

“Descend, descend, and be damned throughout the ages.”:
Pope Gregory VII and the *Dictatus Papae*

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I

Of the many controversial Popes of the Middle Ages, Pope Gregory VII is one of the most prominent. He was born under the name of Hildebrand of Soano in the early 11th century. Hildebrand was elected to the Papal Throne in April of 1073, where he would take the name of Gregory. He would reign over the Catholic Church until his exile in 1084, and later die in Salerno in May of 1085.

When analyzing a pope of this caliber and what he has done, it is important to examine why he was so prolific. Not only should his decrees be looked at, but the potential influences of his predecessors as well. By following in the footsteps of reformation popes like Gregory VI and Leo IX, Hildebrand would no doubt have some of their ideas in mind. One key figure to note in the history of Hildebrand is the enigmatic reformer Saint Peter Damian. Damian was a friend of Hildebrand's and would later become an opponent.

It is also imperative to look into the reasons for the reform of the Catholic Church. The topics of reformation involved simony (the purchase of ecclesiastical office), clerical marriage, and discipline within the church. All of these reasons would provide a platform for Gregory VII to launch his ideals, campaigns, and decrees. This information is important in the fact that the mindset of Gregory is vital into understanding his reasons for his decrees such as the *Dictatus Papae* in 1075.

Pope Gregory VII is most notably known for his dispute with Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV and for his extensive use of Papal power. This is shown in Gregory's attempted subordination of Henry IV. While Gregory VII would never win any major victories in the Papal

seat, he would help set a precedent for the misuse of Papal power, particularly against secular leaders like Henry IV.

II

There are many secondary sources dealing with the issues surrounding the Investiture Controversy during the reign of Gregory VII. Key works include those of Blumenthal, Mommsen, Morrison, LM Smith, and JP Whitney. These historians had a lot of key influences that would sway the way they would write on this particular subject, specifically: education, nationality, religion, and more would determine how these historians would define their topic. Some sources would lean one way or another, whether they support the actions of Pope Gregory VII, or see him as a tyrant at the head of the Catholic Church in severe opposition to the divinely ordained rule of Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV.

The first work to look at in a historiographical sense is *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century* by Uta-Renate Blumenthal. Blumenthal does a good job going into the events leading up to the Investiture controversy, and in particular the early lives of Henry IV and Gregory VII. She writes about how the Church is consolidating power when Henry is too young to actually rule. This source describes the early beginnings of the conflict and move on to the climax and end of it all, particularly in Church Reform. Blumenthal also goes into detail of how both sides gave some effort in trying to reconcile the issues of simony and the power struggles between the two. Another key issue that Blumenthal provides is the side-switching politics of the Papacy that keeps the controversy going. Blumenthal also describes how Gregory VII's inability to maintain his allegiances to either Henry IV (after abasing himself at the feet of the Pope at the settlement at Canossa in

1077), or to the princes in the Holy Roman Empire, eventually leads to his dethroning as Pope, exile, and his later death.

For all intents and purposes this source will help in the idea of showing the issues leading up to and throughout the controversy. Unfortunately, this source gives little material and insight into the *Dictatus Papae*, or Papal Dictates, which is seen as one of the key issues to the conflict between Pope Gregory VII and Emperor Henry IV. Even with this lack of insight this source will prove invaluable in providing a contextual view of the entire conflict on both sides. This work is reviewed by Philip F. Gallagher, and is commended as being a very solid source in dealing with the controversy. *The Investiture Controversy* may have a slight tilt of bias towards siding with Henry IV, since it stems from a German source. According to Gallagher, “She shows in great detail that strong support for spiritual reform came from lay rulers of all types.”¹ Gallagher praises the book as being widely and favorably reviewed by many other scholars. He also presents the fact that the book would be more helpful to historians than to undergraduate students, based on its difficult reading.

The next source to dissect is *Imperial Lives and Letters of the Eleventh Century* by Theodor E. Mommsen and Karl F. Morrison. The authors go into great detail to go into the early formulas for the controversy, even by using the Bible as a source. One key feature to note is that the author goes into the distant past to describe how the Popes and Kings were both appointed by God, and were supposed to rule equally. The Popes would rule the spiritual aspect of man, and the Kings would protect the former and rule the secular aspect of man. Eventually, greedy Kings and Popes would begin to try and consolidate their power and overcome the other. One of the earliest writings comes from Pope Gelasius I, who writes that the soul is greater than the body,

¹ Gallagher. *Reviewed work(s): The Investiture Controversy*. 96-97

and therefore is greater than the material, and in essence the Popes are to be intrinsically more powerful than the secular Kings. Gregory VII would eventually take up this banner and damningly compete with the secular Kings like Henry IV.

Mommsen also describes of how Gregory would turn away Henry's continued support of invested clergymen, and how this would infuriate Henry. This source will be helpful in the idea that it shows the seeds that are sown to begin the Investiture Controversy. The authors also use the contemporary writings of Wipo of Burgundy to detail the predecessors of Henry IV and how they helped spark (or in Henry III's case, diffuse) the issues between the Kings and Popes. Mommsen also provides invaluable primary source material of the conflict by including the personal letters between Gregory and Henry, depicting their bitter struggle for power. From a historiographical sense this book does not arrive to many of its own conclusions, instead focusing on translations of Wipo's *Life of Conrad*, the anonymously written *Life of Henry IV*, and the *Letters of Henry IV*. It may be that since the focus of the book is on the Imperial side of the conflict that this is where the inherent German bias comes into play. It only makes sense for a German to agree with the German actions that took place in the conflict. The only way the Papal side of the Controversy is shown is through Imperial eyes, such as through the letters of Henry IV.

The Investiture Controversy: Issues, Ideals, and Results by Karl F. Morrison provides a great deal of data on the controversy. This data ranges from a timeline of events, to maps, and a detailed chronology of how it all took place. This source, while short, does include a full citing of the *Dictatus Papae*, which will be very useful in looking at what Gregory VII specifically decreed that so enraged Henry IV. Morrison's book may not be as detailed as Blumenthal or

Mommsen, but his inclusion of primary sources such as the *Dictatus Papae*, the letters of the Pope and the Emperor, will help to provide a full picture of the events and the struggle.

Morrison also describes how both parties used an early form of propaganda to sway the provincial princes to their side of the struggle. The source eventually goes into detail on how Gregory's reforms failed, and how his successor Paschal II tried to mend the rift that Gregory had caused, and even tried to distance himself from his predecessor. While Gregory and his predecessors, like Alexander II and Gelasius I, tried to consolidate their power and land, it was not possible since the power base of the Papal Seat was already so weak that alienating powerful potential allies like Henry IV was not the most prudent of decisions. It was this bleeding that Paschal tried so desperately to stop after Gregory's attempts failed so miserably, and later with Pope Calixtus II with the Catholic Reforms at the Concordat of Worms in 1122 in particular. In a historiographical sense, Morrison may have been influenced in his thinking by his colleague and teacher, Theodor E. Mommsen, since Mommsen was born and raised in Germany with a German bias. The timelines and chronology provided a helpful tool in understanding a possibly unbiased standpoint.

L. M. Smith wrote an article titled *Cluny and Gregory VII*. Smith goes into detail in this journal article at where Gregory VII may have received some of his ideas against simony and clerical marriage. This source believes that he got it from the Cluniacs at their monastery at Cluny. This source in particular gives great information on the life of Gregory before he became Pope, by providing a detailed understanding of his upbringing and education. Hildebrand, as he was known before acquiring the Papal Throne, took up the Papal Seat unwillingly, but once he got into power he tried to use his position to stubbornly promote the Cluniac Reforms that opposed simony, lay investiture, and clerical marriage. While this source does not show the

Investiture Controversy as a whole, it does provide some insight into how Gregory got his ideas and what he did to place them into his Papal decrees.

Hildebrand, and later as Pope Gregory VII, firmly believed that the Church was being corrupted by secular Kings that were placing their own lay henchmen into bishoprics and priestly position, and this was something the Pope could not allow to continue. Gregory saw these “invested” clergymen as falsifiers of the cloth, and felt them unfit to perform priestly duties, when they were just political lackeys who were looking for their beneficiaries to throw them a bone and give them some power. Gregory and the Cluniacs saw this as an affront to the Holy Church, and this was one of the earliest starting points of the Investiture Controversy.

Historiographically speaking, Smith could have been influenced by the time period in which he was writing. 1911 is by far one of the earlier secondary sources available on this topic. Smith himself could have been a deeply devoted Catholic and had himself agreed with the methods of Gregory VII, by justifying them with what Gregory had learned from his time at Cluny.

The final source to look at is *Gregory VII* by J. P. Whitney, written in 1919. Whitney’s article goes into great detail, and invokes more specifics on the life of Gregory VII. Whitney elaborates much like Smith and focuses specifically on Gregory. He specifically seems to praise Gregory on his initial humility and refusal of the Papal seat, and that he only took it because he was forced to. He also tells of how Hildebrand thought it was a chance to improve the current state of the Catholic Church, and that he was not being ambitious for power. He saw it as a mission of God as opposed to a way to seek and gain personal power. This source also details the Cluniac Reforms, which opposed simony, lay investiture, and clerical marriage, which Gregory embarked on once he was Pope. It briefly illustrates the confrontational past between

Gregory VII and Henry IV, and it seems to infer that the two men were destined to be at odds with each other.

This source also has complete list of Gregory's failures and how these failures caused many of his former comrades to forsake him to the will of his bitter enemy. Many of Gregory's senior cardinals leave him after his crusade against Henry proves to be fruitless, and only serves to strengthen Henry and weaken the Catholic Church. From a historiographic standpoint, it may be safe to assume that Whitney was much like his predecessor Smith. It may also be possible that Whitney and Smith did what they could to compile what information they could on a possibly unenlightened topic. Maybe these historians wanted to find out the Church side of the conflict rather than just sitting back and taking what they might have heard from the remnants of the Holy Roman Empire in Germany.

The best way to understand these authors wrote the way they did is to try and group them together by background and available information. Blumenthal, Mommsen, and Morrison all lean towards the secular arguments and authority of Henry IV. This may be because of a German bias inherent in at least two of the authors, Blumenthal and Mommsen, with Morrison being biased because of his scholarly relationship with Mommsen. The last two authors, Smith and Whitney, tend to support the religious arguments of Gregory VII. They base this on the idea that he just wanted to help, and was a humble clergyman that was trying to make the world and the Catholic Church a better place. They also seem to support the idea that his religious fervor is what brought him into conflict with Henry, and ultimately became his undoing.

III

An early representation of his abuse of his power as Pope was by writing several documents, most notably the *Dictatus Papae*. This document was used to outline the powers which the Pope had over secular authority, as well as spiritual authority. The purpose of the *Dictatus Papae* was to declare the powers of the Pope, outlaw simony and clerical marriage, and to give Gregory legal authority over the kings and emperors, most notably Emperor Henry IV. Gregory VII had many reasons for extending the power of the Papacy by fighting against simony, or the sale of spiritual gifts like blessings or ecclesiastical offices, and clerical marriage. In simple terms Gregory's view of the Papacy was to show that the Pope was closer to divine authority than any emperor or king, continuously try to keep Henry IV beneath him, and to try, and fail, in his Papal policies, in particular the *Dictatus Papae*.

The first item up for discussion comes from defining the issues that sparked the controversy. While many think that the Church is a place for spiritual guidance and salvation, this was not exactly the case in the eleventh century. A great number of the popes that were "elected" to their office were in fact lay rulers. These popes were placed in their positions for their administrative abilities, or by respected Roman families. Even "middle management" level clergy were some of the wealthiest landowners in Medieval Europe. This meant that they had to maintain their lands, support the peasants, organize defenses in case of attacks, and most importantly, form alliances and help insure their rightful claim to their land. In order to understand why these types of men would be placed on the Papal throne, it is important to look

at the underlying issues of clerical celibacy and lay investiture from a secular, administrative point of view.

The next point to understand is how clerical celibacy is beneficial from a secular perspective. The Catholic Church wanted its clergy to be celibate to help make them distinct from the laity around Europe. This would help the laity and the clergy differentiate between each other, also helping to show who was cleared to distribute the sacraments and perform priestly duties. Celibacy was also useful in maintaining the image of the church and inner discipline.² Another reason for celibacy was to prevent hereditary bishoprics and sees. This would help maintain a balance by making sure a decent administrator was in charge of a particular see, and not just anybody's incompetent son. A secularly appointed clergyman would not always agree with this, because he would want to be able to enjoy his secular life and be able to continue his family legacy, instead of leaving it up to the church.

IV

It is also very important to understand the issues of reform and which of Gregory VII's predecessors felt the need to press for reform. The previous popes should be placed under the scope of why they felt reform was necessary, and how they would attempt to accomplish these efforts. The most notable of the popes that would affect Gregory VII are Gregory VI and Leo IX.

Gregory VI is recognized for purchasing the Papal Throne from the love-sick Pope Benedict IX. Gregory VI, born John Gratian, had deemed it necessary to remove such a fickle and young man from such a seat of power and responsibility. Unfortunately for Gratian, he was

² Cowdrey. *Pope Gregory VII*. 553.

accused of simony for buying his ecclesiastical office by a returning Benedict IX and Pope Sylvester III at the Synod of Sutri in 1046 AD. While Gratian had passionately argued against his accusations, Holy Roman Emperor Henry III ordered Gregory VI deposed, and Gratian decided to relinquish the Holy See peacefully and venture into voluntary exile. Following the exiled pope was his chaplain, Hildebrand, who would later become Gregory VII.

In 1049 a German pontificate was placed on the seat of Saint Peter and took the name of Leo IX. This pope fought hard against the sins of simony and clerical marriage. His Synod at Rheims in 1049 also decreed against the practice of simony and to fight for canonical elections, which were basically mutually elected candidates of the Church and the Empire. At the synod of Mainz the more difficult issue of outlawing clerical marriage confirmed the decision made at Leo's Easter Synod earlier in the same year. The issue was difficult because the issue had wormed its way down into the lower ranks of the Catholic Church and its sees. According to Blumenthal a married bishop was overlooked, even in Italy.³ These events and efforts from Gregory's predecessors provide some insight into his attitude and efforts of reformation.

V

To better understand Gregory's frame of mind, it is vital to discuss contemporary writers of the time. Saint Peter Damian, clergyman and friend to Gregory VII, had close ties and vested interests towards the Papacy. They were both similar in their ideals of reforming the Church, particularly in outlawing simony and clerical marriage, to return to the models of Church discipline founded by Saint Peter. According to Cowdrey Damian saw the rise to Papal power of Gregory VI as crucial turning point in Church reformation. "...enthusiastic reformer Peter

³ Blumenthal. *The Investiture Controversy*. 73.

Damiani applauded his accession as heralding an end to simony, a return to the golden age of the apostles, and a reflowering of Church discipline.”⁴

Despite their similarities in fervor for Church reform, the two reformers disagreed on how papal powers should be executed regarding secular authority. Gregory wished to establish Papal supremacy over any and all worldly rulers. Damian believed that divinely ordained rulers had interconnected powers with the Church. Damian also believed in a symbiotic relationship between the Empire and the Papacy. In Mommsen’s text he analyzes Damian’s views on Church and State interconnectivity. “...the king is in the Roman pontiff, and the Roman pontiff in the king... Moreover, he [the pope] may bring force to bear upon delinquents through the law of the public courts, when the cause dictates; and the king with his bishops may make investigation in regard to the state of souls, with the cited authority of the sacred canons...”⁵

The relationship between the two reformers would take a turn as Gregory (Hildebrand) became more zealous in his ideals. Whitney helps explain Gregory’s justification for his dictates. “The church then appeared to Gregory as a divinely ordered society, working out by its life and authority the purposes of God. Hence came his great regard for its laws, and his desire to make it one more a real coherent body. He came to his papacy more with a sense of mission than a real wish for power.”⁶ While this may have been the case early on in his time involved with the Church, Gregory changed as the years progressed, by becoming much more heavy handed in his enforcement of his beliefs.

Damian would twice refer to Hildebrand as “my holy Satan.” The first reference describes him as the Satan in the Book of Job, who decided to test the holy man to the limit in

⁴ Ibid., 22.

⁵ Mommsen and Morrison. *Imperial Lives*. 17.

⁶ Whitney. *Gregory VII*. 137.

respect to his manner of life.⁷ Under this assessment Damian is attributed as the holy man and Hildebrand is the holy Satan. It is apparent that Hildebrand pressed Saint Peter Damian as far as he could go. The second reference to Hildebrand as “holy Satan,” occurs after Damian had felt he suffered enough at Hildebrand’s anger. The anger arose from a disagreement and offense by Peter Damian between himself and Hildebrand. Damian pleaded with “his holy Satan” for a reprieve from such vicious backlash, so that he could recover. Eventually, Saint Peter Damian would retaliate with blunt cruel statements concerning his friend. Blumenthal attributes Damian with these statements, “Damian describes Gregory as an intrinsically worthless piece of iron but with the irresistible effect of the magnet, drawing everything into its field. He also compared him to a tiger tensed for the leap, to a wolf, and to the bone-chilling, icy north wind.”⁸

VI

In 1075 AD, Pope Gregory VII issued a Papal decree known as the *Dictatus Papae* which overtly declared some of the powers of the Papacy. The chief rules of this decree were to show the supremacy the Pope had over any king, queen, emperor, or empress. A key point expressed in the *Dictatus Papae* is dictate twelve which states, “That it may be permitted to him to depose emperors.”⁹ This key point in the *Dictatus Papae* shows how far Gregory is willing to go to make sure that he alone was responsible for secular and spiritual authority. The third point in the decree was that only the pope could remove or restore clergy. This is another issue that was not always so. On many occasions bishops and clergymen were handpicked by kings to help the kings stabilize their power and show that they are divinely ordained to their position of power.

⁷ Cowdrey. *Popes and Church Reform*. 34.

⁸ Blumenthal. 116.

⁹ Tierney. *The Middle Ages*. 122.

This decree switches the appointee's allegiance from the king, emperor, or other leader who they owed patronage for their position to that of the Pope. One of the main goals of Gregory's issuing of the *Dictatus Papae* was to spell out the powers of the Papacy, which he did overtly and without any regrets.

Gregory VII also issued the *Dictatus Papae* to help him stamp out the practice of simony. In a Roman Council meeting at the Lateran Palace, one year before the *Dictatus Papae* was issued, Gregory had this to say about simony, "Those who have been advanced to any grade of holy orders, or to any office, through simony, that is, by the payment of money, shall hereafter have no right to officiate in the holy church. Those also who have secured churches by giving money shall certainly be deprived of them. And in the future it shall be illegal for anyone to buy or sell [any ecclesiastical office, position, etc]." ¹⁰ Gregory was a firm opponent on the practice of simony, or the purchase of ecclesiastical services or offices. This would help propel Gregory into conflict with Henry IV.

According to L.M. Smith the two key points to Gregory's reforms in the church were mentioned as thus, "...points of the Gregorian reform, against simony in the church and the marriage of priests..." ¹¹ Gregory was not alone in his plans for reforms nor was he the first to act towards these reforms. Some of his predecessors, chiefly Pope Leo IX and Pope Gregory VI, were involved in the early reforms of the Church. Gregory VII was also joined by the members of the Monastery at Cluny, "To his mind Gregory, upon the basis of the Cluniac reforms, started a campaign against simony and built up a new spiritual democracy." ¹² This source also makes the implication that Gregory's attacks on simony were not even his own original policies.

Evidence that points to this come from his predecessor, Pope John XI, who helped begin the

¹⁰ Tierney, 121.

¹¹ Smith. *Cluny and Gregory VII*. 25.

¹² Whitney, 130.

reform movement by supporting the Cluniac Monastery. Whitney describes that the idea came from the reformers at the Church of Cluny, and Gregory took up the task of enforcing the ideals of the Cluniacs when he became Pope. Gregory used his numerous accounts of synods and decrees, like the *Dictatus Papae*, to strengthen his power base and give him the authority to outlaw and enforce such policies against simony.

Gregory was also infamous for his opposition to clerical marriage, or in other terms non-celibate clergy. In the same Roman council at the Lateran Palace mentioned earlier, held in 1074, Gregory issued a statement against clerical marriage, “Nor shall clergymen who are married say mass or serve the altar in any way. We decree also that if they refuse to obey our orders, or rather those of the holy fathers, the people shall refuse to receive their ministrations, in order that those who disregard the love of God and the dignity of their office may be brought to their senses through feeling the shame of the world and the reproof of the people.”¹³ Gregory blatantly calls out those clerics who are untrue to the virtues of their position, and call on the masses to refuse the services of such “unfaithful” clergymen. Clerical marriage, along with simony, was one of the biggest reform policies enforced by Gregory VII.

VII

The main reason behind Gregory’s *Dictatus Papae* was to give Gregory legal authority over emperors and kings, most notably Emperor Henry IV of the Holy Roman Empire in Germany. The passage below also relates to simony and clerical celibacy in the sense that by wishing abandonment and defeat upon his imperial enemy, Gregory will help his cause in removing the hereditary power that Henry IV had in appointing clergy at his leisure. It was more

¹³ Tierney, 121.

or less a move to consolidate his power over the king, ergo to consolidate his power and gain discipline in the church.

And again, on the part of God Almighty and of yourselves, I deny to him the kingdom of the Germans and of Italy and I take away from him all royal power and dignity. [And] I forbid any Christian to obey him as king, and absolve from their oath all who have sworn or shall swear to him as ruler of the land. May this same Henry, moreover, - as well as his partisans, - be powerless in any war-like encounter and obtain no victory during his life.¹⁴

This excerpt comes from Gregory's second excommunication of Emperor Henry IV of Germany and explicitly asks God to deny Henry of victory and calls for Henry's vassals to abandon their "godless" king. A key point of this is stated very blatantly in the *Dictatus Papae* under point twelve. This issue gave the Pope the express powers to depose kings and emperors that he thought to be unworthy of such titles, and also gave Gregory the power to depose those that displeased the Pope. Gregory VII had a vision of what a good Christian king was supposed to do, and if he did not like the way that king did things the *Dictatus Papae* was established to give the Pope the power to take care of such things. "According to Gregory VII, a Christian king must be 'suitable' (*idoneus*), 'worthy' (*dignus*), 'obedient' (*obediens*), 'devoted' (*devotus*) and 'useful' (*utilis*) from the point of view of the Church, and especially of the pope. If a king lacked these qualities, he must be deposed in favour of a more suitable candidate."¹⁵

VIII

In analyzing the downfall of Gregory VII and the eventual failure of the *Dictatus Papae*, there are a few items that need to be addressed. The issuing of the *Dictatus Papae* brings Gregory face to face with Henry IV on the grounds of irreverence and disobedience to the

¹⁴ Tierney, 126.

¹⁵ Robinson. *Pope Gregory VII*. 740.

Papacy. "...his warning to Henry IV in 1065 anticipates Gregory VII's theory of kinship: 'unless [the king] is obedient, humbly devoted and useful to holy Church,...then beyond a doubt holy Church will not only not countenance him, but will oppose him.'"¹⁶

Gregory did not direct all of his ideals of power to just Henry IV. He also came into conflict with other princes and kings in Europe. "'By my power kings rule' (*Per me reges regnant*), was used by Gregory VII to emphasize that kings must prove their divine ordination by the righteousness of their conduct. 'Let your life be worthy,' wrote the pope to Harald Hein, king of the Danes,'...so that God may be able to say of you, 'this king rules by my will (*per me*)'."¹⁷ Gregory also managed to put princes under his Papal authority. According to Robinson, Gregory would essentially put secular princes under his jurisdiction. This also meant that the princes had to defer to the pope no matter what decisions of authority had to be made. When princes and kings refused the authority of the Pope, especially Henry IV, Gregory would call for God to bring swift justice upon them, "Let kings and all secular princes now learn how great ye are and what your power is; and let them dread to disregard the command of your church. And, in the case of the said Henry, exercise such swift judgment that all may know him to fall not by chance but by your power."¹⁸ Gregory's ambition to place secular rulers under his authority would lead to his downfall. The Pope's ultimate issues with Henry IV would be shown in his first and second excommunications of the German emperor.

¹⁶ Ibid., 750.

¹⁷ Ibid., 742.

¹⁸ Tierney, 127.

Henry IV, however, refused, even at the pope's request, to recognize him, declared Godfrey properly chosen, and asked the Lombard bishops to consecrate him. At the Lent Synod of 1073 Alexander excommunicated five leading counselors of the emperor for their action and simony. This was an attack upon the imperial power, even if it was justified by church law. The death of Alexander II (21 April 1073) left this complicated difficulty for solution by his successor.¹⁹

This quote shows that Henry had a confrontational past with Gregory's predecessors, which might explain why Henry had such a strong disdain for the Papal administration that included unwillingness for Henry to cooperate with anything the Papacy declared. After the Pope issued the *Dictatus Papae* Henry immediately called for Gregory to be deposed, "Let another ascend the throne of St. Peter, who shall not practice violence under the cloak of religion, but shall teach the sound doctrine of St. Peter. I Henry, king by the grace of God, do say unto thee, together with all our bishops: Descend, descend, to be damned throughout the ages."²⁰

IX

Eventually, Gregory's overzealous reforms would cause him to lose much of his clerical support. It would be picturesque of what had happened to some of his predecessors, showing the true weakness of the Papacy. In 1084 AD thirteen of his cardinals deserted him, three of which he appointed himself. Many of these cardinals were key administrators in the Church, and several of them took their support staff with them when they left. Gregory had even managed to drive away his principal electors, supporters, archdeacons, and the heads of several colleges, most notably the College of Cantors, the College of Regionarii, and the head of the Judices. This

¹⁹ Whitney, 143.

²⁰ Tierney, 124.

abandonment was official and devastating. A reason for this desertion may have been that while Gregory was liked and respected early in his reign, he pushed more of his followers away with his increasingly heavy-handed and tactless attempts at reform. While a full understanding of the causes is not known, it had meant the defeat for Pope Gregory VII.²¹

This abandonment caused Gregory to lose face in the Church, and throughout the entirety of the Holy Roman Empire. After Gregory's abandonment, the support he had for his decrees and ideals dissolved, and he was seemingly forced into self-imposed exile in Salerno, where he would stay until his death in 1085.

X

Of all the controversial men to sit in the Papal seat in Rome, there is one that sticks in everybody's mind. Pope Gregory VII was most well known for his face to face confrontation with Emperor Henry IV of the Holy Roman Empire in Germany. This confrontation between Gregory and Henry, known as the Investiture Contest, was handed down to Gregory from his predecessors and it stemmed from Henry's refusal to follow the dictations of the Papacy. Gregory tried numerous times to heel Henry IV, but he was met with failure. One of the Pope's more famous attempts was his issuing of the *Dictatus Papae* in 1075.

The *Dictatus Papae* overtly called out Henry IV and tried to establish a precedent for the power held by the Pope's. This attempt to place a great king like Henry beneath the power of the Pope, while valiant, was futile in the end. Henry had completely disregarded the Papal decree and continued his practices of simony by electing his own bishops. This Papal decree of Gregory's, while important, was refuted and disregarded as another attempt by the Pope's to

²¹ Whitney, 150-151.

exaggerate their own power whilst belittling the power of their regal neighbors. Another key feature to Gregory's confrontation with Henry came from his attacks on the actions of simony and priestly marriage. Henry wanted to appoint his own clerics to help stabilize his power, and to prove he was equal to the Pope in terms of power. The Pope had tried to expand his power, without success, as well as show how a Pope could greatly misuse the powers bestowed upon him by his predecessors. Pope Gregory's "war" with simony, clerical marriage, and Henry IV would cause him to lose backing on nearly all levels. Gregory's own cardinals would eventually leave him because of his own ambition and pride. This would be the end of Gregory VII's long and arduous reign on the seat of St. Peter.

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