

Decrees of Pope Alexander III (1159-1181) from the Reign of Louis VII

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Document 48: Alexander III to the Bishop of Marseilles. (1159-1179)

Because we do not possess a sure guide (canon) regarding those issues because of which you wrote to us in your letter about the Jews, we shall indicate to your fraternity by the import of the present letter that, after assembling your clergy, you should issue a general prohibition on both our and your own authority that Jews may not keep their doors and windows open on Good Friday but must keep them shut the whole day. Also, you should not allow any Christian servants to live with the Jews but should issue a general decree to all that no Christian should dare to remain in their service lest perchance they be converted by living with them to the treachery of judaizing. Regarding the lands which Jews cultivate, we answer your prudence that you should with all rigor compel them either to pay the tithe or to give up their lands entirely, lest perchance they be able to deprive the church of its rights in that situation.

Document 49: Papal Bull *Sicut Judeis* (1159-1181)

Just as Jews should not be permitted to presume [to do] in their synagogues more than has been allowed by law, so they should not endure any prejudicial action in what has been granted. Therefore, although they wish to remain in their own hardness more than to understand the mysterious words of the Prophets and to receive knowledge of the Christian faith and salvation, nevertheless, because they seek our protection and aid, we shall receive their petition and grant them the shield of our protection, thus walking in the footsteps of our predecessors of blessed memory, the Roman pontiffs Calixtus [II] and Eugenius [III] out of the gentleness of Christian piety.

Now then, we have decreed that no Christian should compel those who are unwilling and refusing to come to baptism. If, however, any of the Jews flee to the Christians for the sake of the faith, once his will has been made manifest, let him be made a Christian without calumny. Truly no one who is known to have come to Christian baptism not voluntarily but under duress, is believed to hold the true faith of Christianity.

Also, no Christian should dare without the sanction of the secular power to wound or kill Jews or take their money or alter the good customs which they have hitherto had in the region where they were living before. In particular, during the celebration of their festivals, no one may in any way harass them with clubs and stones nor may anyone demand forced service from them except for those services which they used to do in the aforesaid time.

In addition to these things, since we oppose the wickedness and iniquity of evil men, we decree that no one should dare deface or usurp the Jewish cemetery or pay to have the human bodies exhumed.

If someone, knowing the tenor of this decree, should boldly presume to go against it, he may jeopardize his honor and office or be punished with the sentence of excommunication, unless he corrects his presumption with due satisfaction.

Document 59: To Guarin [Gerard], archbishop of Bourges.

Your fraternity has asked us whether you should defer to the appeals made on behalf of the Jews by our most beloved son in Christ, Louis, the illustrious king of the French, so that they may keep their Christian servants, and whether you should allow them to establish new synagogues where they had none before. We have written to the afore-remembered king that he should desist from his defense of the Jews in this respect. On this we have also had him admonished by others and we believe that he acquiesces to our warning that it would not be right to observe with negligence what was recently decreed by the Holy Fathers in council. Consequently, it is not appropriate that you should refrain from observance of the decree because of appeals of this kind. You should not allow Jews to build new synagogues where they did not have them before. But if ancient one has collapsed or threatens to do so, you can with equanimity allow the Jews to rebuild them but you cannot allow them to make them higher or bigger or more

ornate than they are known to have been before. They should consider great what they tolerate in old synagogues and their observances.