Gregory VII, *Dictatus papae* (1090)

In the following document, Pope Gregory VII declared that the pope was the head of all society and the Church was superior to the secular world. His concept of his office and of the extent of papal power is outlined here in *Dictatus papae*, a list of 27 assertions included in his official papal register. Although the list was never widely circulated, it is justly famous as a document that provides a view into the arguments of the papacy during the investiture controversy.

1. That the Roman church was founded by God alone.
2. That the Roman pontiff alone can with right be called universal.
3. That he alone can depose or reinstate bishops.
4. That, in a council his legate, even if a lower grade, is above all bishops, and can pass sentence of deposition against them.
5. That the pope may depose the absent.
6. That, among other things, we ought not to remain in the same house with those excommunicated by him.
7. That for him alone is it lawful, according to the needs of the time, to make new laws, to assemble together new congregations, to make an abbey of a canonry; and, on the other hand, to divide a rich bishopric and unite the poor ones.
8. That he alone may use the imperial insignia.
9. That of the pope alone all princes shall kiss the feet.
10. That his name alone shall be spoken in the churches.
11. That this is the only name in the world.
12. That it may be permitted to him to depose emperors.
13. That he may be permitted to transfer bishops if need be.
14. That he has power to ordain a clerk of any church he may wish.
15. That he who is ordained by him may preside over another church, but may not hold a subordinate position; and that such a one may not receive a higher grade from any bishop.
16. That no synod shall be called a general one without his order.
17. That no chapter and no book shall be considered canonical without his authority.
18. That a sentence passed by him may be retracted by no one; and that he himself, alone of all, may retract it.
19. That he himself may be judged by no one.
20. That no one shall dare to condemn one who appeals to the apostolic chair.
21. That to the latter should be referred the more important cases of every church.
22. That the Roman church has never erred; nor will it err to all eternity, the Scripture bearing witness.
23. That the Roman pontiff, if he have been canonically ordained, is undoubtedly made a saint by the merits of St. Peter; St. Ennodius, bishop of Pavia, bearing witness, and many holy fathers agreeing with him. As is contained in the decrees of St. Symmachus the pope.
24. That, by his command and consent, it may be lawful for subordinates to bring accusations.
25. That he may depose and reinstate bishops without assembling a synod.
26. That he who is not at peace with the Roman church shall not be considered catholic.
27. That he may absolve subjects from their fealty to wicked men.

Inasmuch as we have learned that, contrary to the ordinances of the holy fathers, the investiture with churches is, in many places, performed by lay persons, and that from this cause many disturbances arise in the Church by which the Christian religion is degraded, we decree that no one of the clergy shall receive the investiture with a bishopric, or abbey, or church, from the hand of an emperor, or king, or of any lay person, male or female. If he shall presume to do so, let him know that such investiture is void by apostolic authority, and that he himself shall lie under excommunication until fitting satisfaction shall have been made.

Following the ordinances of the holy fathers, as we decreed in our former councils held by the mercy of God concerning the regulation of ecclesiastical offices, so also now by apostolic authority we decree and confirm: that, if anyone shall henceforth receive a bishopric or abbey from the hands of any lay person, he shall by no means be reckoned among the bishops and abbots; nor shall any hearing be granted him as bishop or abbot. Moreover we further deny him the favor of St. Peter and entrance to the Church, until, coming to his senses, he shall surrender the position that he has appropriated through criminal ambition and disobedience—which is the sin of idolatry. We decree, moreover, that the same rule be observed in the case of inferior ecclesiastical positions. Likewise, if any emperor, king, duke, margrave, count, or any secular dignitary or person shall presume to bestow the investiture with bishoprics, or with any ecclesiastical office, let him know that he is bound by the bonds of the same condemnation. And, furthermore, unless he come to his senses and relinquish her prerogatives to the Church, let him feel, in this present life, the divine wrath both in body and estate, in order that at the Lord’s coming his soul may be saved.