

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE CONFLICT BETWEEN GREGORY VII AND HENRY IV

#### I. THE EARLY YEARS OF HENRY IV

107. The early part of Henry IV's reign. (From the *Chronicle of Ekkehard of Aurach*.)

The most comprehensive of all the mediæval chronicles covering the history of the world was written by Ekkehard of Aurach. He exercised great patience and care and repeatedly revised and elaborated his work. He began to write just before the opening of the First Crusade, in which he became greatly interested (see extract below, pp. 316 *sq.*). His fair-mindedness is shown in the following account of Henry IV's early troubles.

In the year 1057 of the Incarnation of our Lord, and the year 1808 since the founding of the City, Henry IV, son of Emperor Henry, while still a boy, began to reign in the place of his father. At the time that this book is being written, he is reigning, in his forty-second year, as the eighty-seventh emperor since Augustus. . . .

In the year of our Lord 1058, Frederick, who as pope was called Stephen, died, and Alexander, bishop of Lucca, followed him. At that time Hildebrand, who later became pope, administered the office of archdeacon in Rome.

In the year of our Lord 1059, Pope Stephen died, and Gerhard followed him under the name of Nicholas (II).<sup>1</sup> Henry, king of France, died, and Philip, his son, reigned in his stead.

<sup>1</sup> Stephen IX died in 1058 and was succeeded by Nicholas II, who was in turn succeeded by Alexander II in 1061. The confusion of dates by Ekkehard seems rather surprising, but similar mistakes are common in most of the chronicles.

In the year of our Lord 1060, Luitpold, archbishop of Mayence, died and Siegfried, abbot of Fulda, followed him, who later allied himself with others in a conspiracy against his lord the king.

In the year of our Lord 1062, Archbishop Anno of Cologne, with the consent of the leaders of the empire, brought the prince (Henry IV), of whose person he had taken violent possession, under his control, and withdrew from the prince's mother the government of the empire, as if he felt it to be unworthy that the state should be ruled by the empress, who, though a woman, was enabled to exercise power after the manner of a man. After he had given an account before all of what he had done, he again gained the favor of his lord the king, and was again reconciled to the mother through the son. . . .

In the year of our Lord 1063, Pope Nicholas died and was followed by Bishop Alexander of Lucca. . . .

In the year of our Lord 1064, Siegfried, bishop of Mayence, Gunther of Babenberg, and William of Utrecht, along with many other bishops and noblemen, set forth with a great following on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Here they suffered much from the attacks of the barbarians, but finally, having happily reached their goal, they returned, greatly reduced in numbers and strength.

In the year of our Lord 1065, Gunther, bishop of Babenberg, died in Pannonia, as he was returning from Jerusalem. His body was brought back to Babenberg and buried there, and Hermann was chosen to succeed him. Count Gozmin, who had usurped the power in the bishopric of Würzburg, was killed by the followers of Bishop Adelberon.

In the year of our Lord 1066, a comet glowed long over the whole earth. In the same year England was terribly desolated by the Norman William and finally subjugated, and he had himself made king. He then drove almost all the bishops of the said kingdom into banishment and had



the nobles killed. The commons he gave over in bondage to his knights, and he compelled the wives of the natives to marry the invaders.

In the year of our Lord 1067, King Henry took to wife Bertha, daughter of a certain Otto, an Italian, and of Adelheid; and he celebrated the wedding at Tribur. Conrad, councilor of the church at Cologne, whom King Henry had designated as bishop of Treves, was taken prisoner by Theodorich, count of that city, and was carried into the forest by his followers and thrown down three times from the top of a mountain, but since he still remained unhurt, they dispatched him with a sword.

The king's  
youthful  
recklessness.

In the year of our Lord 1068, King Henry, with youthful recklessness, began to reside in Saxony alone of all the Roman Empire, to despise the princes, oppress the nobles, exalt the lowborn, and to devote himself (as was said) to the chase, to gaming and other occupations of this kind, more than to the administration of justice. He married the daughters of the nobles to his favorites of low origin, and, full of distrust against the powerful of the empire, he began to build certain castles. By thus recklessly sowing the seeds of discord it fell out that the number of those who proposed to deprive the king not only of his kingdom but even of his life grew rapidly. However, as he had not yet fully reached the years of maturity, many judged that the responsibility did not fall so much upon him as upon Archbishop Adelbert of Bremen, since everything was done on his advice.

In the year of our Lord 1069, the Empress Agnes, mother of King Henry, through vexation, or better, through divine inspiration, surrendered the duchy of Bavaria, and, discarding the reins of government in her devotion to Christ, betook herself to Rome, where, with marvelous humility, she brought forth the fruits of repentance and after a few years closed this earthly life in the Lord.

In the year of our Lord 1070, Margrave Teti, not without the connivance of the Saxon princes, established a tyranny

directed against the king's followers. This was, however, suppressed through the intervention of the heavenly as well as the earthly majesty, for his castles of Beichlingen and Burgscheidungen were destroyed by the king; his son, likewise a warrior, was killed by some of his servants, and he himself soon died a natural death.

In the year of our Lord 1071, Duke Otto lost the duchy of Bavaria. He was a Saxon by origin, a man of excellent rank, to whom few could be compared in insight and military power. He enjoyed such respect among all the princes that the king, who was already an object of suspicion and hate to the Saxons, was fearful lest this Otto might, should the king's influence decline, attempt to win the royal throne itself.

How the  
duchy of  
Bavaria was  
taken from  
Duke Otto.

A certain Egino, of mean origin and insignificant resources, took advantage of the situation for his evil ends. Although well known for his impudence and shameless conduct, he managed to slip into the court under the protection of certain of the king's adherents. He lied to the king, saying that that great hero, Otto, who in reality had never known him, had conspired with him to murder the king. He offered himself, as was the custom, as a hostage until the truth of what he had said should be settled by a duel between him and the duke. What more need be said? After royal councils had been announced, one at Mayence and the other at Goslar, Otto disdained to fight with Egino, — the duke with the rogue, the prince with the common man, — nevertheless his innocence and Egino's shamelessness remained by no means concealed.

So Otto, guilty of leze majesty, lost the duchy of Bavaria, which a certain Welf received, a distinguished, brave, warlike person, a Swabian by birth. From this seed, alas, did great dissension spring, which grew into the wretched fruit of continuous battles, of rebelliousness, robbery, and destruction, division in the Church, heresy, and many deaths.

The duchy  
of Bavaria  
given to  
Welf.

In the year of our Lord 1072, the king followed Otto everywhere, destroyed as many of his fortresses as he could,



Duke Otto rouses the Saxons to revolt.

wasted his lands, and strove completely to annihilate him, as an enemy of the state. Nevertheless, Otto, with a select following, and with his own stout arm and his heart full of bitter hate, since he might not fight directly with the royal troops, sought to avenge the injury which he had suffered, now by plundering, now by fire, now by the sword, wherever opportunity offered.

At his inspiration the Saxon people—of a very violent disposition as they are—ceased not, with one accord, to organize a conspiracy against the king; sent letters full of insulting and unheard-of accusations against the king to the apostolic see, and sought allies by letter and messenger throughout the whole German empire.

In the first place they made friends with Siegfried, the archbishop of Mayence, Adelbert of Worms, Adelberon of Würzburg, Gebhardt of Salzburg, and other bishops, as many as they could, and then through these they gained Pope Alexander. Many assert too that, last and greatest, Anno, archbishop of Cologne, was one of those privy to this conspiracy. Frightened at last by these intrigues, the king left Saxony and conducted the business of the empire in other regions.

In the year of our Lord 1073, the archbishop of Cologne and Hermann of Babenberg were sent to Rome in order to get together the money which was owing the king there. They brought back, on their return, a letter from Pope Alexander, in which the king was ordered to give an account of his heresy, simony, and many other similar matters which called for improvement, rumors of which had reached him in Rome.

Thereupon the Saxons built many strongholds, for up to this time that country had had but few of them. Moreover they completely destroyed the castles which the king had built some time before. Among these they tore down the castle which was called Harzburg, the cathedral and the abbey which stood there, destroying all these in their rage and perversity, down to the very ground. Horrible to say, they

took up the bones of the innocent son of the king, who had been buried there, and scattered them about as an insult to the father.

In the year of our Lord 1074, after Pope Alexander of blessed memory had died, Hildebrand, later called Gregory, followed him; by profession and rank he was a monk and archdeacon. Under him the Roman Empire and the whole Church began to be threatened by new and unheard-of divisions and turmoil. Since Gregory had reached this height of power without the king's permission, simply through the favor of the Romans, some asserted that he was not rightfully chosen, but had seized the papal dignity with his own hand. Therefore he was not recognized by some of the bishops. Gregory repeatedly summoned King Henry through messengers and letters to answer for his deeds before a synod.

In the year of our Lord 1074, Pope Gregory, after holding a synod, condemned the simonists, namely those who bought and sold the gift of the Holy Ghost, and provided that the Nicolaitae, that is to say, the priests who had married, should be removed from the service of the altar, and forbade the laity to attend masses performed by them.

In the year of the Lord 1075, King Henry moved against the Saxons, after he had collected a strong army from Alemannia, Bavaria, and Germania, and from Bohemia. He fought with the Saxons on the river Unstrut and after much blood had been shed on both sides, he finally returned home victorious.

Rudolph, duke of Alemannia and Burgundy, who later usurped the imperial crown, fought bravely there with his followers for the king. Bishop Hermann of Babenberg was deposed, on account of his simoniacal practices, by command of Pope Hildebrand, and Ruotpert was put in his place by the king. In this year died Anno, archbishop of Cologne, rich in merits of piety, and was buried in the cloister of Siegburg, which he himself had built. He was followed by Hildolf.

Hildebrand, the monk, becomes pope as Gregory VII



II. THE ISSUE BETWEEN POPE AND EMPEROR IN THE  
MATTER OF INVESTITURE

108. The conference at Châlons sur Marne in regard to the question of investiture (1107). (From Suger's *Life of Louis the Fat*.)

A conference was arranged at Châlons in 1107 between the representatives of the pope and those of the emperor, where the demands of each party might be clearly stated. Although this did not occur until just after the death of Henry IV, it seems best to introduce at this point an account of the arguments advanced by each side, since they serve to show the real nature of the troubles between Henry and Gregory. The report which follows is given by Suger in his *Life of Louis the Fat* (see above, p. 198). He was himself present at the conference and evidently neither liked the Germans nor approved of their arguments and point of view.

The pope (Paschal II) having spent some time in Châlons, the representatives of the emperor, men void of humility, hard and rebellious, betook themselves according to agreement to the place of meeting, with much display and a numerous escort, all richly appareled. These envoys were the archbishop of Treves, the bishops of Halberstadt and of Münster, several counts, and Duke Welf, who had his sword carried before him. The latter was a man of great corpulence, truly astonishing in the length and breadth of his surface, and a loud-mouthed fellow withal. These turbulent men seemed to have been dispatched with a view to terrify those they met rather than to discuss matters in a rational way.

We should make a single exception of the archbishop of Treves: he was an agreeable person, of good manners, well educated, a good speaker, and with a touch of French polish. He made a clever speech, saluting the lord pope and the assembly in the name of his master, and offering the emperor's services, saving always the rights of the imperial throne.

Then, reaching the real object of their mission, he continued as follows:

"This is the reason that the emperor has sent us hither. It is well known that in the time of our predecessors it was recognized by holy and truly apostolic men, like Gregory the Great and others, that, according to the law of the empire, in every election the following method should be observed. First, the election was brought to the emperor's attention before it was publicly announced. Before deciding the matter measures were taken to learn whether he approved of the candidate proposed, and his sanction was obtained. Then, following the canons,<sup>1</sup> the election was proclaimed in a general meeting, as having been carried out by the clergy with the ratification of the people and the assent of the distributor of honors. The person chosen, freely elected without simony in the manner above described, should then present himself to the emperor to be invested with the regalia by the ring and the staff, to pledge his fidelity and to do homage. Nor is it any wonder that there should be no other way by which one should be able to get possession of towns, castles, markets, tolls, and other things associated with the imperial dignity. If the lord pope will recognize this, the throne and the Church will be united, to the glory of God, in a firm and advantageous peace."

To all this the lord pope replied judiciously, by the mouth of the bishop of Piacenza, a distinguished orator, as follows: "The Church, redeemed and made free by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, may in no way become a slave again. Now if the Church cannot choose a prelate without the permission of the emperor, she is subject to him, and Christ's death is made of no avail. To invest with the ring and the staff, since these belong to the altar, is to usurp the powers of God himself. For a priest to place his hands, sanctified by the body and blood of the Lord, in the blood-stained hands of a layman, as a pledge, is to dishonor his order and holy consecration."

The claims of the emperor.

The counter-claims of the pope.

<sup>1</sup> See *History of Western Europe*, p. 155.



### III. GREGORY VII'S CONCEPTION OF THE POPE'S PREROGATIVES

109. The *Dictatus* of Gregory VII (1075).

Among the letters and decrees of Gregory VII a list of propositions is found which briefly summarizes the claims of the papacy. The purpose of this so-called *Dictatus* is unknown; it was probably drawn up shortly after Gregory's accession and no doubt gives an official statement of the powers which he believed that he rightly possessed. The more important of the twenty-seven propositions contained in the *Dictatus* are given below.

- 1 The Roman church was founded by God alone.
- 2 The Roman bishop alone is properly called universal.
- 1 He alone may depose bishops and reinstate them.
- 1 His legate, though of inferior grade, takes precedence, in a council, of all bishops and may render a decision of deposition against them.
- 2 He alone may use the insignia of empire.<sup>1</sup>
- 2 The pope is the only person whose feet are kissed by all princes.
- 1 His title is unique in the world.<sup>2</sup>
- 2 He may depose emperors.
- 1 No council may be regarded as a general one without his consent.
- 1 No book or chapter may be regarded as canonical without his authority.
- 1 2 A decree of his may be annulled by no one; he alone may annul the decrees of all.

<sup>1</sup> The Donation of Constantine describes the emperor Constantine as leaving his imperial scepter, cloak, etc., to Pope Sylvester. The word "use" (Latin *uti*) here employed may perhaps be used in the sense of "dispose of," referring to the pope's asserted claim to control the election of the emperor.

<sup>2</sup> This is the first distinct assertion of the exclusive right of the bishop of Rome to the title of pope, once applied to all bishops. See *History of Western Europe*, p. 52, note.

- 1 2 He may be judged by no one.
- 1 2 No one shall dare to condemn one who appeals to the papal see.
  - 1 The Roman church has never erred, nor ever, by the witness of Scripture, shall err to all eternity.<sup>1</sup>
  - 1 He may not be considered Catholic who does not agree with the Roman church.
- 2 The pope may absolve the subjects of the unjust from their allegiance.

### IV. ORIGIN OF THE TROUBLES BETWEEN GREGORY VII AND HENRY IV

In 1075 a synod held at Rome under Gregory VII denounced the marriage of the clergy, prohibited lay investiture, and then excommunicated five of Henry IV's councilors on the ground that they had gained the church offices which they held, by simony. While the text of this decree, which in a way began the trouble between Gregory and Henry, is lost, it was probably similar to the following decrees issued respectively three and five years later.

Inasmuch as we have learned that, contrary to the ordinances of the holy fathers, the investiture with churches is, in many places, performed by lay persons, and that from this cause many disturbances arise in the Church by which the Christian religion is degraded, we decree that no one of the clergy shall receive the investiture with a bishopric, or abbey, or church, from the hand of an emperor, or king, or of any lay person, male or female. If he shall presume to do so, let him know that such investiture is void by apostolic authority, and that he himself shall lie under excommunication until fitting satisfaction shall have been made.

110. Decree of November 19, 1078, forbidding lay investitures.

<sup>1</sup> See sermon of Leo the Great, above, pp. 70-71.



Decree of  
March 7,  
1080, for-  
bidding  
the same.

Following the ordinances of the holy fathers, as we decreed in our former councils held by the mercy of God concerning the regulation of ecclesiastical offices, so also now by apostolic authority we decree and confirm: that, if any one shall henceforth receive a bishopric or abbey from the hands of any lay person, he shall by no means be reckoned among the bishops and abbots; nor shall any hearing be granted him as bishop or abbot. Moreover we further deny him the favor of St. Peter and entrance to the Church, until, coming to his senses, he shall surrender the position that he has appropriated through criminal ambition and disobedience — which is the sin of idolatry. We decree, moreover, that the same rule be observed in the case of inferior ecclesiastical positions.

Likewise if any emperor, king, duke, margrave, count, or any secular dignitary or person shall presume to bestow the investiture with bishoprics, or with any ecclesiastical office, let him know that he is bound by the bonds of the same condemnation. And, furthermore, unless he come to his senses and relinquish her prerogatives to the Church, let him feel, in this present life, the divine wrath both in body and estate, in order that at the Lord's coming his soul may be saved.

The two letters which follow serve to show the attitude of mind of the pope and of the emperor on the eve of open hostilities.

*Bishop Gregory, servant of the servants of God, to King Henry, greeting and apostolic benediction: — that is, if he be obedient to the apostolic chair as becometh a Christian king:*

111. Gregory's letter of December, 1075, upbraiding Henry for his neglect of the papal decrees.

For we cannot but hesitate to send thee our benediction when we seriously consider the strictness of the Judge to whom we shall have to render account for the ministry intrusted to us by St. Peter, chief of the apostles. For thou art said knowingly to associate with men excommunicated by a judgment of the apostolic chair and by sentence of a synod. If this be true, thou thyself dost

know that thou mayst not receive the favor of the divine, nor of the apostolic benediction, unless those who have been excommunicated be separated from thee and compelled to do penance, and thou, with condign repentance and satisfaction, obtain absolution and pardon for thy misdeeds. Therefore we counsel thy Highness that, if thou dost feel thyself guilty in this matter, thou shouldst seek the advice of some devout bishop, with prompt confession. He, with our permission, enjoining on thee a proper penance for this fault, shall absolve thee, and shall take care to inform us by letter, with thy consent, of the exact measure of thy penance.

In the next place, it seems strange to us that although thou dost so often send us such devoted letters; and although thy Highness dost show such humility in the messages of thy legates, — calling thyself the son of holy mother Church and of ourselves, subject in the faith, foremost in love and devotion; — although, in short, thou dost commend thyself with all the sweetness of devotion and reverence, yet in conduct and action thou dost show thyself most stubborn, and in opposition to the canonical and apostolic decrees in those matters which the religion of the Church deems of chief importance. For, not to mention other things, in the affair of Milan<sup>1</sup> the actual outcome shows with what intent thou didst make, and how thou didst carry out, the promises made through thy mother and through our brothers the bishops whom we sent to thee. And now, indeed, inflicting wound upon wound, thou hast, contrary to the rules of the apostolic chair, given the churches of Fermo and Spoleto — if indeed a church can be given or granted by a mere man — to certain persons not even known to us, on whom, unless they are previously well known and proven, it is not lawful regularly to perform the laying on of hands.

It would have beseemed thy royal dignity, since thou dost confess thyself a son of the Church, to have treated more

<sup>1</sup> There had been trouble even before Gregory's accession over the question of filling the bishopric of Milan.



respectfully the master of the Church, — that is, St. Peter, the chief of the apostles. For to him, if thou art of the Lord's sheep, thou wast given over by the Lord's voice and authority to be fed; Christ himself saying, "Peter, feed my sheep." And again: "To thee are given over the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Inasmuch as in his seat and apostolic ministration we, however sinful and unworthy, do, by the providence of God, act as the representative of his power, surely he himself is receiving whatever, in writing or by word of mouth, thou hast sent to us. And at the very time when we are either perusing thy letters or listening to the voices of those who speak for thee, he himself is observing, with discerning eye, in what spirit the instructions were issued. Wherefore thy Highness should have seen to it that no lack of good will should appear toward the apostolic chair in thy words and messages. . . .

A reference to the decree of 1075 forbidding investitures by laymen.

In this year a synod was assembled about the apostolic chair, over which the heavenly dispensation willed that we should preside, and at which some of thy faithful subjects were present. Seeing that the good order of the Christian religion has now for some time been disturbed, and that the chief and proper methods of winning souls have, at the instigation of the devil, long been neglected and suppressed, we, struck by the danger and impending ruin of the Lord's flock, reverted to the decrees and teachings of the holy fathers, — decreeing nothing new, nothing of our own invention.<sup>1</sup> . . .

The pope willing to moderate his decree.

Lest these things should seem unduly burdensome or unjust to thee, we did admonish thee, through thy faithful servants, that the changing of an evil custom should not alarm thee; that thou shouldst send to us wise and religious men from thy land, to demonstrate or prove, if they could, by any reasoning, in what respects, saving the honor of the

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 275 sqq.

Eternal King and without danger to our soul, we might moderate the decree as passed by the holy fathers, and we would yield to their counsels. Even without our friendly admonitions it would have been but right that, before thou didst violate apostolic decrees, thou shouldst reasonably have appealed to us in cases where we oppressed thee or infringed thy prerogatives. But how little thou didst esteem our commands or the dictates of justice is shown by those things which thou afterwards didst.

But since the long-suffering patience of God still invites thee to amend thy ways, we have hopes that thy understanding may be awakened, and thy heart and mind be bent to obey the mandates of God: we exhort thee with paternal love to recognize the dominion of Christ over thee and to reflect how dangerous it is to prefer thine own honor to his.

Henry, irritated not so much by the tone of the above letter as by the reproaches of Gregory's legates, sent the following violent reply, January 24, 1076.<sup>1</sup>

*Henry, King not by usurpation but by holy ordination of God, to Hildebrand, now no Pope but false monk:*

112. Henry IV's violent reply to Gregory.

Such greeting as this hast thou merited through thy disturbances, for there is no rank in the Church but thou hast brought upon it, not honor but disgrace, not a blessing but a curse. To mention a few notable cases out of the many, thou hast not only dared to assail the rulers of the holy Church, the anointed of the Lord, — archbishops, bishops, and priests, — but thou hast trodden them under foot like slaves ignorant of what their master is doing. By so crushing them thou hast won the favor of the common herd; thou hast regarded them all as knowing nothing, — thyself alone as knowing all things. Yet this knowledge thou hast

<sup>1</sup> Henry appears to have prepared two replies to the pope's letter. This is the second draft, more violent than one which Henry had dispatched just before. See discussion in Richter's *Annalen der deutschen Geschichte*, Vol. II, pp. 202-203.