

Three Inquisition Bulls Issued by Gregory IX (1231-33)

[Translated by the students of Pomona College Classics 103 ("Medieval Latin Translation"): William Cole, Fiona Riley, Andy Russell, and Jonathan Wong under the guidance of Professor Ken Wolf (Spring, 2013)]

Gregory IX, "Ille humani generis" (November 22, 1231)

From: James Fearn, ed., *Ketzer und Ketzerbekämpfung im Hochmittelalter*. Historische Texte, Mittelalter Vol. 8 (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: 1968)

Gregory, bishop, servant of the servants of God, to his beloved sons. . . Prior Burchard and Theodoric, brothers of the Order of Preachers of Regensburg, greetings and apostolic benediction.

That stubborn enemy of mankind, incitor of all evils, whose pride struck him down from the heights to the depths, not content that he, by the iniquity of his deceit, led man to the fall to be subjected to hardships and miseries, cunningly tries to ensnare him with his pestilential nets, shrewdly preparing snares for him, lest he lift himself up to the place from which he himself had fallen just as he was about to occupy it. Most recently, in these very days, in an effort to distort the faith with his perfidy, he scatters deadly poison through his ministers, workers of iniquity. Seditiously deciding that a familiar enemy might be most efficacious for doing harm, they prick with their tails, like a scorpion, offering (as if it were something sweet) the venom of the pestilence about to be poured into the gold chalice of Babylon.¹ Although the heretics, hiding for a long time up until the present, crawled around in secret like crabs and like foxes strove surreptitiously to destroy the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts,² now, with their sins driving them out into the open, they, like horses prepared for war, dare to openly rise up against it [the vineyard] by preaching publicly in certain places, seeking the simple as their food and the educated as their prey, likewise striving to trap with their tricks any of the faithful whom they can, making masters of error out of those who never had been disciples of the truth. Whence it is expedient that we rise up powerfully against them, so that, once this heresy of theirs has been completely refuted, the faith of Christ may thrive everywhere; for the crown of reward follows those who resist temptations. Therefore, while up until now loyal faith has shone bright in Germany and while, for this reason, we fear such venomous animals more in that region lest perchance the simple, surrounded by the shrewd seductions of these same ones, and the astute, dangerously deceived by their depraved artifices, should come to the abyss of evil men, and, as a result, the foundation of the faith be violated there, we who at the eleventh hour were among the laborers (actually, more than laborers) of the vineyard of the Lord,³ we who were appointed by the head of the household in the gospel, warned by the voice of the spouse to catch the little foxes who seek to destroy the vineyard of the Lord, touched inwardly with pain in our hearts, not being able to tolerate such an insult to the Creator, and wishing to head off so many dangers to the souls, we diligently ask, admonish, and exhort your discretion, commanding and strictly ordering, under the witness of divine judgment, through these apostolic writings to you, that, with the prelates

¹ Revelations 17:4: *et mulier erat circumdata purpura et coccino et inaurata auro et lapide pretioso et margaritis habens poculum aureum in manu sua plenum abominationum et immunditia fornicationis eius.*

² Song of Songs 2:15: *capite nobis vulpes vulpes parvulas quae demoliuntur vineas nam vinea nostra floruit.*

³ A reference to Matthew 20:1-15, the parable of the laborers in the vineyard.

summoned along with the people and clergy, you arrange for a general sermon to be preached in whatever place you consider to be most expeditious, and, along with certain discrete ones joined to you to attentively carry out these matters, you inquire with diligent solicitude about heretics as well as those who have been accused of heresy; and, if you shall find any who are guilty of heresy or who have been so accused, that—unless the examined ones wish to obey absolutely the mandates of the church—you proceed against them according to our recently promulgated statutes against the heretics; receivers, defenders, and supporters of the heretics are also to be proceeded against in accordance with the same statutes. But if any who, once the stain of heresy has been thoroughly abjured, should wish to return to ecclesiastical unity, may you extend to these the favor of absolution, according to the formula of the church, and impose upon them what is accustomed to be imposed upon such as these, being attentively provident lest those who seem to have returned commit impiety under the cloak of the appearance of piety, the angel of Satan transforming himself into an angel of light; with this in mind, you will be able to examine the statutes—sent to Germany through Brother Hugo, preacher of the word of God—that we ordered to be promulgated about such matters and guard against the traps of these same ones according to the discretion given to you by the Lord. So that you will be able more freely and efficaciously to exercise the office committed to you with regard to these matters just as everything has been set out above, we, trusting in the mercy of Omnipotent God and in the authority of his holy apostles Peter and Paul, will forgive three years of the penance imposed on all who attend your preaching in single stations of twenty days, and to those who willingly (*ex animo*) lend help, advice, or favor for fighting against heretics, and their supporters, receivers, and defenders in fortified places and castles, and others rebelling against the church. And, if some among these should perchance die while carrying out business (*negotium*) of this kind, we grant them a full indulgence concerning those sins which, contrite in their hearts, they have confessed with their mouths. So that nothing be lacking to these brothers for carrying out the aforementioned business, we discharge to you the free faculty of proffering ecclesiastical censure against contradictors and rebels according to the priestly tenor, and we grant the sword against the enemies of the faith and free faculty in destruction of those present. Likewise we also grant permission to you to restrain with a similar censure from the office of preaching (which does not pertain to them) those preaching seekers of alms [*predicadores questuarios*], whose [proper] concern is only to ask for charitable relief and to dispense pardon—if by chance they have any to dispense. If you are not able to be present for carrying out all of these matters, may two of your [agents] carry them out nonetheless.

Given in Rieti, the X kalends of December in the fifth year of our pontificate.

Gregory IX, “Ille humani generis” (April 20, 1233)

[From: Yves Dossat, *Les Crises de L’Inquisition au XIIIe siècle* (Bordeaux, 1959), pp. 326-327]

Gregory, bishop, servant of the servants of God, to his venerable brothers, the archbishops and bishops, and to his beloved sons, the other prelates established in the kingdom of France and the adjacent provinces, greetings and apostolic benediction.

That stubborn enemy of mankind, whose pride struck him down from the heights to the depths, not content that he, by the iniquity of his deceit, led man to the fall to be subjected to hardships and miseries, cunningly tries to ensnare him with his pestilential nets, shrewdly preparing snares for him, lest he lift himself up to the place from which he himself had fallen just as he was about to occupy it. Most recently, in these very days, in an effort to distort the faith with his perfidy, he scatters deadly poison through his ministers, workers of iniquity. Seditiously deciding that a familiar enemy might be most efficacious for doing harm, they prick with their tails, like a scorpion, offering (as if it were something sweet) the venom of the pestilence about to be poured into the gold chalice of Babylon.⁴ Although the heretics, hiding for a long time up until the present, crawled around in secret like crabs and like foxes strove surreptitiously to destroy the vineyard of the Lord,⁵ now, with their sins driving them out into the open, they, like horses prepared for war, dare to openly rise up against it [the vineyard], seeking the simple as their food and the educated as their prey, likewise striving to trap with their tricks any of the faithful whom they can, making masters of error out of those who never had been disciples of the truth. Whence it is expedient that we rise up powerfully against them, so that, once this heresy of theirs has been completely refuted, the faith of Christ may thrive everywhere; for the crown of reward follows those who resist temptations. Therefore, while previously loyal faith shone bright in the kingdom of France and the adjacent provinces, and while, for this reason, we fear such venomous animals more in that region lest perchance the simple, surrounded by the shrewd seductions of these same ones, and the astute, dangerously deceived by their depraved artifices, should come to the abyss of sinners, and, as a result, the foundation of the faith be violated there, we who at the eleventh hour were among the laborers (actually, more than laborers) of the vineyard of the Lord,⁶ we who were appointed by the head of the household in the gospel, touched inwardly with pain in our hearts, not being able to tolerate such an injury to the Creator, and wishing to head off so many dangers to the souls, do not cease to try diligently and multifariously, with many different strategies, to extirpate the heretical depravity. When the commiserating, merciful Lord—who wishes no one to perish—noting that the harvest was great but the workers few,⁷ raised up the order of his beloved sons, the Preachers,⁸

⁴ Revelations 17:4: *et mulier erat circumdata purpura et coccino et inaurata auro et lapide pretioso et margaritis habens poculum aureum in manu sua plenum abominationum et immunditia fornicationis eius.*

⁵ Song of Songs 2:15: *capite nobis vulpes vulpes parvulas quae demoliuntur vineas nam vinea nostra floruit.*

⁶ A reference to Matthew 20:1-15, the parable of the laborers in the vineyard.

⁷ Matthew 9:36-38: *videns autem turbas misertus est eis quia erant vexati et iacentes sicut oves non habentes pastorem, tunc dicit discipulis suis messis quidem multa operarii autem pauci; rogate ergo dominum messis ut eiciat operarios in messem suam.*

⁸ The Order of the Friars Preacher, that is, the Dominicans.

who, seeking not their own [advantages] but those of Jesus Christ, dedicated themselves to the preaching [*evangelizationi*] of the word of God against the heresies that are to be put to flight (as much as against other deadly plagues) in an abject state of voluntary poverty, we, considering how you [archbishops and bishops], bothered by the various whirlwinds of your affairs, are scarcely able to breathe among the press of worldly anxieties, and considering, with regard to this worthy matter, how your burdens might be divided with others—because when a burden is divided among many it is more easily carried, according to the example of His instruction, who chose twelve apostles and then another seventy two,⁹ sending them out in twos ahead of him for the sake of preaching—we decreed that the said Brother Preachers be sent against the heretics in the kingdom of France and the adjacent provinces. We therefore diligently ask, admonish, and exhort your company, commanding and strictly ordering, through these apostolic writings to you, that you, out of reverence for the holy apostolic see and for us, kindly receive and decently handle these same ones in these and other matters, that you dispense advice, assistance, and favor in such a manner that they will be able to carry out the duties assigned to them without any hindrance, and we will be able to commend with merit the zeal of your sincerity.

Given at the Lateran, 12 kalends of May, in the seventh year of our pontificate.

⁹ Luke 10:1-2: *Post haec autem designavit Dominus et alios septuaginta duos et misit illos binos ante faciem suam in omnem civitatem et locum quo erat ipse venturus et dicebat illis messis quidem multa operarii autem pauci rogare ergo Dominum messis ut mittat operarios in messem.*

Gregory IX, “Ille humani generis” (April 22, 1233)

Gregory, bishop, servant of the servants of God, to his beloved son . . . the provincial prior of the Order of Preachers in Provence, greetings and apostolic benediction.

That stubborn enemy of mankind, incitor of all evils, whose pride struck him down from the heights to the depths, not content that he, by the iniquity of his deceit, led man to the fall to be subjected to hardships and miseries, cunningly tries to ensnare him with his pestilential nets, shrewdly preparing snares for him, lest he lift himself up to the place from which he himself had fallen just as he was about to occupy it. Most recently, in these very days, in an effort to distort the faith with his perfidy, he scatters deadly poison through his ministers, workers of iniquity. Seditiously deciding that a familiar enemy might be most efficacious for doing harm, they prick with their tails, like a scorpion, offering (as if it were something sweet) the venom of the pestilence about to be poured into the gold chalice of Babylon.¹⁰ Although the heretics, hiding for a long time up until the present, crawled around in secret like crabs and like foxes strove surreptitiously to destroy the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts,¹¹ now, with their sins driving them out into the open, they, like horses prepared for war, dare to openly rise up against it [the vineyard] by preaching publicly in certain places, seeking the simple as their food and the educated as their prey, likewise striving to trap with their tricks any of the faithful whom they can, making masters of error out of those who never had been disciples of the truth. Whence it is expedient that we rise up powerfully against them, so that, once this heresy of theirs has been completely refuted, the faith of Christ may thrive everywhere; for the crown of reward follows those who resist temptations. Therefore, while previously the loyal faith shone bright in the region of Provincia, and while, for this reason, we fear such venomous animals more in that region lest perchance the simple, surrounded by the shrewd seductions of these same ones, and the astute, dangerously deceived by their depraved artifices, should come to the abyss of sinners, and, as a result, the foundation of the faith be violated there, we who at the eleventh hour were among the laborers (actually, more than laborers) of the vineyard of the Lord,¹² we who were appointed by the head of the household in the gospel, warned by the voice of the spouse to catch the little foxes who seek to destroy the vineyard of the Lord, touched inwardly with pain in our hearts, not being able to tolerate such an insult to the Creator, and wishing to head off so many dangers to the souls, we diligently ask, admonish, and exhort your discretion, commanding and strictly ordering, under the witness of divine judgment, through these apostolic writings to you, that you send some erudite ones from among the brothers committed to you, whom you know to be suitable for this task, to regions assigned to you according to your order; and that they, having summoned the clergy and the people, arrange for a general sermon to be preached in wherever place they consider to be most expeditious, and, along with certain discrete ones joined to you to attentively carry out these matters, you inquire with diligent solicitude about heretics as well as those who have been accused of heresy; and, if you shall find any who are guilty of heresy or who have been so accused, that—unless the examined ones wish to obey absolutely the mandates of the church—you proceed against them according to our recently promulgated statutes against the heretics;

¹⁰ Revelations 17:4: *et mulier erat circumdata purpura et coccino et inaurata auro et lapide pretioso et margaritis habens poculum aureum in manu sua plenum abominationum et immunditia fornicationis eius.*

¹¹ Song of Songs 2:15: *capite nobis vulpes vulpes parvulas quae demoliuntur vineas nam vinea nostra floruit.*

¹² A reference to Matthew 20:1-15, the parable of the laborers in the vineyard.

receivers, defenders, and supporters of the heretics are also to be proceeded against in accordance with the same statutes. But if any who, once the stain of heresy has been thoroughly abjured, should wish to return to ecclesiastical unity, may you extend to these the favor of absolution, according to the formula of the church, and impose upon them what is accustomed to be imposed upon such as these, being attentively provident lest those who seem to have returned commit impiety under the cloak of the appearance of piety, the angel of Satan transforming himself into an angel of light; with this in mind, they will be able to examine the statutes that we have ordered to be promulgated about this, and guard against the traps of these same ones according to their discretion bequeathed to them by the Lord. So that they will be able more freely and efficaciously to exercise the office committed to them with regard to these matters just as everything has been set out above, we, trusting in the mercy of Omnipotent God and in the authority of his holy apostles Peter and Paul, will forgive three years of the penance imposed on all who attend their preaching in single stations of twenty days, and to those who willingly (*ex animo*) lend help, advice, or favor for fighting against heretics, and their supporters, receivers, and defenders in fortified places and castles, and others rebelling against the church. And, if some among these should perchance die while carrying out business (*negotium*) of this kind, we grant them a full indulgence concerning those sins which, contrite in their hearts, they have confessed with their mouths. So that nothing be lacking to these brothers for carrying out the aforementioned business, we grant to them the free faculty of proferring ecclesiastical censure against contradictors and rebels according to the tenor of those present. Likewise we also grant permission to these same ones to restrain with a similar censure from the office of preaching (which does not pertain to them) those preaching seekers of alms [*predicatores questuarios*], whose [proper] concern is only to ask for charitable relief and to dispense pardon—if by chance they have any to dispense.

Given from the Lateran, 10 kalends of May, in the seventh year of our pontificate.