right of its power: it neither fears the purple of kings, nor scorns the squalor of beggars.

These things destroy the life of the soul and remove the heart, and bring blindness to the mind, weaken the body itself, and precipitate it broken into miserable old age. Unless the merciful hand of the only God, extending most benign clemency, raises it up, and causes it to

recover before death comes, it plunges the man into Hell, and drags him into the punishments of Tartarus. Woe to him who has reached the limits of lust during life.

It is necessary for us to obey the wholesome counsel of Scripture, which admonishes: “Turn not after your lusts, and turn away from your will” (Ecclus. XVIII); and again: “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, and evil concupiscence” (Col. III), etc.

To all ranks, all orders, and to both sexes we earnestly entreat that they flee putrid lust, and, with loins girded, hold the virtue of chastity; knowing for certain that the apostolic voice is most true, which cries terrifically among other things: “Neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor male prostitutes shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. VI).

Chapter XI

Among the other duties of our admonition, abominable perjuries must be restrained. Not only those done by the invention of factions, or by the desire to deceive or mislead others, but also those which, from depraved custom, are now habitually admitted in individual cases by those known to swear falsely as if truthfully.

On account of those slow to believe, or to faith in the Word, who also gravely sin in that they compel themselves speaking to swear, an oath becomes necessary. This must have truth, judgement, and justice, with the Lord saying through the prophet Jeremiah: “And you shall swear, ‘As the Lord lives,’ in truth, and in judgement, and in justice” (Jer. IV). If these are lacking, it will not be an oath, but perjury.

The old law permitted swearing, but prohibited perjuring: “You shall not take,” it says, “the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes the name of the Lord his God in vain” (Exod. X).

With this command understood more deeply, we know it commands us not to consider Christ the Son of God the Father, calling Him a mere man and depriving Him of divine honour. Yet in simple understanding, he takes the name of his God in vain who in any trivial matter, and in swearing towards his neighbour, in a matter unnecessary, or in idle speech, does not fear to take His holy name in such vanity.

In the New Testament the Lord says: “You have heard that it was said to the ancients: You shall not swear. But I say to you, swear not at all” (Matt. V), etc.

Therefore, the evangelical truth does not accept the oath, since every faithful word is for swearing.

Many swear continually, yet do not fear perjuring themselves by God and all the saints. Some swear by the bodies of the saints, by their own soul, or that of their mother or

father, or someone dear to them, undervaluing the salvation of their own soul and of their kin. Some swear by the whole world, disregarding the Lord's precept: "You shall not swear, neither by heaven, nor by earth" (*ibid.*); for whoever swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God, and by Him who sits upon it.

Whoever wishes to avoid the crime of perjury should not hold to the use of swearing. Scripture says: "Do not accustom your mouth to an oath" (*Eccli. XXIX*); and again: "A man who swears much will be filled with iniquity, and will not depart from the house of that plague" (*ibid.*). Hence Bishop Isidore says (*lib. II Sentent., cap. 31*): "Just as he cannot lie who does not speak, so he cannot perjure who does not swear. Therefore, he who fears to sin should never swear."

But what of those who, in order to deceive others, lie, or by artifice of words perjure themselves rather than deceive another? The Lord, the witness of conscience, regards this in the same way as he who is sworn to understands it. Hence St Augustine says: "They are not perjurers who, by keeping their words, fulfil what was expected of them when they swore. They are perjurers who, even keeping their words, deceive the expectations of those to whom they swore."

Alas, how many crimes such wretched people are bound by: transgressors of the whole sacred law, old and new, because they speak falsehood, because they take the name of their God in vain, because they ensnare their neighbour by deceit, and perjure themselves. Such people, unless they perform due penance, seem to carry dead, wretched souls in their living bodies.

Christian kings have also established that oaths are not taken lightly. In Book V, chapter 349 (197): "We wish that oaths not be taken quickly; but let each judge first truly know the case, so that truth may not be hidden from him, lest they come to the oath too easily." Likewise concerning the avoidance of perjury, in Book V, chapter 276: "We

command that perjuries be avoided, and that witnesses not be admitted to an oath before being examined.” And further: “If anyone is convicted of perjury, let him lose his hand, or redeem it.”

Since it is necessary in order to avoid perjury, we wish it to be known to all that a certain oath is in no way to be observed by Christians: namely, an oath by which any evil is recklessly or even knowingly promised. If someone should promise perpetual fidelity with an adulteress; or if someone, in order not to return to peace, or to commit some outrage, binds himself by oath. It is indeed more tolerable not to fulfil the oath than to remain in that which he has promised badly.

And lest someone say that we recommend perjury, or that this is none or little, let the Council of Lleida be cited at chapter 74: “He who binds himself by oath, so that as a litigant he may in no way return to peace with anyone, shall for perjury be separated from the communion of the Body and Blood of the Lord for one year. He shall absolve his guilt by alms and tears, and by as much fasting as he can; but let him hasten to charity, which covers a multitude of sins.”

Chapter XII

Our discourse concerns those who are discordant, irascible, and contentious, and we have judged it necessary also to show how harmful these vices are to the soul, and how much they are to be avoided by all Christians. The Lord says in the Gospel: “Woe to the world because of scandals; for it is necessary that scandals come: nevertheless, woe to the man through whom the scandal comes” (Matt. XVIII).

It is necessary, as blessed Jerome says, that scandals occur in this world, and that each person lies open to scandals through his own vice, yet woe to that man who, by his own vice, causes that which must happen in the world to happen through himself. Hence Solomon says: “A perverse man stirs up quarrels, and a talkative man separates princes” (Prov. XVI). Likewise: “An evil man is always seeking quarrels; but a cruel angel shall be sent against him” (Prov. XVII).

The cruel angel is an unclean spirit, sent by the Lord against sinners and seekers of quarrels, to afflict them in the present life, or after death to snatch them away to destruction. Solomon says: “An angry man provokes strife; but he who is patient calms those that have been stirred up” (Prov. XV). Likewise: “He who devises discord loves quarrels” (Prov. XVII).

With such persons God is not present, since, as the Apostle Paul testifies: “God is not a God of dissension, but of peace” (I Cor. XIV). And God has called us in peace. Hence the gentle teacher of the Church, Gregory, says: God is in unity, and those merit to have His grace who do not divide themselves from one another through the scandals of sects.

The Lord says in the Gospel: “If you offer your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before the altar, and go be reconciled to your brother” (Matt. V).

The aforesaid teacher, showing how grave the fault of discord is, says: A gift is not accepted by God unless discord is first driven from the heart.

Concerning the irascible the Lord says: “Everyone angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment” (ibid.). Hence James says: “The anger of man does not work the justice of God” (Jas. I); and the Apostle Paul admonishes us, saying: “Let not the sun set upon your anger” (Eph. IV); and Solomon says: “Do not be quick to anger, for anger rests in the bosom of a fool” (Eccl. VII). Likewise: “Who can endure a spirit that is easily provoked to anger?” (Prov. XVIII). And likewise: “Anger has no mercy, nor raging fury; and who can bear the assault of one enraged?” (Prov. XVII).

Anger must be restrained, discord must be driven away, quarrelling must be curbed, so that we may not only not provoke by our own vice, but also, when provoked and grievously injured, according to the voice of Paul, we may be patient, bearing with one another and forgiving ourselves, if anyone has a complaint against another. As God in Christ has forgiven us, so also let us forgive one another what is owed to us, so that what is owed by us may be forgiven (Col. III).

We must make such a pact with God in prayer, saying: “Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors” (Luke II). Hence [anger] must be most carefully avoided. For whoever does not forgive the one who does him injury, does not make prayer for himself, but brings a curse upon himself; and in vain does he make God favourable, who neglects to be reconciled to his neighbour. Such persons are separated from Him who is peace, and they are rightly separated from the Church, unless they lay aside enmities, as the Council of Agde decrees, chapter 31 (3):

“It has likewise been decided that, as often happens, whoever have dissented among themselves through hatred or long-standing quarrel, and have been unable to be recalled to peace by prolonged effort, shall first be rebuked by the priests of the city. But if by pernicious

obstinacy they refuse to lay aside enmities, let them be driven from the assembly of the Church by most just excommunication.”

And in the Council of Carthage (IV) in chapter 93: “The offerings of brethren who are at variance are not to be received into the treasury.”

Those whose offering is not received into the treasury of the present Church, without doubt, are excluded from the fellowship of the heavenly treasury, namely the kingdom of God.

Chapter XIII

We admonish that discord and anger, together with quarrelling, be restrained greatly, because from them we know there is begotten offspring hateful to God and to His lovers.

The abominable crime of homicide; how grave that crime is, and how great misfortunes attend those who commit it, is evident to all sound in understanding. We wish to trace its wretched origin more deeply and to make it known to all, so that, when all have learned that its root is deadly, they may in no way touch it, if that can be done, or, if perchance, as is customary, it should intrude itself, they may at once, at the very first contact, remove its most bitter poison from their lips before they are infected.

The first-created humans, created with such a quality of nature that they were capable both of immortality and of death, after the guilt of the first transgression lost the ability not to die by their own will, and no longer retained the ability to die voluntarily, or, as we might say, acquired the inability not to die. Punished with death: whatever might arise from their stock would be liable to the same penalty, and what succeeded to them as a punishment because of sin would follow in those born from them by nature.

The serpentine envy of the ancient enemy did not rest here. What had poured itself into the forbidden apple so that it might sweeten the throats of the parents, having been transferred into the succeeding offspring, passed into the innermost hearts of the children.

By his agency death thus entered into the world. But it nevertheless seemed to him to have accomplished too little, if he were now to allow mortals to await the end of their due death. Hence (mournful to say) expanding himself to such an extent and pursuing the innocence of the first condition, he poured himself out so far that not even those who were the first born upon the earth, brothers of the same womb, had peace and concord with one another. While they still existed alone with their parents as masters of the whole world, one,

through envy, slew the other. Forestalling the moment of his due end, before the final bounds of a mature life, he forced him to return to his earth.

God brought him under a curse, and condemned him for so great a crime to sevenfold vengeance, so that he himself, up to the seventh generation, should wander and flee, paying the penalties of his fratricide and envy. His offspring likewise in the seventh generation should be subject to the curse. When the second murderer, Lamech struck (with the added crime of a deed forbidden and punished by a curse), with added and multiplied vengeance, it was seventy times sevenfold, according to the interpretation of his name. The human heart, corrupted and infected with ancestral poison, as the Lord Himself says, is inclined to evil from its youth (Gen. XIII), and cannot be restrained from impiety, even by fear of punishment.

But the more the offspring of the human race increased, the more the magnitude of cruel murders and all crimes grew together, having taken its beginning from the envy of the devil. Those who are of his party imitate him.

What was not restrained by divine fear had to be prohibited by the law, both the old and the new, both ecclesiastical and secular, and, after being prohibited, when perpetrated, justly punished by punishment. Let us recount again what was anciently decreed concerning the insane perpetrators of murders.

In the Decalogue of the old law the Lord commands through Moses: "You shall not kill" (Exod. XX). Likewise: "Whoever strikes a man and kills him shall surely die" (Exod. XXI). In the Gospel, the Lord Himself says: "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not kill; but whoever kills shall be liable to judgement'" (Matt. V).

When anger is taken away, what place is left for homicide? For when we are commanded to offer the other cheek to the one who strikes, to love our enemies, and to pray

for those who persecute us, every occasion not only of homicide, but also of that from which it is born – namely anger – is removed.

But who murderers are, and of what sort, and whose children they are, and whose works they do, the Lord makes manifest when speaking to the Jews. He says: “You seek to kill me, because my word has no place in you” (John VIII). As if He were to say: It has no place in your heart, because it is not received by your heart. For if it were received, it would receive; but it would receive unto salvation, not unto destruction. Likewise: “You do what you have seen with your father” (ibid.).

What sort of things they saw with their father He explains, when He openly shows who their father is – namely the one whom they have imitated, not the one by whom they were created. Likewise: “You do the works of your father” (ibid.).

When they (akin to certain wretched persons, Christian in name but diabolical in deed) boasted of having the one God as their father, saying: “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, God” (ibid.), they heard: “If God were your Father, you would indeed love me” (ibid.). As if He were to say: You say God is your Father; acknowledge me at least as your brother.

Would that we Christians might hear this which the Jews were unwilling to hear.

If we truly wish to glory in the grace of the fatherhood of the heavenly Father, and to be His adopted sons, let us love with our whole heart our brother, the Lord Jesus Christ, the true and proper Son of God. Let us also love our neighbour, according to His command, as ourselves. Let us recognise the voice of His speech, as His sheep do: lest He reproach us with what He said to the Jews: “Why,” He says, “do you not recognise my speech? Because you are not able to hear my word” (ibid.); and whence is this? “You,” He says, “are from your father the devil, and you wish to do the desires of your father” (ibid.).

If He were asked what those desires are: “He was a murderer from the beginning, and did not stand in the truth.” “He was a murderer from the beginning.” Indeed, in the first man. From that point he was a murderer, from when murder came to be. He envied the first man and killed man. Those who, by imitating him, do such things, or desire to do them, are indeed his sons. With such a father, unless they come to their senses, they will inherit the punishment of eternal fire, prepared for him and his angels and his sons.

The occasion presently offers itself for us to speak about liars. Let us hear the Lord Himself showing us who is held to be the father of lying and of human falsehood. For when He had said of the devil, “He was a murderer from the beginning,” He added whence: “And,” He says, “he did not stand in the truth, because the truth is not in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and its father.” That is, the father of his own lie which he himself generated, because he did not hear it from anyone. Whoever among men receives a lie from another and speaks it is a liar, but he is not its father.

Liars see and hear from their father the devil when he speaks a lie. Born from himself, he teaches that it be brought forth from the mouths of men, so that through that lie he may kill their souls, as Scripture indeed testifies: “The mouth that lies kills the soul” (Wis. I), and for all liars their portion will be in the lake of fire burning with sulphur.

The Apostle Paul admonishes all: “Do not,” he says, “lie to one another” (Col. III). And likewise: “Putting away falsehood, speak the truth each one with his neighbour” (Eph. IV). And Solomon: “A lying tongue is an abomination to the Lord; but those who act faithfully please Him” (Prov. XII). And again: “A faithful witness delivers souls; the deceitful man brings forth lies” (Prov. XIV). Likewise: “He who speaks what he knows is a judge of justice; but he who lies is a deceitful witness” (Prov. XII). Hence Jesus son of Sirach: “Do not,” he says, “be willing to lie any lie” (Ecclus. VII).

The blessed father Augustine says there are eight kinds of lying, but in none of them ought perfect men to lie. Hence Isidore: “Every lie must be most carefully avoided,” and likewise: “Flee every kind of lie with the greatest care. For everything that departs from truth is iniquity. Be truthful in word; deceive no one by lying; do not speak one thing and do another; do not say one thing and hold another in your mind.” And in the letter of Pope Callistus: “He who is faithful wills nothing evil. If anyone is faithful, let him see that he does not speak falsely or lay snares for anyone.” The Psalm says: “You will destroy all who speak a lie” (Ps. V).

If you ask why: because it is contrary to the Truth, which is Christ. For it pertains to that which is not, not to that which is. If what is is spoken, truth is spoken; but if what is not is spoken, it is a lie. Therefore, He says, “You will destroy those who speak a lie,” because, departing from that which is, they have turned aside to that which is not.

Some wish this to be understood not of every lie, but only of heretics. But we, fleeing from the father of lying, run to the Father of truth. Let us speak truth from heart and mouth with our neighbours, so that we may deserve to share in eternal truth, and be coeternal with the Father, reigning with Him forever.

Let us return to murderers, who are said to have one father together with liars, that is, the devil. Let them attend to what the Lord said to His servant Noah after the flood: “I will require the blood of your souls from the hand of man; from the hand of a man and of his brother I will require his soul. Whoever sheds human blood, his blood shall be shed for him; for man was made in the image of God” (Gen. IX).

By which sentence, although homicide is prohibited under threat, nevertheless lest any of the foolish think that the soul of man is constituted in the blood (which is immortal, and which is therefore so named as if *anaema*, that is, far removed from blood) let him know that “the blood of souls” is to be understood typologically as that very life-force by which

men are nourished, sustained, and live in the flesh through the soul. The blood of man is not believed to belong to the substance of the soul, although elsewhere the lawgiver says: “The soul of all flesh is in the blood” (Lev. XVII). This was not said so that the soul (properly a spiritual substance) should be this; but because through blood the soul, as we have said, is signified typologically, that is, an invisible reality through a visible thing. Just as also this: “The rock was Christ” (I Cor. X): not because it was this, but because it signified this.

In this sense also: “Whoever sheds human blood, his blood shall also be shed” (Gen. IX). Many indeed have shed blood, and their blood has not been shed. Many also are killed by poison, or hanging, or by any other means, and their blood is not shed. When the one who kills has not shed blood, how will the Lord shed his blood? Because, as we have said, the blood of man must be understood as his very vital principle by which he subsists. Whoever sheds it (that is, whoever kills a man by any kind of death) his blood shall be shed (that is, his vital portion). Just as he took away temporal life from the one he killed, so by sinning he took away eternal life from himself. The soul that sins shall die.

Similar is that which is said to Peter: “All who have taken the sword shall perish by the sword” (Matt. XXVI). All who unjustly kill a man perish by the same killing in their soul. God made man in His image, in that He wished him to remain unto eternity, therefore He requires the souls of men from those by whom they are driven from their bodies.

Let deceitful men and false witnesses hear the Psalmist saying: “The man of blood and deceit the Lord will abhor” (Ps. V). Likewise: “Men of blood and deceit shall not halve their days” (Ps. LIV); and because the Lord abhors such men, the Church also will abhor them. Hence thus it was decreed concerning them in the Council of Agde, chapter thirty-five: “Therefore we have judged that murderers and false witnesses are to be removed from ecclesiastical communion, unless they wash away the crimes committed by the satisfaction of penitence.” And in the Council of Ancyra, chapter twenty-one: “Those who have committed

murder voluntarily shall continually submit themselves to penitence, but shall attain perfection at the end of life.”

But concerning those who commit homicide unwillingly, in the same council, chapter twenty-two: “Concerning homicides not committed voluntarily, the earlier decision ordered that perfection be attained after seven years of penitence, but the second that the period of five years be completed.” And concerning murderous sorcerers, in the Council of Elvira, chapter six: “If anyone by sorcery kills another, because he could not accomplish the crime without idolatry, communion is not to be granted to him even at the end.”

This crime of homicide is now more frequently perpetrated among our people. Not only the blood of ordinary Christians, but even of the very ministers of Christ, indeed even of the highest priests, is rashly shed. The fear of God, and the observance of the sacred law, both old and new, and priestly reverence, and also the decrees of the canons are trampled underfoot. Every ecclesiastical order is thrown into confusion by such men, and is held in mockery. Those who are darkened have filled the houses of the earth with iniquities.

What are we to do, when holy religion is annulled, while right and law are confounded? It remains only to cry out to the Lord with the Psalmist and to say: “Arise, O God, judge your cause; remember your reproaches, those which are from the foolish all the day long” (Ps. LXIII).

Nevertheless, let those whom divine fear does not restrain at least be checked by human fear. Let the edicts of emperors be set before them. In the book of capitularies VI, chapter 90: “Whoever kills a monk or cleric shall lay aside arms and serve God in a monastery all the days of his life, never to return to the world, and shall undergo seven years of public penitence.” From the same book, chapter twenty-eight (97): “If anyone kills or maims a priest or deacon or monk, according to the statutes of the earlier capitularies which are added to the Salic law, let him make composition [compensation] and pay our ban, that is,

sixty solidi, to us, and lay aside arms, and serve God in a monastery under severe penitence all the days of his life, never thereafter to serve in the world or among seculars, nor to be joined to a wife.”

Likewise in book VII, chapter 225 (18): “Concerning murderers we have ordered this to be observed: that whoever with rash daring kills another without cause shall be struck with danger of life and shall never be able to redeem himself with a payment. And if it comes about that anyone descends to composition [compensation], let none of his relatives or friends assist him at all; and if he does so, let him pay his own *wergild* in full.”

Such strict judgement is pronounced concerning these matters. What shall be decreed concerning the killing of bishops? This perhaps seems omitted here: because after the cruelty of the pagan persecution of Christians was put to rest, such a monstrous crime was very rare among Christians. How it should be repented of or punished was not defined by this law. Only this much is found among the other writings of the Capitularies, book V, chapter 261: that whoever kills a bishop is judged culpable for nine hundred solidi.

How vengeance ought to be taken in such cases (it is not the vengeance of man that is sought, but of God) lest, as far as human judgement is concerned, so great a crime seem to remain unpunished, and lest just judgment be brought upon those who ought to have been God’s avengers (they avenge their own injuries more severely, but those of God lightly or not at all) let the king see to it. By judging rightly concerning such matters, he shall fulfil his name by deeds. Let his dukes and counts see to it, who bear the sword of God for the vengeance of evildoers, of whom the Apostle says: “Rulers are not a terror to good work, but to evil. Do you wish not to fear authority? Do good, and you will have praise from it. For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, fear; for he does not bear the sword without cause. He is God’s minister, an avenger in wrath against the one who does evil” (Rom. XIII).

And let them look to themselves and to their subjects, according to the example of Moses the servant of God, who joined himself to God's vengeance, armed. He encouraged the sons of Levi, though he was most gentle, in punishing certain idolaters. He raged against these as if with fury, commanding his men: "Let each man put his sword upon his thigh" (Exod. XXXII). And again: "Go and return from gate to gate, and let each one kill his brother and friend and neighbour" – lest the wrath of God rage against the whole people.

For if the king, and those charged with this task, in any way neglect the judgement of God, they themselves will see to it. Firm stands the sentence of the blessed Apostle Paul, in whom Christ Himself, the Truth, was speaking: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and injustice of men, and of those who hold the truth of God in injustice" (Rom. I); and a little later: "Who, although they knew the justice of God, did not understand" – that is, they did not wish to understand – "that those who do such things are worthy of death. Not only those who do them, but also those who consent to those who do them." And again: "We know the judgement of God is upon those who do such things" (Rom. II).

But concerning such men (if perhaps, in their final moments, they come to their senses, and with heart-felt sorrow seek pardon for grave offences), lest we seem to shut the door of God's mercy, which cannot be closed, and to despair of His mercy for anyone (which may it never be), or to add death to the dead, we by no means say that penitence should be denied. For we believe God to be merciful, most ready to come to the aid of the wretched who flee to the harbour of His kindness, inviting all to repentance and crying out through the prophet: "I do not will the death of the sinner, but that he turn and live" (Ezek. XXXIII).

The Apostle testifies that he acted with regard to those who suffered shipwreck concerning the faith (that is, who erred in the faith by living wickedly) writing to Timothy:

“Of whom are, he says, Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan,⁵ that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1 Tim. V).

But if they shall persevere in their malice, and despise the riches of the goodness of God, and of His patience and long-suffering, according to their hardness and impenitent heart, storing up for themselves wrath on the day of wrath and of the revelation of the just judgement of God, who will render to each according to his works: they are now not delivered by us to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved. Rather they have wholly delivered themselves to Satan, so that they may perish with him on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. We also, together with the whole Church of Christ, because we neither ought nor are able, will communicate with them neither living nor dead.

Moreover, according to the power bestowed upon us in blessed Peter and the other apostles, to whom it was said: “Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven” (Matt. XVIII), we bind them with the bond of that anathema. According to the word of Paul – because they do not love our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. XVI), nay rather they hate and persecute Him, and have killed the Christ of the Lord, the one who bore His name with sacred anointing and acted in His stead – let each who has perpetrated this most wicked crime, and whoever consents to them by favouring or communicating with them, be anathema maranatha, that is, condemned until the Lord returns, or destruction. Namely, as has been said, condemned on the day of judgement, when the Lord shall come.

But may the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us, and with His whole Church.

Amen.

⁵ That is, excommunicated.

Chapter XIV

There has been discourse among us concerning sacrilegious persons, where we showed how grave that crime is and by what penalty a sacrilegist is justly punished.

Nevertheless, among our own people this most evil custom has taken root – that when the bishop of a church has died, the ecclesiastical goods are immediately seized by whosoever are the more powerful, as though they had been the bishop’s own, whereas even if they were his, this would be done against all law. We grieve, knowing this crime of sacrilege to be so monstrous and so often committed.

Lest it be further presumed by anyone, by the authority of God and of His saints who reign with Him in heaven, and also by our episcopal ministry, to which the Lord, though we are unworthy, granted power in His apostles: *“Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven”* (Matt. 18), we forbid it.

Hence, among the other canonical constitutions concerning this matter, in the Council of Valence, chapter 2, it is written:

“This also has pleased [the council], that when a bishop has been summoned from this world by the Lord, the clergy must refrain from any household goods in the house of the church or of the bishop – books, provisions, utensils, vessels, crops, flocks, animals, or absolutely anything – and that rapacious hands seize nothing after the manner of robbers. And unless they are restrained by the authority of the canons, they shall be compelled, by the severity of the metropolitan or of all the bishops of the province, to restore everything they have seized to its former state, so that under this just constitution the future bishop or steward shall not be deprived of necessities. And in order that this be more securely observed while justice remains in force, according to the constitutions of the Council of Reims (chapter 5),

when a bishop departs from the body, the bishop nearest to him shall come, who, after the funeral rites have been celebrated according to custom, shall immediately exercise the most strict care of that church, lest anything be permitted before the ordination of the future bishop for the subversion or plundering by the remaining clergy.

A more certain inspection and a most faithful inventory, if it can be done, shall be carried out within the octave of the deceased, under the diligence of the present bishop; thereafter the orderly description having been made shall be brought to the knowledge of the metropolitan, so that by his choice such a person may be appointed for the governance of the ecclesiastical house as may dispense the customary stipends to the clergy, and may be able, if delay occurs in the ordination of a bishop, to render an account of the goods entrusted to him to the metropolitan at fitting times. Under this wholesome constitution, the clergy, fully content with their stipends, may not plunder the labours of the departing bishop, and the future pontiff may not succeed to an empty house of the church with sorrow. Rather he may rejoice in what has been left by his predecessor, and himself minister to others.”

Likewise, chapter 3:

“In like manner it shall be declared to the parents and relatives of the deceased bishop, if he has died intestate, that without the knowledge of the metropolitan or the bishops of the province they shall seize nothing of the property of the deceased, lest perhaps among hereditary goods they usurp something belonging to the church or mixed with it. They shall wait until the ordination of the future bishop, or if it be long delayed, they shall have recourse to the admonition of the metropolitan.

But if anyone, forgetful of divine fear, whether cleric or layman, shall attempt with wicked intent to act against these holy synodal decrees, let him be deprived both of communion and of fellowship with the Church; for it is hard that he should share in that which he does not fear to despoil, unless perhaps, corrected by a better spirit, when he ceases

from his presumption, he recovers pardon. But if anyone reasonably and modestly claims what is lawfully owed to him, let neither the thing nor the account be denied to him by the metropolitan or by one to whom he has entrusted the matter, without any punitive action. All these canons likewise bind all who, both in the past and in the future, have seized and plundered the goods of the church or of a bishop.”

Likewise, chapter 4:

“This also we decree with provident counsel: that because the funerals of holy bishops are often delayed through the absence of the bishop entrusted with the care, so that the venerable body of the pontiff, buried too late, is wholly exposed to insult, the bishop who after the death of his brother is accustomed to come to bury him should not delay, when admonished, to visit him while still sick and yet in the body. Thus he may rejoice more fully in the recovery of the priest, or at least may admonish his brother concerning the ordering of his household, and bring their prudent will into effect; and when he departs from the world, after the sacrifice has been offered to God for his commendation, let him be handed over immediately to burial with the utmost diligence, and let the things above constituted be fulfilled canonically without delay.

But if, as often happens, a bishop has departed by a sudden death, and the neighbouring priests cannot be present from afar, the lifeless little body of the priest shall remain for only one day together with its night. It shall not be without the gathering of brothers and religious persons, or the vigil of those chanting psalms, having been kept by the presbyters with all diligence. Placed apart in a coffin, it shall not immediately be buried, but shall be honourably commended, until, without delay, an invited bishop is present, by whom it may be solemnly entombed as is fitting. Thus both the occasion of injury may be removed and the ancient custom in the burial of priests may be observed.”

Likewise, in the synodal decree enacted in the city of Toledo (Seventh Council of Toledo, canon 3), it is read:

“Those things which pertain to propriety are often unfulfilled because of the sloth of certain persons. It is known what dignity is to be preserved by the canons in the funerals of a dying bishop, and to the tradition of the ancient custom we add only this:

If any priest, according to the statutes of the Council of Valence, when warned to come to the mortal remains of a dying bishop, delays with sluggish will, upon the appeal of the clergy of the departing bishop before the synod or before the metropolitan bishop, for the space of one year he shall have no licence to celebrate Mass or to receive communion. Presbyters or other clerics who have held a higher place of honour in that church whose bishop has died, if found slow in solicitude for the funerals of one already dead or of a bishop about to die, or are proved to have neglected this through any disturbance of mind, shall be assigned to penance in monasteries for the space of an entire year.”

Such a constitution of the Fathers is held concerning the funerals of a departing bishop. We wish it be made known to all, so that no one may dare to perpetrate so great a crime of sacrilege. That which is wicked and what the laws forbid, no one may presume to do to the holy mother Church.

In certain cases, the suitability of places offers itself, so that at the death or funerals of one of us two or three bishops may be able to assemble. This has pleased your fraternity, beloved in Christ: it is fitting that holy charity show itself in the funerals of the dead, when it burned in the hearts of the living.

The holy Apostolic See reports that even now the errors and blasphemies of a certain Photius persist in the regions of the East – blaspheming that the Holy Spirit proceeds not from the Son but only from the Father.⁶ We exhort your fraternity, together with me, that

⁶ The filioque controversy.

according to the admonition of the lord of the Roman See, each one of us, having considered the judgements of the catholic Fathers, may bring forth keen arrows of the Mighty One from the quivers of divine Scripture, for piercing the beast of the reborn monster and for crushing the head of the most wicked serpent.

Chapter XV

These matters having been set forth, let us now address all who wish to live justly and piously in the communion of the holy catholic Church, which is the one body of Christ, of which there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism. And although she is universally built by her own head, Christ Himself, upon the rock – that is, upon the confession of Peter – it is nevertheless evident that throughout all Italy, Gaul, and Spain no one established churches except those whom the venerable Peter, or his successors, appointed as priests.

The Church in our regions has not only been founded upon this solidity of the rock, but has moreover been taught by him and by his successors, with the grace of God and with the merits of the blessed Peter himself lending support. She has striven to preserve, up to the present, the firmness of the faith which she first received, unshaken, and has received no fellowship of the faithless.

But since many are Christians in faith alone, while in deed they dissent from Christian teaching, and since, with the testimony of the Apostle James, we have learned that faith is not only idle but even dead without works: “What will it profit, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?” (James II) – and blessed Jerome: “What will it profit, if, acting impiously, you invoke God with your voice, whom you deny by your works?” And likewise holy Pope Gregory: “What does it profit, if we are joined to our Redeemer by faith, if we are separated from him by our conduct?”

He truly believes who practices in deed what he believes.

Great effort must be made, so that the faithful, if they desire to be blessed with the faithful Abraham (who merited to be justified not only by faith but by works) may strive to live blessedly. For he, as holy Jerome says, is blessed who both lives well by believing rightly and by living well preserves right faith.

But alas, grief upon grief! Through the negligence and ignorance of us and of our fellow ministers (both those already departed and those who still remain) many, and almost innumerable, ruined by vices, are still found among the ecclesiastical people, of whatever sex and age alike and condition, who even up to the times of their old age have not yet, as they ought, attained knowledge of the simple faith. To such a degree that they know neither the words of the saving Creed itself, nor even the supplication of the Lord's Prayer.

Such persons, even if they have good conduct – how will they build the edifice of good work without the foundation of faith? And in addition, what excuse can we put forward, when such people, departing from the body, are snatched not to life – which they did not know – but to eternal death, which they could by no means escape without faith, from which the righteous are believed to live?

We, as blessed Gregory says, become the authors of death when the people perish, since we ought to have been guides to life. Through our sin the multitude of the people has been struck down, because through our negligence they have not been instructed unto life. Let us strive by every means to escape the exceedingly terrible and imminent damnation threatening us, both through us and through the priests of the second order.

We must constantly instruct those entrusted to us both with the words of faith and with the examples of good works. Thus in all things we may present ourselves as ministers of God, so that our ministry may not be blamed, lest it be said of us: "The priests have not known knowledge," and again: "The priests did not say, 'Where is the Lord?'" and those who handle the law did not know me" (Jeremiah II); and lest we incur that offence which the priest Eli is known to have incurred, because he did not duly correct his sons when they acted disgracefully (I Samuel IV).

Addressed generally to all

Therefore, let every Christian establish for himself – without which he cannot truly be called or be a Christian – the foundation of the Christian religion, that is, the catholic faith.

That he believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, one true God, three in persons, one in substance. Let him likewise believe that the person of the Son alone assumed flesh for our salvation, in which He suffered, and rose again, and ascended into heaven, with which He is also to come for judgement. Let him also believe in the Holy Spirit, and that through Him in baptism the remission of all sins is bestowed; and that by his gift in the Church of Christ, through repentance and through the priestly ministry, forgiveness of sins is unfailingly granted. Let him also truly believe that in true flesh there will be, at the coming of Christ, the resurrection of all.

This foundation of true faith must necessarily be adorned with good works. Just as without faith it is impossible to please God, so faith cannot be perfect unless it works through love; moreover, if it does not have works, it is dead in itself.

Let holy faith therefore be adorned, so that it may be true and fruitful, with hope, charity, humility, chastity, continence, sobriety, unanimity, concord, justice, mercy, innocence, simplicity, and the other things which consist in the love of God and of one's neighbour.

Let each person see to it that he does not defile its beauty with various disgraces. Among which we perceive that these are especially to be avoided, and we know for certain that the more hidden they are, the more dangerous: namely pride, which both knows how to make a devil out of an angel and to cast him down from heaven; envy, devised by the devil to cast man out of paradise and to introduce death into the world; hatred and discord, the followers of the aforementioned crimes, but no less destructive, because they drive out

charity, the mother of all virtues, and once it has fled, they pervert all good works, if there were any.

These are chiefly to be uprooted from the hearts of the faithful, and together with those things we have above partly touched upon, are to be utterly abhorred. Likewise, those things such as drunkenness, feasting, quarrels, detractions, and enmities, and things similar, which according to the Apostle exclude men from the kingdom of God: “For,” he says, “those who do such things shall not attain the kingdom of God” (Galatians V). In the same way, those things must by every means be restrained which are against the law of human society, such as thefts and the execrable plunderings, calumnies, oppressions, and invasions. Those must first see restoration, and afterwards be corrected by the remedy of repentance.

We also prohibit by every means, with great protestation, the most wicked frenzy for gain, namely the invention of usury, which clerics pursue no less than laymen, forgetful of the Lord’s command: “You shall not give your money at interest.” And again: “You shall not take interest from your brother, nor more than you gave” (Leviticus XXV).

There are also other evil crimes, which divine law reproves and condemns, on account of which peoples are worn down by devastation and the sword, by famine and pestilence, and the condition of the Church is weakened and the kingdom imperilled. The most unspeakable pollutions with males or with beasts, for which our sweet and kindly God is provoked to the bitterness of wrath all the more gravely, insofar as they are proven to be done against nature; and things such as remain from pagan custom, namely magic arts, lots, amulets, poisons, divinations, interpretations of dreams – all of which divine law commands to be punished, because servitude to the devil is most manifest.

Concerning these, in the Council of Ancyra, title 23, it is thus written: “Those who seek divinations and follow the custom of the Gentiles, or bring such people into their houses

to inquire about something by magical art or for the sake of expiation, shall lie under the rule of five years, according to the degrees of repentance defined.”

Likewise, let every Christian beware of those things appearing light, but which are against the divine commandments: scurrility and foolish speech, idle tales, and shameful and obscene conversations. For very many not only speak these things and gladly hear them in their houses and at their banquets, but even (provoking God to anger), they do not cease irreverently to occupy themselves with such things in basilicas consecrated to him and to his saints, without any regard for fear.

Let the worship, honour, and reverence of the Lord’s Day and of holy solemnities be observed; also fasting, both that which is enjoined and that of the four seasons. Let dangerous and harmful lies cease, which are done excessively and continually; oaths, curses, shameful songs, and other things similar, which indeed it would take a long time to enumerate, but which it is most necessary to correct swiftly.

We are going to account for all deeds and words, and thoughts, to Him who is to come in terrible majesty to render to each according to what he has done, whether good or evil. Sins, whether small or great, cannot be unpunished. Being not insensitive, not incorrigible, not murmuring at the scourges which for the sins we now justly suffer (grievous, but less than we deserve) let us take care to soften, by swift conversion and fitting satisfaction, His hand stretched out to strike. We neglected to forestall it lest it strike, and with fatherly piety we are chastised like sons, but [we might act] lest He strike unto destruction, lest He strike unto the soul; lest, like evil servants, we be struck with strict punishment in the present and dragged into harsher punishments in the future.

There is still time, while He who is offended overlooks our sins because of repentance and cries out with blandishments and threats that we may return from His severity to His goodness. Let us not harden our hearts, as until now our fathers and we have done. For we

have sinned with our fathers, we have acted unjustly, we have committed iniquity. Therefore now, having returned to our consciences and having judged the evils we have done, let us confess to the Lord with a pure and true confession, for He is good, for His mercy endures forever.

Let us fall down and weep before the Lord who made us, for He Himself is our Lord, for He is kind and merciful, rich in forbearance over wickedness, who does not will the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live.

If therefore, converted to God with the whole heart, we perform true repentance and fruits of repentance, insisting upon frequent and holy fasts, chaste vigils pleasing to Him, and prayers drenched with the true shower of tears, together with just almsgiving and other works of mercy and charity; and if we profess that, aided by His grace – without whom we can do nothing – we will never return to the former crimes of our impieties; and if we persevere in these things, making satisfaction to God and to the Church for past sins through the sorrow of repentance, through the groaning of humility, and through the sacrifice of a contrite heart, we shall swiftly obtain the mercy of Him who does not despise a contrite and humbled heart and whose nature is always to show mercy and to spare.

We say “swiftly,” because with the kindly God the measure of time avails less than that of sorrow. He Himself speaks through the prophet: “When you have been converted and have groaned, you shall be saved.” And likewise: “The impiety of the impious shall not harm him, on whatever day he shall be converted from his impiety” (Ezekiel XXXIII).

Since the kindness of the Lord our God is so great, let us not neglect, not delay, not hesitate to be converted to Him; but as the holy Apostle Paul exhorts, “let us approach with confidence the throne of His grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace for timely help” (Hebrews IV), through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with the coeternal Father and the Holy Spirit, be power and glory unto the ages of ages.

Amen.

Subscriptions of the bishops

Heriveus, archbishop of Reims,⁷ assenting to these decrees, subscribed.

Wito, bishop of Rouen,⁸ subscribed.

Rodulfus, prelate of Laon,⁹ subscribed.

Erluinus, bishop of Beauvais,¹⁰ subscribed.

Raubettus, bishop of Noyon,¹¹ subscribed.

Letoldus, bishop of Châlons,¹² subscribed.

Abbo, bishop of Soissons,¹³ subscribed.

Stephanus, bishop of Cambrai, subscribed.

Hucbertus, bishop of the church of Meaux, subscribed.

Otfrid, bishop of Senlis,¹⁴ subscribed.

Stephanus, bishop of Thérouanne,¹⁵ subscribed.

Otgarius, bishop of Amiens,¹⁶ subscribed.

⁷ Heriveus of Reims (900-922).

⁸ Wito of Rouen (889-c.910).

⁹ Rudolf of Laon (died 921).

¹⁰ Herluin of Beauvais (909-921).

¹¹ Rambert of Noyon (fl 909).

¹² Letoldus of Châlons (c. 908-912).

¹³ Abbo of Soissons (909-937).

¹⁴ Otfrid of Senlis (899/900-909).

¹⁵ Stephan of Thérouanne (909-935).

¹⁶ Otgarius of Amiens (c.892-928).