

The Trial of Kingship and Priesthood¹

Anonymous

Translated by W.L. North from the edition of H.E.J. Cowdrey in *ibid.*, The Age of Abbot Desiderius. Montecassino, the Papacy, and the Normans in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries, Oxford 1983, Appendix V, pp. 247-248.

Certain men who are called religious and most holy have, as usual, set themselves against the law and have tempted God and done what they should not have done. They have therefore been greatly dishonored. These men are, in fact, the ones who held an ordeal (iudicium) regarding the kingship and the priesthood. But God, who is most merciful and pious, provided for what is just.

Now then, the abbot of Montecassino,² the chancellor who is also cardinal of San Paolo,³ the bishop of Porto⁴ along with some of his fellow bishops, Bernard the deacon, Guitmund the monk who is also called by the name Christian,⁵ and Gratian—all these performed this trial (hanc legem) which you are going to hear about by order of the pope. But first let me say that the one who blessed the water was a certain very religious monk named Peter of Naples. The priest first held a three day fast together with the other clerics who were present and then the most holy priest himself celebrated Mass. When the Mass was completed, he proceeded to the water along with the aforementioned clerics and blessed the water. He cast a certain boy (puer) in the water on behalf of the king so that God might decide the truth as to whether the king himself was in the right (haberet iusticiam). As soon as the boy was thrown into the water, he went straight to the bottom. All those present were dumbstruck at this miracle, but the one named Guitmund, who is called Christian, began to say against Gratian: *It is obvious that you pushed the child down so that he would go to the bottom of the water.* Gratian began to protest and said: *I never did any such thing.* Then the one named Guitmund went in a rage to the pope and said: *Gratian pushed the child down so that he would go to the bottom of the water.* When the pope heard this, he commanded

¹ This text survives as a copy in a single manuscript (British Library, MS Arundel 390, f. 132r) from the late eleventh century. The events described take place supposedly on December 3, 1083. This text was produced as part of a propaganda war against the Gregorian papacy.

² Desiderius, abbot of Montecassino (1058-1087) and cardinal priest of Santa Cecilia (1059-1085).

³ Peter, cardinal priest of San Grisogono from c. 1070-1084, when he deserts to Wibertine party.

⁴ John II, bishop of Porto from c. 1057-1089; he deserts to the Wibertine party in 1084.

⁵ Formerly a monk in Normandy, he was associated with the reform papacy by 1077 when he went on an embassy to Germany. He wrote against Berengar's eucharistic teachings. He eventually became bishop of Aversa.

Guitmund, saying: *Go and tell them to throw the boy into the water again in order that we may see if what you say is true.*

At this command, Guitmund set off and said to all who were present there on the pope's behalf to throw the boy into the water one more time. And so, by order of the pope they threw the boy once again into the water, and the boy went straight to the bottom of the water as before.

After that, the aforementioned persons performed the same trial (eandem legem) with regard to the pope. They threw a little boy (puerulus) into the water but he began to swim around on the surface. Once again, they threw him in and he likewise swam around on top. They therefore forced him under the water so that he would go to the bottom of the water, but God did not allow this. For they had drowned the little boy in the water. At such a miracle they are struck dumb and do not know what they should do. They took counsel at once and promised each other that if this affair should become known to the king by anyone, that not one of them would dare to say anything without common counsel and the counsel of the pope. For the pope himself received a promise from all that no one would dare to say anything.

This occurred in Pallaria in the monastery of Santa Maria which is the chapel of the abbot of Montecassino. This occurred to the confusion of those who did it and to the salvation of your empire, and it occurred on Sunday after the Mass pertaining to the Advent of the Lord.