

## Papal Attitudes to the Heretics in the 12th and 13th Centuries

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In the history of the Christianity, the heretics are essential beings.

Partly because heretics are from of old. As the Apostle says in 'the First Letter to the Corinthians' that 'I hear that there are divisions among you; and I partly believe it, for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized'(1), they were known also in the primitive Church. Heretic and orthodox are, so to speak, 'twins', although the former is a trouble-maker one.

Partly because heretics exercised the formative influences to the Christianity. As 'the First letter to the Corinthians' also attests, Paul established 'the <right> Lord's Supper' in oppsition to the heretical sacramental usages. There are many other cases in which the orthodox Church was formed with the stimuli of the heretics. In this sense, heresies are 'necessary' beings to the formation of the Christian Church.

And partly because through the heretics, we can understand the ages and societies in which heretics arised, flourished and declined. For example, in the factions of the Corinthian Church, we may find the cultural collision or absorption that would naturally happen in the hellenizing process of the judeo-Christianity; resurrection, prophecy, marrige, idolatry and so on. Heresies are 'a mirror', or more exactly, 'a distorted mirror'. For these reasons, therefore, in my opinion, to understand heretics is a key to appreciate the history of the Christianity.

It was in the 11th century that the heresies, which, as mentioned above, can be traced back even into the apostolic age, arised in the Western Europe(2). These heretics exercised deep influences and were admired very much, because they practiced, at some points, the precepts of the Lord even in its extreme forms. But these heretics lived in the society which was fundamentally different to the present one; the uniformity of the faith was the premise to the stability of the

society. They provoked the abhorrence and fear of the populace, because they could destroy the balance of the world and make lost the Gods' protection to the Human race; tolerance was an unimaginable idea. In some cases people put the heretics to death. But at the same, to forgive the sins of the flock of Christ and to keep open the way to the Salvation are the duties of the churchmen. How to deal with the heretics was a difficult problem to the Church.

It was Herbert Grundmann (1902-1970), German medievalist, who laid the foundation of the study of the medieval heresies, or following his conception, religious movements. In his epoch-making work 'Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter' which remains classic today, he advanced a theory that emphasizes the common point of departure of groups that ultimately became located on either side of papally defined orthodoxy. In regards to the position of the Church against the heretics, on one hand, he highly evaluated Pope Innocent III's personal decisions who persecuted ruthlessly the adherents of the 'religious movements' who refused obedience, while he made reconciled some heretics with the Church. On the other hand, Grundmann estimates Pope Alexander III's achievements trivial, whose decision was inconsequent and confused.

The purpose of my paper is, reviewing the Grundmann theory, to survey the attitudes of the ecclesiastic authorities to the heretic in the 12th and 13th centuries, and to reevaluate the anti-heresy policy of Pope Alexander III.

#### 1) Attitudes of the secular and ecclesiastic authorities to the heretics before the 12th century

Before arguing over the papal attitudes to the heretics in the 12th and 13th centuries, it would be better to discuss the attitudes of the secular and ecclesiastic authorities in the previous period.

When the first heretics of the western Europe since the end of late Antiquity were reported in Aquitaine in 1018, chronicler Adhémar de Chabannes called them 'Manicheans' (3). Or in other cases heretics were named 'Arians' (4). Guibert of Nogent (1053-ca.1124), author of the famous Autobiography, for example, wrote about the heretics of

Soisson in 1114, ' if one rereads the lists of heresies compiled by Augustine, one realizes that this one is most like that of the Manicheans'(5). And he attributed heretics' revulsion against marriage, especially for purposes of procreation to the 'Manichean' heresy. The churchmen certainly knew and hated the dangers of the heretics who then sprang up in many places of the Europe and attracted the people, but they did not investigate the heretics closely, but rather looked them through the decrees of the synods and the writings of the Church Fathers, especially St. Augustine. They might look heretics, in short, stereotypically, and lack the real recognition.

Against these dissenters, on the one hand, the attitude of the Church was not yet defined at that time, and was often tolerant rather than merciless. The most typical case was of bishop Wazo of Liège, who was esteemed as one of the most splendid thinkers, against the heresy of Châlons-sur-Marnes, where their rising influence could not be overlooked. Bishop Roger II of Châlons-sur-Marnes, who inclined at heart to punish the heretics, but did not know what to do, posed to Wazo a question of how to deal with them. Then Wazo advised him that, although heretics were not tolerable, men should follow the example of the Lord, and endure the attacks and insults of the heretics, and be gentle and humble. And citing the parable of the weeds of the field (6), he said, men should not eradicate the weeds not to dig up confusedly the good seeds; heretics should be left to the God's Last Judgement; the churchmen should be content only to pronounce excommunication without recourse to the secular arms (7). His view belonged to a traditional interpretation which was preponderantly otherworldly and indifferent to the World.

In addition, as demonstrates the correspondance between Wazo and Roger, each bishop had to and could face up to heretics, and therefore asked for advice of a learned and famed person like Wazo, not of Rome. Rome did not then establish the authority on the jurisdiction over the heresies. And when regional councils enacted decrees on heresies, these decrees were not known or not valid in other regions. The ecclesiastical attitude to the heretics was not yet defined in 11th century, and generally tolerant.

Heretics were, however, persecuted. It was not on the initiative

of the ecclesiastical authorities, but on that of the princes and people, that the heretics were put into death by burning or hanging . The first burning of the heretics in the middle ages were, for example, ordered de facto by King Robert II of France at the council of Orléans in 1022 with the support of the populace (8); it was the people of Milan in 1028 that urged the heretics to abjure the wrong teaching, and burned those who had not repented (9). Heresies were not the problem of the conscience as in today, but were concerned with the welfare of the world as a whole. The princes and populace were afraid that the presence of the heretics would injure God to incur wars or famines and to disturb the possibility of the Salvation of the people. Besides, when deciding who were heretic, the ordeal procedures were used, such as ordeals by hot iron or by water, and in several cases were lynched those who could not kill a chicken or were pale in face (10). The guidelines of the sentences were very arbitrary.

In the 11th century, to sum up, the attitude of the Church authorities was traditionally otherworldly and tolerant and not papal centralized, or rather while hesitating to face up with the danger of heretics, was dragged by the princes and populace who insisted to exterminate the heresies.

## 2) Papal attitude to the heretics in the early 12th century

But the 11th century is also known as the period when the Papacy was freed from the yokes of the secular princes, and establishing its authority in the Church; the so-called Gregorian Reform. The reformer popes fought against the lay investiture and the simoniacal and nicolaite usages. In this process, the traditional otherworldly attitude was disappearing; Rome claimed itself not only the spiritual jurisdiction over the ecclesiastical affairs, but also the supremacy over the secular rulers as well. The popes pretended themselves as the 'Vicar of Christ'.

This papal claim for the supremacy is manifested in Gratian's Decretum which would be the foundation of the hierarchical Church. In it, for example, we can find the false decretal of Pope Marcellus that 'we ask you not to teach and believe except what you have accepted from

saint Peter and other apostles and Fathers', or the Pope Innocent I's claim that 'when argueing the faith, I believe, every brother the bishop should always refer to Peter, that is, the dignity of Peter and the authority of his name' (11). Decretum insists on the supremacy of Peter, and in consequence, enhanced the authority of the popes who were the successors of Peter. Rome is, in its view, the norm of the faith. Every question in regards to the doctrines was under the power of the popes. And as to the legal procedure, the Papacy attempted to eradicate the superstitious usages like the ordeal.

The strengthening position of the popes can be recognized also in the problem of the heretics. The heresy, which is argued in Decretum, was, of course, the simoniacal and schismatic one, but its principle could easily applied to the other types of heresy, like the dogmatic or popular heresies (12). Gratian formulated three principles of the policy against the heresy; 1) on the basis of the idea of 'bonum commune', the attacks against the dogmatical and hierarchical structures of the Church must be punished; 2) the secular arms, following the guidance of the sacerdotal authority, must have the same interests and the same enemies as to the Church, and must react in the same manner; 3) the heretics are identified with the infidels, and the wars against them are sacred and meritorious. In regards to the corporal punishment of the heretics, Decretum forbids the capital punishment following the maxim that 'the Church hates bloodshed', but admits the whipping and the banishment. Besides, if one who sentences to death has the legal authority, even the capital punishment can be permitted, because the welfare of the whole is at stake. In regards to the property of the heretics, the heretics can not have the ownership, because the they offend and injure God who possesses everything (13).

Decretum was a private compilation, but would have the dominating influence over the later policy of the Church. Also the policy against the heretics would be under its influence, and became more and more systematic. The council of Toulouse in 1119 and the second ecumenical council of Lateran in 1139 decreed, in an almost same text, 'we condemn as heretics those who, although simulating the semblance of the religious, disapprove the Eucharist, the infant baptism, the ordination and the bonds of matrimony, and we expel them from the Church of God.

We order the secular powers to coerce them, and we accuse also their defenders with the same damnation'(14)

Yet the decisions of these councils were not well known at that time. The clergy of Liège in 1144, for example, asked Pope Innocent II how to deal with the heretics (15). Certainly the papal authority was becoming more respected than before, as proved by the asking of the clergy of Liège, but the role of the Papacy was still passive. And in the decisions of the local councils, the voice of the secular magnates was still dominating, and the superstitious usages survived. The council of Rheims in 1159, which enacted the first explicit anti-heresy law since the collapse of the Roman Empire, admitted the superstitious judgement such as the ordeal by hot iron (16).

### 3) Pope Alexander III's attitude to the heretics

In the pontificate of Alexander III (1159-81), we find two records of heresies; the heretics of Flanders in 1162 and the Waldensians in 1170's. How did the pope react to them ?

#### i) The Flemish heretics in 1162

The heretics of Flanders, who were condemned by the Archbishop Henry of Rheims, were named as 'Neo-manicheans' or 'Populicani'. It is possible that they hold the dualist tenets, as suggests the denunciation against them, but their exact teaching is not known. The only sources, of which we can avail, are the correspondance between Alexander and King Louis VII of France and Archbishop Henry of Rheims. We can deduce from these letters that the heretics had been accused of heresy and carried their appeal to the papal court in person, and that the accused were probably wealthy. Archbishop Henry must have asked the pope the harsh punishments.

Pope replied to Archbishop Henry on 23 December 1162, 'it is wise to be cautious, and less wrong to acquit sinners who ought to be condemned than to visit the wrath of the Church upon the innocent, better for churchmen to be less severe than they might to be, or to seem, excessively harsh in discipline(17)'.

Then King Loius VII, brother of Archbishop, wrote for the sake of

his brother to the pope that, 'if by any mischance they were to prosper they would do great damage to the faith, especially in the areas where their iniquities have spread, and they have become deeply rooted ... Since the archbishop would give them no mercy they have appealed to you. Let your holiness deal carefully with this poisonous and pernicious sect, and realize that such a pest should be rooted out, not allowed to flourish.. Severity against them will be welcome to every lover of piety in that country. If you decide otherwise you will open many mouths against your blasphemy and that of the Holy Roman Church, and their murmur will not be easily stilled'(18).

To this menacing letter, Alexander answered on 11 January 1163, 'when some of the heretics presented themselves before us with many letters and asserted that they were quite free of any taint of heresy, we wish to send them to judgement by Archbishop Henry. They did not want to go to him, and two of them returned, without the letter, and insisted on remaining with us: they would not return on any account, and preferred to be judged by our verdict. Since we are always anxious to have your advice on all things and to follow it so far as God and righteousness permit, we refused to give them a hearing until we were properly furnished with the advice of yourself, the archbishop, and other men of religion'(19).

In the end, the Supreme Pontiff sent a letter to Henry on 7 July 1163 that 'we have been trying to get rid of the citizens of Arras, G..., J..., and R..., and the woman R..., who have been following our court so long seeking judgement on their case. We must be especially careful neither to let the guilty go free nor to condemn the innocent and are also anxious to respect your wishes. Therefore we think it necessary to prolong this case so that we may benefit fully from the advice of you and your church, and of your brothers the bishops of France. Meanwhile we are sending these people home, on condition that when we send for them again they must come before us and accept our verdict and that of the Church without demur, and observe it exactly. Consequently we ask you to make inquiries about them from people who will know about their manner of life and their beliefs, and report to us so that with God's help and the advice of you and your church and our fellow bishops we can reach a conclusion based on sound informa-

tion. In the meanwhile it would be improper for these people to suffer any loss or danger to their person or property, and we instruct you to make it clear to their fellow citizens that they must not harm or threaten them or their property in any way'(20).

According to Grundmann, this case shows the curia's indecision and confusion towards the religious movement and heresy. 'The question of whether or not the Flemish burgers were heretics', he says, 'would simply be left open, and he gave no guidelines for how the matter should be clarified'(21). Certainly Alexander was very flattering to King Louis, said he that 'he was always anxious to have your advice on all things and to follow it so far as God and righteousness permit'. In those days, Alexander who was fighting against the Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa, took refuge in France. He wanted and had to rely on the support of Louis as much as possible. Then was he forced to give way to the king, in seeking king's favor ?

Certainly the pope reacted rigorously against the heretics. On 19 June 1163, while they were exchanging correspondence, Alexander held the council at Tours, and the council prohibited, it is reported, on the pope's initiative (22), that 'while in the region of Toulouse the damnable heresy has sprang up which, like cancer, has diffused into the neighboring lands, has already infected many in Gascony and other provinces... Where followers of this heresy were detected, anyone should not dare to give them hide or protection. Anyone who would try to do against this rule, would be considered as their accomplice and be anathemized. Those who were arrested, would be prisoned and confiscated of all their goods by the catholic princes'(23). The council indeed excommunicated the heretics, punished their sympathizers as well, and asked the secular arms to coordinate. This attitude was the result of the interference of King Louis? In my opinion, no. He did not yield to the king of France, only did he consistently follow his policy.

First of the reasons that would support my argument is, that on 17 May 1162, 6 months before this case arised, Alexander had summoned the council at Montpellier and had made decreed that, 'any secular prince, even if admonished by the ecclesiastic authority, would not exercise his temporal jurisdiction over the heretics, would be anathe-



mized as well, as instituted at the Second Lateran Council'(24). Also at this council, he asked the secular powers to coordinate, and ruled the excommunication not only of the the heretics, but also of the supporters. I think that the essential of both decrees is identical, not altered fundamentally.

Secondly, in the second letter adressed to the Archbishop Henry, Alexander explicitly stated that 'be especially careful neither to let the guilty go free nor to condemn the innocent'. Certainly forcing them to go home would be equal to pronouneing a death sentence, but he ordered not to suffer any loss or danger to person or property of the heretics. As much as possible, he warned not to give the excessive punishment to the heretics, he never gave way to the king, in theory at least.

Before climbing to the chair of St.Peter, Alexander had achieved fame as canonist Rolando Bandinelli. He left several works, and in these opera he developed a concept of the punishment against the heretics. He thought the curative aspect of the punishments like banishment, confiscation and excommunication which might serve to force the heretics to go back into the bosom of the Church. If one pursues the heretics not out of the spirit of revenge, but of charity, it would be proper and right (25). And he approved the capital punishment, if it were done under the authorized power and in order to correct the evil, because to slay the wicked is to serve the God (26). He affirmed not only the canonical correction, but also the secular penalty against the heretics.

In addition, he would advocate, at the Third Lateran Council in 1179, the crusade against the heretics. In fact, his cardinal legate Henry summoned the crusade agaist the cathar-sympathizar Viscount of Bediers in 1180 (27). I consider that his policy against the heretics was consistent, that is, tolerant and resolute at once, and did not much influenced by the secular interferences. He accepted and firmly kept the lines of Decretum.

In the case of the Flemish heresy, in my opinion, we can recognize another positive changes rather than the 'indecision and confusion' of papal position.

First, the Flemish heretics did institute an appeal to the papal

court. As the Bernard of Clairvaux's criticism on the papacy gives an example, people increasingly filed appeals to Rome at that time, even the heretics did to obtain the approbation of their manner of life against the persecution of the secular arms. Pope Alexander laid claim to the supremacy of the Sacerdotium over the Regnum in the spiritual affairs, and acted as the sole legislator of the Church, as the Head of the hierarchy, as the final arbitrator of the ecclesiastic jurisdiction (28). As expressed in the second letter to the archbishop of Rheims, he made clear that the policy towards the heretics would be under the papal power.

Secondly, in finding who were heretic, the pope asked to 'make inquiries about them from people who will know about their manner of life and their beliefs', not to apply the ordeal which was usually practiced in the northern France and approved in the above-mentioned council of Rheims in 1157. It was not a rare and isolated case. When an adoptionist heresy sprang up in 1170, Alexander ordered the authorities of Bruges, Rheims, Tours and Rouen to make join the 'prudent and pious men' in the hearings (29).

Finally, In the decrees of the council of Tours in 1163, he mentioned the heretics of Toulouse and of Gascony, but did not suggest those of Flanders. The here condemned heretics were certainly the cathars who had been accused also in the councils of Toulouse in 1119 and of II Lateran in 1139. If the Flemish heretics led the life like cathars, because they 'have been following our court so long seeking judgement on their case', Alexander could discern their nature and would declare them intolerable and name them. He must have understood the situation very well.

ii) the Waldensians in the 1170's

As to the Waldensians, originally lay religious movement which advocated the absolute poverty and the itinerant preaching, Grundmann said that, 'the pope and the (III Lateran) council completely failed to rise to the challenge of this decision (of the Waldensians), and they were incapable of grasping its significance' (30). The incomprehension of the pope and hierarchical Church, in his view, made the

Waldensians heretics.

In my opinion, however, Alexander pursued the institutionalization of the Church also in this case. At the III Lateran Council, the Pontiffe was said to have praised the founder Valdes' proposal, and embraced him, and 'approving his wish of the voluntary poverty, but inhibiting him and his followers to presume the office of the preaching without the permission of the clergy' (31). According to Moneta, dominican Inquisitor in Lombardy, the pope permitted the Waldensians to preach, on condition that they should obey the teaching of the four Church Doctors; St. Ambrose, St. Augustin, St. Gregory and St. Jerome (32). Judging from these testimonies, it is probable that the voluntary poverty was admitted, and the itinerant preaching was, although in fact prohibited, allowed with restriction. These terms were identical to what later Pope Innocent III would grant to the 'Pauperes catholici' of Durand of Osca, and to the 'Pauperes reconciliati' of Bernard Primus. And in the decrees of the III Lateran council, the Waldensians were not named as heretics like the Cathars and the Patharins (33). Alexander did not shut the door mercilessly.

And in 1180 when the heretical elements were appearing in the Waldensians, Cardinal Legate Henry imposed Valdes the profession of the faith, which abjures the ancient heterodoxies of the Arians, the Sabelians and so on, and denies the dualist tenets of the Cathars. According to Dondaine and Thouzellier (34), the original version of this profession of the faith had been made in the papal chancellery, then revised in agreement of Valdes. And even when convicted as heretic, Valdes was not imposed of the Imposition of hands which usually practised in case of the repentance of the heresy. Therefore Valdes was certainly suspected of heresy, but was considered to still remain in the orthodoxy. This profession should be regarded as a preventive measure not to precipitate into the error. But it is difficult to attribute this action to the single initiative of Henry who was a faithful of the pope (35). It could be done only upon the initiative of the pope.

This profession of the faith of Valdes was not only the product of the papal chancellery, but also resembled to those by which later Innocent III would make Durand of Osca and Bernard Primus swear their

orthodoxy. Moreover, it is presumed that the former could be the original of the latter, and would develop into the first of the decrees of the IV Lateran council (36). In these points, we must recognize the consistency between the policy of Pope Alexander III and that of Pope Innocent III.

Even if the policy of Pope Alexander did not have effectiveness because of his weak position, his concept pointed out the clear guidelines, and established the precedents to his successors the popes; 1) the final jurisdiction over the heresy pertains to the Apostolic See; 2) one must avoid the excessive harshness, and condemn the guilty and forgive the innocent; 3) in order to identify who were heretic, one should carry out inquiries about the manner of the life of the accused instead of the ordeal; against the contumacious heretics, one should resolutely order the coordination of the secular arms, not avoid even the death sentence or wars; as to the heretics who might repent their own failures, one has to care them not to precipitate into the errors. In these positions, we can find the development and the practice of the Bolognese jurisprudence after Gratian.

#### 4) Innocent III's attitude against the heretics

The anti-heresy policy of Pope Innocent III was, to sum up, the consummation of the try-and-errors of his predecessors, especially Alexander III. Innocent indeed positively and systematically developed and put them into practice.

In 1199, for example, when Innocent wrote a letter to the bishop of Metz to investigate the heretics of that city, he instructed him not to be too much harsh in punishing them, lest the good seeds would be dugged up with the weeds (37). And the Pontiffe said that he would not make decisions hastily, before hearing all the informations, and he ordered to search inquiries into the matter (38). Then he punished the heretics of Metz, and preached against them a crusade which might be a prelude to the later Albigensian Crusade. He was at once discrete and rigorous.

As to the inquiries, he used to set up a special committee for investigation, different to Alexander who had ordered to make inquiries

about them from people who will know about their manner of life and their beliefs'. Of course, the ordeal was denied. Such a legal procedure was, for example, also used in the matter of the Humiliati(39).

More important than this change was the absolute authority of the papacy over the heresy. Innocent stated that, 'receiving informations from you, we could rightly pronounce sentences'. Decisions were not left to the hands of the diocesans, exclusively to the hands of the pope. Sentences of the heretics passed from the Last Judgement to the Vicar of Christ on earth.

In regards to the reconciliation of the heretics, Innocent tried to make return the excommunicated. We have already referred to the 'Pauperes catholici' and 'Pauperes reconciliati'. Another typical case was the Humiliati, whose vow of the poverty was approved, but their wish to lead the Apostolic Life was restricted. To reconcile them with the Church, he instituted the three-fold structure of the Humiliati: 1) for the married lay brothers and sisters; 2) for the single lay brothers; 3) for the clergy of the religious life (40). It might be an important revision of the anti-heresy policy.

Even this three-fold plan of the religious life had, however, a precedent. Yes, in the pontificate of Alexander. It was the Knights of St. James in Spain of the Reconquista. In 1175 Alexander authorized the foundation of this Order and approved its three types of life; 1) for the married knights; 2) for the single knights who make a vow of celibacy; 3) for the clergy who serve also as teachers or male nurses. It was certainly difficult to attribute the religious status to the first type of them who fought by swords and had wives. But the pope admitted them the dignity of the religious, because they were exposed to the peril of death for the sake of Lord. It became possible that, while keeping the former manner of life, the lay person could lead a religious life (41).

In this paper, I sketched the development of the anti-heresy policy of the Church, and reviewed the Grundmann's thesis. In my opinion, Grundmann overestimated the role of Innocent. Certainly his contribution was crucial, without which the Church could have been overthrown by the heretics. But his achievements does not have to be attributed

to his personal decisions. The policy of the papal centralized institutionalization was also seen in the pontificates of his predecessors, especially in that of Alexander III. Innocent accepted the lines of the Bolognese jurisprudence. What he did is to make more systematic and more effective. His policy was accepted and developed by his successors who would institute the Inquisition and support the mendicant Order. When one tries to understand the anti-heresy policy, he must keep this consistency in mind.

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#### Notes

- 1) I Cor. 11, 18-19; the Holy Bible Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition (Oxford University Press 1966), p. 160.
- 2) In this paper, I will discuss only the so-called 'popular' heresies, which had wide range of following of not only the mass, but also the upper strata of the society. To the dogmatic heresies in the early middle ages, for example Gottschalk of Saxony, I will not refer.
- 3) Cf. R. I. Moore, The Birth of Popular Heresy (London 1975), p. 9.
- 4) Cf. H. Grundmann, 'Oportet et haereses esse: das Problem der Ketzerei im Spiegel der mittelalterlichen Bibelexegese', in Archiv für Kulturgeschichte 45(1963), pp. 129-164.
- 5) Paul J. Archambault (trans), A Monk's Confession: the Memories of Guibert of Nogent (the Pennsylvania State University Press 1996), pp. 196-197.
- 6) Cf. Matthew, 13, 36-43; pp. 13-14.
- 7) Cf. H. Maisonneuve, Etudes sur les origines de l'Inquisition (Paris 1960), pp. 29-44.
- 8) Cf. Moore, op. cit., pp. 10-15.
- 9) Ibid., pp. 19-21.
- 10) Ibid., pp. 21-24.
- 11) Cf. Maisonneuve, op. cit., p. 71.
- 12) Ibid., p. 65.
- 13) Ibid., p. pp. 76-79.
- 14) Ibid., p. 122.
- 15) Ibid., p. 102.
- 16) Ibid., pp. 108-111.
- 17) Mansi, Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio XXI, col.

