

Medieval Sourcebook: Council of Constance: *Sacrosancta*, 1415

By the election of Martin V as Pope (11 Nov 1417), the Council of Constance ended the Great Schism but it did not have time to reform. It did issue two canons which represented the high points of conciliar thought. The first - Sacrosancta - declared that the Council of Constance derives its power directly from Christ and that its authority is superior even to that of the See of Rome. The second - Frequens - called for the frequent convoking of future councils to promote reform. A Third list of abuses to be addressed was also issued. Later popes largely nullified the intended results, perhaps laying the path to the Reformation.

In the name of the Holy and indivisible Trinity; of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen. This holy synod of Constance, forming a general council for the extirpation of the present schism and the union and reformation, in head and members, of the Church of God, legitimately assembled in the Holy Ghost, to the praise of Omnipotent God, in order that it may the more easily, safely, effectively and freely bring about the union and reformation of the church of God, hereby determines, decrees, ordains and declares what follows: - It first declares that this same council, legitimately assembled in the Holy Ghost, forming a general council and representing the Catholic Church militant, has its power immediately from Christ, and every one, whatever his state or position, even if it be the Papal dignity itself, is bound to obey it in all those things which pertain to the faith and the healing of the said schism, and to the general reformation of the Church of God, in head and members. It further declares that any one, whatever his condition, station or rank, even if it be the Papal, who shall contumaciously refuse to obey the mandates, decrees, ordinances or instructions which have been, or shall be issued by this holy council, or by any other general council, legitimately summoned, which concern, or in any way relate to the above mentioned objects, shall, unless he repudiate his conduct, be subject to condign penance and be suitably punished, having recourse, if necessary, to the other resources of the law. . . .

trans J. H. Robinson in University of Pennsylvania. Dept. of History: Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European history, published for the Dept. of History of the University of Pennsylvania., Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, Series I. Voll III:6 [1912], 31-32

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