

## First Lateran Council 1123 A.D.

- [Canons](#)

### INTRODUCTION

In 1123, during the pontificate of Pope Callistus II, a general Roman council was held "for various important matters of the church", as Callistus himself says in the letter of convocation which he sent on 25 June 1122 to bishop Baldric of Doll. A great number of bishops, abbots and religious, numbering at least 300, gathered in Rome from the western churches, although none that we know of came from the eastern churches { 1 } . There is no evidence that legates of the emperor Henry V took part. The council began on 18 March 1123, with the pope presiding. There were at least two sessions. The council ended before 6 April, probably on 27 March.

This council is often called "general" in the letters and decrees of Pope Callistus II. It is reasonable, however, to doubt its ecumenicity. Indeed the manner in which the council was called and conducted by the pope and the fathers differed from that of the older councils. Moreover several other councils, similar to Lateran I, were convened in the 11th and 12th centuries but were not termed ecumenical. The ecumenicity of this council seems, as far as we can tell, to have been confirmed later by the tradition of the Roman church.

There had long been conflict between church and state, though some sort of a solution had been reached a short time before at the Concordat of Worms (September 1122). Thus, questions concerning the investiture of prelates and the freedom of the church were a major concern of the council. The said concordat was approved and confirmed by the council's authority, though not without opposition on the part of many, as Gerhoh of Reichersberg { 2 } testifies; canons 3-4, 8 and 12 make mention of this debate. Thereby a measure of peace and discipline was restored to the church.

The fathers devoted themselves principally to the reform of the church, to the abolition of simony and to the correction of ecclesiastical abuses. There were a few other matters of lesser importance. Also, the struggle for the Corsican episcopacy between the churches of Genoa and Pisa was a considerable problem, and a commission of twenty-four fathers had to be created by the pope in order to resolve the matter; for this see canons 1, 7, and also canons 2, 5-6, 9, 11, 16. Thus pope Callistus, following as closely as he could the examples of Gregory VII and Urban II { 3 } , and supported by the approval of the council, brought to a successful conclusion matters which had engrossed the whole church's effort and zeal for almost fifty years.

A number of canons were ratified by the council fathers, perhaps at the session on 27 March. Many of these were included in Gratian's Decrees (c. 1140), namely canons 1, 3-4, 6, 9, 12, 14, 16B, 19-22B, and part of 8, 18B. As far as we know, Baronius was the first to print others which Gratian did not accept (Br { 4 } 12, 1607, 149-150; ed. Theiner 18, 1869, 343-344). Twelve more follow in the Roman edition (Rm { 5 } 4, 1612, 16- 17), where a complete text of the canons may be found. We have examined all the canons in the following: Bn { 6 } 3/2 (1618) 464-465; ER { 7 } 27 (1644) 37-43; S. Baluze, in P. de Marca, *Dissertationum de concordia sacerdotii et imperii ...libri II* Paris 1663, 363 (=BdM); LC10 { 8 } (1671) 896-900; Hrd { 9 } 6/2 (1714) 1111-1114; Cl { 10 } 12 (1730) 1333-1337; E. Martene and U. Durand, in *Veterum scriptorum et monumentorum ... collectio*, VII Paris 1733, 68-69, four canons only (= MD); Msi { 11 } 2 (1748) 355-358; Msi 21 (1776) 281-286; G.H. Pertz, in MGH { 12 } , *Leges in f.º, II/2* Hanover 1837, 182-183 (= Pertz); PL 163 (1854) 1361-1365; L. Weiland, in MGH, *Const.*, I Hanover 1893, 574-576 (= MGH).

The text of the canons presents some difficulties. Bn 2, ER, LC, Hrd, Cl and Msi must have printed the same text as that used by Rm (though with some differences). This commonly accepted version, which we call B, consists of 22 canons and seems to derive from two manuscript codices (not from Rm, since this has the different readings). In addition, seven canons (2, 5, 10-11, 13, 15, 17) printed by Br seem to relate to B, even though they often do not agree with B in their readings. A second version of the canons, "from an ancient manuscript codex of the monastery of Aniane", which is now in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris, was published by BdM. The order of the canons in it, and often the readings, are different from B; moreover six canons (11 and the last five, 18-22B) are missing and two (15-16) are completely different from B. Regarding this other version, which we call alpha, MD published four canons (6, 12, 15- 16) "from a manuscript of the marquis of Laubes", and Pertz published sixteen canons (15 and 18-22B are missing, in place of which are what appear to be two rubrics) from Vienna MS. *Codex of Canon Law* 91 (now 2178). Migne transcribed the text of Pertz. LC took several readings of (alpha and included them in B[eta] as variant readings. Finally, the text printed by Msi "from a Pistoia codex of canons", as

well as the order of canons in it, appear similar to alpha; although canons 15-16 are preserved according to the B text and 18-19 are added to B. If alpha is earlier than B, then the text of Msi seems to date from an earlier time and to have been corrected occasionally from B; therefore we conclude that this text belongs to alpha.

We believe the (alpha version is older than B[eta]. For, the canons from alpha (except 11-12, 15-17) are mentioned in Simeon of Durham's "Historia Regum" { 13 } (= S), which is contemporaneous. This point has not been noticed by scholars. In addition, Gratian's Decrees ascribe the last 5 canons to the earlier pontificate of Urban II (1088-99) and not to the time of Lateran I, as Br noted; therefore alpha seems right to omit these five canons. The document on which Br and possibly Rm depend is a Vatican codex "which contains the Collection of Anselm [of Lucca], in which the canons of this council are included as an appendix after chapter 55". Maybe, therefore, our B should be attributed to this peculiar version in Anselm of Lucca's text. Certainly all the known manuscript codices are related to alpha, so far as we are aware { 14 } , including the 12th century Vatican Reginensis lat. 987 (= R), which was the first to be examined by us. We think that little confidence can be placed in MGH, which is the only critical edition so far made. Its editor, Weiland, divided the sources into three groups: the "Parisian", more correctly called the "Roman"- the Pistoian codex; and the codices used by BdM and Pertz. But he completely ignored the similarities between the three groups, and in the end collated only the two sources of the third group, omitting for no reason canon 17. We have collated together R and all the other editions, and have prepared our text with the alpha version as the basis. We think that R and BdM are the most reliable sources. We have relegated the alternative version of canons 15-16 to a footnote, and the last five canons to an appendix. We have not used the MGH text except in a few instances. There is a preface to the canons in R, S, BdM and Msi vol 1, but we do not reproduce it.

BIBLIOGRAPHY H-L 5/1 (1912) 630-634; DThC 8/2 (1925) 2628-2637; DDrc 6 (1957) 344-346; LThK 6 (vol 2 1961) 815-816; NCE 8 (1967) 406; HC 3 (1980) 401-402; U. Robert, Histoire du pape Calixte II, Paris-Besancon 1891, 162-177, A. Hauck, Die Rezeption und Umbildung der allgemeinen Synode im Mittelalter, Historische Vierteljahrschrift 10 (1907) 468 ff.; G. Meyer von Knonau, Jahrbucher des deutschen Reiches . . . , VII Leipzig 1909, 228-239; G. Tangl, Die Teilnehmer an den allgemeinen Konzilien des Mittelalters, Weimar 1922, 196-205; H. J. Schroeder, Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils, St. Louis, Mo. --London 1937, 177-194; A. Eliche, La reforme gregorienne et la reconquete chretienne (Histoire de l'Eglise 8), Paris 1950, 390-393; G. Eranzen, L'ecclésiologie des conciles medievales, in Le concile, 125-141; R. Eoreville, Latran I, II, III et Latran IV (Histoire des Conciles 6), Paris 1965; M. Mollat and P. Tombeur, Les conciles Latran I a Latran IV: Concordance, index, listes de frequence, tables comparatives (Conciles oecumeniques medievales 1), Louvain 1974.

## C A N O N S

1. Following the examples of the holy fathers and renewing them as we are bound by our office, by the authority of the apostolic see we altogether forbid anyone to be ordained or promoted in the church of God for money. If anyone indeed should have been ordained or promoted in the church in such a fashion, let him be utterly deprived of the office acquired. { 15 }
2. { 16 } We absolutely forbid those excommunicated by their own bishops to be received into communion by other bishops, abbots and clergy { 17 }
3. { 18 } No one may consecrate as a bishop someone who is not canonically elected. If anyone should presume to do this, let both consecrator and consecrated be deposed { 19 } beyond hope of restoration.
- 4 { 20 } Absolutely no archdeacon, archpriest { 21 } , provost or dean { 22 } may grant to anyone the care of souls or prebends in a church without the decision or consent of the bishop. Rather, as it is constituted by the holy canons, let the care of souls and the dispensing of ecclesiastical affairs remain in the decision and power of the bishop. Indeed, if anyone presumes to do something against this, or to claim for himself the power which pertains to the bishop, let him be banished from the bounds of the church
5. { 23 } The ordinations made by the heresiarch *Burdinus* { 24 } , after he was condemned by the Roman church, and whatever was afterwards done by pseudo-bishops ordained by him, we judge to be null and void.
6. { 25 } No one except a priest { 26 } may be ordained to the office of provost, archpriest or dean; no one except a deacon may be ordained to the office of archdeacon. { 27 } { 28 }
7. { 29 } We absolutely forbid priests, deacons or subdeacons to live with concubines and wives, and to cohabit with other women, except those whom the council of **Nicaea** permitted to dwell with them solely on account of necessity, namely a mother, sister, paternal or maternal aunt, or other such persons, about whom no suspicion could justly arise

8. {30 } We further resolve, in accordance with the statute of the most blessed **pope Stephen**, that lay persons, however religious they may be, have no power to dispose of any ecclesiastical business; but following the apostolic canons, let the bishop have the care of all ecclesiastical matters, and let him manage them as in the sight of God. Therefore {31 } if any prince or other lay person should arrogate to himself the disposition or donation {32 } of ecclesiastical things or possessions, let him be regarded as sacrilegious.

9. {33 } We prohibit unions between blood relatives, because both the divine and secular laws prohibit them. For, the divine laws not only cast out those doing this and their progeny but also call them accursed; the secular laws call such people disreputable and deprive them of inheritance. We, therefore, following our fathers, mark them with infamy and judge them to be infamous.

[crusades]

10. {34 } To *those who set out for Jerusalem* and offer effective help towards the defence of the christian people and overcoming the tyranny of the infidels, we grant the remission of their sins, and we place their houses and families and all their goods under the protection of blessed Peter and the Roman church, just as has been decreed by our lord **pope Urban**. Whoever dares to distraint or carry off their houses, families and goods, while they are on their way, shall be punished with excommunication. {35 } *Those who have put crosses on their clothes, with a view to journeying to Jerusalem or to Spain, and have later taken them off*, we command by our apostolic authority to wear the crosses again and to complete the journey between this Easter and the following Easter. Otherwise, from that moment we cut them off from entry into church and forbid divine services in all their lands, apart from the baptism of infants and confessions for the dying.

11. {36 } With the advice of our brothers and of the whole curia, and also with the wish and consent of the prefect, we order the abolition of that immoral practice hitherto obtaining with respect to the dead *Porticani*, so that the goods of Porticani dwellers dying without heirs are not to be dispersed against the wishes of those dying. This, however, is to the extent that the Porticani remain obedient and faithful to the Roman church and to us and our successors. {37 }

12. {38 } In accordance with the canons of the holy fathers, we absolutely forbid and prohibit the laity, under the penalty of anathema, to remove the offerings from the most sacred and revered altars of blessed Peter and of the Saviour and of St Mary Rotunda and of St Nicholas of Bari, of St Giles {39 } , or from the altars or crosses of all the other churches. By {40 } apostolic authority we forbid the fortification or taking hold of churches by {41 } lay persons {42 } . {43 }

13. {44 } Whoever knowingly makes or intentionally spends *counterfeit money* shall be separated from the communion of the faithful as one accursed, an oppressor of the poor and a disturber of the state.

14. {45 } If anyone tries to attack pilgrims to Rome and foreigners {46 } visiting the shrines of the apostles and the oratories of other saints, or to rob them of the things they bring, or to trouble merchants {47 } with new exactions of tolls and fees, let him be deprived of christian communion until he makes reparation.

15. {48 } We confirm, with the authority of the holy Spirit, whatever has been determined by the Roman pontiffs our predecessors concerning the peace and truce of God or arson or the public highways.

Msi (as canon 14) and B (as canon 13) have a different text namely

If anyone should violate a truce, he is to be admonished up to three times by the bishop to make reparation. If he acts in contempt of the third admonition to make reparation, the bishop, either with the counsel of the metropolitan {49 } or with two or one of the neighbouring bishops, shall declare the sentence of **anathema** on the rebel, and denounce him in writing to the bishops all around

16. {50 } Following in the footsteps of the holy fathers, we order by general decree, that monks be subject to their own bishops {51 } with all humility, and show due obedience and devoted submission to them in all things, as if to masters and shepherds of the church of God. They may not celebrate masses in public anywhere. Moreover, let them completely abstain from public visitations of the sick, from anointings and even from hearing confessions, for these things in no way pertain to their calling. Indeed, in the churches where their ministry is recognized, they may only have priests who were ordained by their own bishop, to whom they will answer for the care of souls which they have assumed.

In Pertz there is only "We absolutely forbid anointings and visits to the sick and public masses by monks" and then : "The examples of Leo to Dioscorus, that on the day of the resurrection there may be a levitical and a sacerdotal ordination, ch 19.

That on Sunday morning, continuing the fast of Saturday, there can be an ordination, ch 20".

Msi (as canon 18) and B (as canon 17) have a different text, namely :

We forbid abbots and monks to give public penances, to visit the sick, to perform anointings and to chant public masses. They shall receive chrism, holy oil, consecrations of altars and ordinations of clerics from the bishops in whose dioceses they reside.

17. {52 } In our desire to preserve in peace, by the grace of God, the possessions of the holy Roman church, we strictly forbid, under pain of anathema, any military {53 } person to presume to seize or hold by force Benevento, the city of blessed Peter. If anyone should dare otherwise, he shall be bound by the chain of anathema.

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The remaining canons are missing in alpha, and Msi has canons 18-19 together with canon 16. The first part of this canon (Priests ... pertain to the bishop) may belong to canon 16 (B).

18. Priests are to be appointed to parish churches by the bishops, to whom they shall answer for the care of souls and for those matters which pertain to the bishop. They may not receive tithes or churches from lay persons without the consent and wish of the bishops; and if they presume to do otherwise, they shall be subject to the canonical penalty. {54 }

19. We allow the service which monasteries and their churches have paid from the time of {55 } **pope Gregory VII** until now. We altogether forbid abbots and monks to have the possessions of churches and bishops by a thirty {56 } years provision. {57 }

20. Having in mind the examples in the traditions of the fathers, and discharging the duty of our pastoral office, we decree that churches and what belongs to them, both persons and possessions, namely clerics, monks and their lay brothers, as well as those who come to pray and what they bring with them, are to be under protection and not be harmed. If anyone dares to act contrary to this and after recognizing his villainy, has not properly made amends within the space of thirty days, let him be banished from the bounds of the church and be smitten with the sword of **anathema**.

21. We absolutely forbid priests, deacons, subdeacons and monks to have *concubines* or to contract *marriages*. We adjudge, as the sacred canons have laid down, that marriage contracts between such persons should be made void and the persons ought to undergo penance.

22. We condemn the alienations which have been made everywhere, especially by Otto {58 } , Jeremias, and perhaps Philip {59 } , of the property of the exarchate of Ravenna. Moreover, we declare in general to be invalid the alienations made in whatever fashion by all persons, whether they were intruded or were canonically elected in the name of a bishop or an abbot, who should be consecrated in accordance with the usage of his own church, and the ordinations conferred by them without the consent of the clergy of the church or through simony. We also forbid absolutely that any cleric should presume to alienate in any way his prebend or any ecclesiastical benefice. Any such action in the past or the future shall be invalid and subject to canonical penalty."

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#### FOOTNOTES

- 1 There are no surviving acts of the council. On the number of fathers, see K.J. Hefele, *Histoire des conciles d'après les documents originaux*, trans. and continued by H. Leclercq, 11 vols. 1907-1952., 5/1, 631 n. 2; and also Simeon of Durham *Opera Omnia ...*, II ed. T. Arnold (Rolls series 75), London 1885, 272; *Annali genovesi di Caffaro ...*, ed. L. Belgrano (*Fonti per la storia d'Italia* 11), I Rome-Genoa 1890, 19
- 2 See Gerhoh of Reichersberg, *Libellus de ordine donorum sancti Spiritus*, ed. E. Sackur, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, Hannover and Berlin 1826-, *Libelli*, III Hanover 1897, 280; see also Hefele 5/1, 631
- 3 See also canon 10 on the recovery of the holy Land, and canons 14-15 on peace among Christians.
- 4 C. Baronius (continued by O. Raynaldi), *Anales ecclesiastici*, ed. J. D. Mansi, 38 vols. Lucca 1728-1759)
- 5 *Ton hagion iokoumenikon synodon tes katholikes ekklesias apanta. Concilia generalia Ecclesiae catholicae* [Editio Romana], 4 vols. Rome 1608-1612.
- 6 S. Binius, *Concilia generalia et provincialia ...*, 5 vols. Cologne 1609; 9 vols. *ibid* [ed. 2] . 1618; 11 vols. Paris[ed. 3] 1636.
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- 11 J. D. Mansi (continued by J.B. Martin and L. Petit), Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio ..., 53 vols. Florence, Venice, Paris and Leipzig 1759-1927
- 12 in Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Hannover and Berlin 1826-,
- 13 See Simeon and Durham., Opera Omnia ..., II 270-272
- 14 We have not seen Olmutz Chapter Codex 205; see Pertz, Archiv 10 (1849) 682.
- 15 Council of Toulouse (1119), canon 1 (Msi 21, 226); ch. 10 C. I q. 1 (Fr 1, 360); see Schroeder 179 n. 4
- 16 Canon 3 in Msi, 9 in B
- 17 See council of Melfi (1089), canon 15 (Msi 20, 724)
- 18 Canon 2 in Msi, 10 in B
- 19 condemned Pertz
- 20 Canon 5 in Msi, 7 in B
- 21 priest Msi
- 22 deacon Msi
- 23 Canon 9 in Msi, 6 in B
- 24 Maurice Burdinus, antipope Gregory VIII (1118-1121)
- 25 Canon 4 in Msi, 2 in B
- 26 or a deacon added in alpha except S
- 27 Council of Toulouse (119), canon 2 (Msi 21, 226);
- 28 no one ... deacon omitted in Pertz
- 29 Canon 3 in B
- 30 Canon 6 in Msi, 4 in B
- 31 included in canon 9 in Pertz
- 32 domination in Pertz and variant reading in B
- 33 Canon 8 in Msi, 5 in B
- 34 Canon 12 in Msi, 12 in B
- 35 included in canon 13 in Msi, Pertz
- 36 Omitted in R S BdM; canon 12 in B, 14 in Pertz
- 37 This, however ... our successors omitted in Baronius
- 38 Omitted in S; Canon 11 in BdM, 14 in B, 15 in Msi vol 1
- 39 and of St Nicholas ... St Giles omitted in Msi 1 B.
- 40 included in canon 12 in B
- 41 omitted in B
- 42 omitted in B
- 43 by ... persons omitted in E. Martene and U. Durand, Thesaurus novus anecdotorum seu collectio monumentorum ..., 5 vols. Paris 1717.
- 44 Canon 16 in Msi, 15 in B
- 45 Canon 17 in Msi, 16 in B
- 46 or merchants added in R, BdM
- 47 omitted in R, BdM, B (in B as variant reading)
- 48 Omitted in S, Pertz
- 49 with ...metropolitan] the metropolitan Br and variant reading in B
- 50 Omitted in S;
- 51 omitted in R
- 52 Omitted in S; Canon 10 in Msi, 11 in Pertz, 8 in B
- 53 omitted in Baronius and variant reading in B
- 54 and if ... penalty omitted in Msi; see canon 19
- 55 holy (?saint) added in Msi
- 56 3 years Msi
- 57 But if they presume to do otherwise they shall be subject to canonical penalty added in Msi
- 58 Atto variant reading in B
- 59 dissident archbishops of the church of Ravenna in 12th century