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His 114s

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### Response Paper 2

When the Roman Empire collapsed in the 5th and 6th centuries the Catholic Church emerged as a powerful entity with widespread social and political influence. With its rise in stature, conflicts over power would increase between the Church and States, due to the dissolution of the Roman Empire. One of the most notable quarrels was between Emperor Henry IV of the Holy Roman Empire and Pope Gregory VII. Their dispute was representative of how the Church and State disputes attempted to control one another in order to exert their dominance within the Holy Roman Empire.

In 1072 Pope Gregory VII became Pope. His first endeavor in establishing Papal control over the Holy Roman Empire came in 1075 with the *Dictatus Papae*. Its assertions outlined the powers of the Pope, which were supported by the Bible. The *Dictatus Papae* served as a source of contention because it gave the Pope the ability to undermine the Emperor and act with impunity. It declared “That his decree can be annulled by no one, and that he can annul the decrees of anyone.”<sup>1</sup> This proclamation rendered the authority of an Emperor weightless as the Pope was allowed to enact or amend a decree to fit his agenda giving him more power and influence. The *Dictatus Papae* contained other provisions in the event that an Emperor might

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<sup>1</sup> “Dictatus Papae.” <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~fisher/hst205/readings/InvestitureControversy.html>. Accessed 2-9-2016.

challenge the authority of the Pope adding further friction. It stated “that he has the power to depose emperors.”<sup>2</sup> It further states “that no one can be regarded as Catholic who does not agree with the Roman Church.”<sup>3</sup> These edicts gave an Emperor little choice but to retaliate against Church for attempting to diminish his authority. This placed an Emperor into a precarious situation as he is seen as fighting God’s representative on Earth. The Emperor would thus insert himself in a war with God putting his credibility at risk. This situation caused the Emperor to become angrier and more frustrated.

Following the *Dictatus Papae* relations between the Church and the State within the Holy Roman Empire became more contentious. On January 24, 1076, Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV sent a letter to Pope Gregory VII. *The Letter of Henry IV to Gregory VII* was written in response to a letter the Pope had previously sent to the Emperor. The letter was a scathing attack which challenged the authority and legitimacy of the Pope. It stated “Our Lord Jesus Christ has called us to the government of the empire, but never called you to rule the church.”<sup>4</sup> The letter also states “come down, then, from that apostolic seat which you have obtained by violence.”<sup>5</sup> The bombardment of insults and accusations in the letter represents Henry’s belief that the Pope is beneath. The letter is a testament to the beliefs held by state authority, that it is the state’s absolute right to rule.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup>“The Letter of Henry IV to Gregory VII, January 24, 1076.” <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~fisher/hst205/readings/InvestitureControversy.html>. Accessed 2-9-2016.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid

As a result of the collapse of the Roman Empire in the 5th and 6th century, the Catholic Church dominated politically and socially. Its influential dominance contributed to existing dissension between the Church and the state. The most significant of these disputes was between Emperor Henry IV and Pope Gregory the VII. Their strife epitomized the struggle for power and authority over the Holy Roman Empire that existed between the state and the Church.