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# Fredrick II: Anti-Papal or Papal Manipulator? A study into the Cause of Conflict Between Emperor Frederick II and Pope Gregory IX

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**Frederick II: Anti-Papal or Papal Manipulator?**  
A study into the Cause of Conflict between Emperor Frederick II and Pope Gregory IX

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Master's Thesis  
May 5, 2011

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
I. Quid Pro Quo.....	20
II. Papal Manipulation Fails.....	39
III. Imperial Consolidation.....	58
Acknowledgements.....	81
Appendix.....	82
Bibliography.....	84

With John Cornell.

## Introduction

Sicily has been demographically influenced by successive waves of migrants of diverse origins. Many different people ventured to Sicily because it lies in the center of the Mediterranean. Due to the interchangeability of varying ethnicities, and its accessible location, this island has experienced military invasions that extend back through the ages to the days of the Greek Dorians<sup>1</sup> around the year 500 BCE<sup>2</sup>, and continued up to the unification of Italy in 1870. For well over two thousand years Sicily has experienced the shedding of blood; few locations have been fought over this extensively in the history of Western Europe. When the thirteenth century dawned on Europe, Sicily was still very much a region of discord and violence. This historical continuity greatly shaped the cares of Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen who relied on political manipulation to survive.

Chroniclers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries described the ever-enigmatic Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II as an epicurean, the anti-Christ, a heretic, and one who hated the papacy and religion. Frederick was not anti-papal however, and he was not determined to destroy the papacy or Catholicism. Frederick was a manipulator of the papacy who was forced to adapt to the changing programs of the popes to attain his interests. This led to the great conflict between Frederick II and Pope Gregory IX during the latter's pontificate in the thirteenth century. This great conflict between the *temporal* authority and the *spiritual* authority has been allegorically woven into history as a struggle between the anti-Christ and the servant of Christ, but this is an unfair representation.

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<sup>1</sup> Herodotus, *The Histories* ed. Robert B. Strassler. (New York: Random House, 2007), 386.

<sup>2</sup> If we are permitted to trust that there is any type of factual historical value from Herodotus.

To understand the conflict and how it progressed is a difficult undertaking. We have many records, but the records were written from the points of view of the offending parties, and therefore their historical authenticity is skewed. The records are most often pieces of propaganda designed to destroy the reputation of the adversary. These historical sources are still extremely valuable because they do offer rich ideological insight about the context of medieval Europe in the thirteenth century. From these we may identify the source of conflict.

Popular historical interpretation has maintained that Frederick was one of the most cosmopolitan rulers of the high middle ages; it was said he spoke six languages. When Frederick was on his death bed, the pompous thirteenth century historian Matthew of Paris labeled Frederick with the epithet '*Stupor gouque mundi et immutator mirabilis*'<sup>3</sup> solely to bolster Frederick's reign as extraordinary. Dante Alighieri saw fit to place Frederick in the sixth circle of Hell among the heretics in the *Inferno*: "More than a thousand cram this tomb. The Second Frederick is here..."<sup>4</sup> These conceptions transformed the spark of originality that Frederick possessed into an inferno of claims that range from peaceful ruler to merciless tyrant. The stories that have clustered around the life of Frederick II and the subsequent histories written about him, especially by Thomas Van Cleve and Ernst H. Kantorowicz, have further distorted the truth about Frederick. For many, Frederick was the first modern ruler in medieval Europe, but this claim is disputed by others.

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3 Paris, Matthew, *Chronica Majora* Trans. Henry Richards Luard (London: Longman & Co, 1877), V, 190. 'The wonder of the world, and the marvelous changer of the world.'

4 Alighieri, Dante, *The Inferno*. Trans. John Ciardi. (New York: Signet Classic, 1982), 99.

Frederick has received such bad press because of chroniclers who slandered him and envisioned him as the anti-Christ. It may be understood that people of the thirteenth century saw their time as the coming of the *Sixth Age*, which was the end of Christological history as interpreted from the Bible. Matthew of Paris believed that the first half of the thirteenth century was to usher in the end of days:

“When twice six hundred years and fifty more  
Are gone since the blessed Mary’s son was born,  
Then Antichrist shall come full of the devil.”<sup>5</sup>

Even in 1227 Frederick wrote, “Perhaps we have reached the end of time.”<sup>6</sup> Another man, the thirteenth century visionary Joachim of Fiore, who wrote in this sixth age of prophecy and of overwhelming superstition focused on the coming of Christ, associated Frederick II with the anti-Christ. To Joachim Frederick was the very apotheosis of the prophetic revelation leading up to the end of the world. Accordingly Joachim thought that Frederick represented the sixth or the seventh head of the terrible dragon envisioned in the revelation of St. John the Divine.<sup>7</sup> Joachim foresaw that a coalition was to be formed between the Roman Empire, which Frederick II reigned over, and the Saracens of the Muslim world.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the ‘wonder stories’ that have filled popular history regarding Frederick had their origins in propaganda pieces like Joachim’s. However, there were more who have described Frederick in a type of un-earthly light.

Peter of Eboli, a subordinate of Frederick’s father, used Vergil’s Fourth Eclogue to bolster the reign the Frederick:

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<sup>5</sup> Lewis, Suzanne, *The Art of Matthew Paris* (Berkeley: University of California press 1987), 102.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 103.

<sup>7</sup> Reeves, Marjorie, *Influence of Prophecy in the later Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1969), 60.

<sup>8</sup> ibid, 60.

“Ours is the crowning era foretold in prophecy: Born of time, a great new cycle of centuries begins. Justice returns to earth, the Golden Age returns, and its first-born comes down from heaven above. For with him shall hearts of iron cease and hearts of gold inherit the whole earth... You at our head, mankind shall be freed from its age-long fear, all stains of our past wickedness being cleansed away.”<sup>9</sup>

The Medieval Christian world interpreted this prophecy as the birth and saving mission of Christ. Peter, who built on this initial interpretation, associated Frederick with Christ, and this ultimately bolstered the young monarch’s image among contemporary and future observers.

The thirteenth century chronicler Salimbene noted the venomous relationship between the papacy and Frederick, “...whom the church cherished as hers, and who afterwards raised his heel against her and afflicted her in many ways.”<sup>10</sup> Salimbene described the devastation inflicted on Italy as a result of the conflict:

“But here, that you may know the labyrinth of affairs, I must not omit to tell how the church part in Modena was driven forth from the city, while the imperial part held it... Therefore in those days was most cruel war, which endured many years. Men could neither plough, nor sow, nor reap, nor till vineyards, nor gather the vintage, nor dwell in the villages...”<sup>11</sup>

Salimbene also noted the many people who took refuge in Frederick’s court:

“the court of Frederick appeared to be a haven for people who were outcasts from their orders, frater Elias who was deposed from his order joined the ranks of the excommunicated Frederick who welcomed him with open arms.”<sup>12</sup>

As a result Salimbene marked Frederick’s court as a safe haven for rebellious churchmen and others who were in disfavor of the papacy. Frater Elias whom Salimbene mentioned is of special importance because Frederick supported Elias’ attempts to discover the philosopher’s stone.<sup>13</sup>

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9 Virgil, *The Eclogues and Georgics of Virgil*, trans. by C. Day Lewis, (New York: Anchor books, 1963), 31.

10 Coulton, George G, *From St. Francis to Dante* (London: Duckworth & Company, 1908), 41.

11 Ibid, 59-60

12 Ibid, 76.

13 Ibid, 86.

Salimbene disdained Frederick's court, although his accounts are difficult to prove, they did draped a veil of mysticism around king and court. Stories about Frederick's cruelty are abundant, and Salimbene offers various accounts, one of which accused Frederick of throwing a girl named Ayca into a furnace because her father was Frederick's enemy.

"But in the process of time one Gulielmotto of Apulia came with a handmaid named Paschetta; but he gave her the name of Ayca, saying that she was his wife, and daughter to the Lord Paolo Traversario" for in truth that Emperor Frederick had taken Paolo's daughter Ayca and sent her as a hostage to Apulia. Afterwards, however, when the Emperor waxed wroth against the girl's father, he caused her to be cast into a burning fiery furnace: and so she gave up her soul to God."<sup>14</sup>

There were additional stories that Frederick had cut off the thumbs of notaries, sealed a man inside of a coffin to see if he possessed a soul, and had isolated infants in order to seek what language they would naturally learn first. Similar stories were told by Herodotus, so we may safely assume that someone had read some Herodotus in the thirteenth century. Finally, Frederick was said to have disemboweled men to understand how the digestive system worked. These and other stories of Frederick's cruelty in war must have spread quickly, ultimately darkening his name. Salimbene's account of the siege of Modena and Reggio detailed Frederick's cruelties. "...every morning the Emperor came with his men and beheaded three or four, or as many more as seemed good to him...and all this he did on the shingles by the riverside within sight of the men who were in the city..."<sup>15</sup> Stories like this have shaped the historical image of Frederick.

In reality Frederick possessed the resources, geographical isolation, and the ambition to fulfill his own interests, and this led to his great conflict with Pope Gregory IX. Many historians from Frederick's time to the present have placed a great emphasis on his intellect and worldview. This has led some scholars to believe that Frederick was a

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 196.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 170.

modern ruler. Though to be the “first modern ruler to sit upon a throne” as the Renaissance historian Jacob Burckhardt wrote, denotes that modernity overwhelmingly situated itself at Frederick's court. To apply 'modernity' to Frederick's rule results in claiming that a convoluted labyrinth of tributaries of different modern ideas flowed neatly in a uniform stream, but for this stream to exist in the natural world requires a high degree of unanimity between different avenues of thought which did not exist. For 'modern thought' emerged in Europe at different times and in different fields of activity.

However, Thomas Aquinas, who was a native of Frederick's Italy, developed the idea of the *constitutional monarchy*. This revival of the old classical political idea stressed the notion that the prince was to be supported by an upper house named by himself and by a representative body elected by the people; this idea was unfortunately in vain, since Frederick suppressed popular election by enslaving the populace and by devastating the offending district.<sup>16</sup> These ideas found no pragmatic use, nor voice outside of the classroom, and Frederick continued to rule in the style of a medieval king in order to maintain his authority. However, it is difficult to define what modernity is. Frederick represented a semblance of modernity with his establishment of the University of Naples in 1224, but Frederick was still a medieval ruler because he crusaded, and had the aspirations of empire building.

The twentieth century historian Ernst Kantorowicz, a leading authority on Frederick II, wrote a biography of Frederick in which he attributed Frederick's unsupervised childhood the reason for his extraordinary life. Early experience taught Frederick ideas and strategies that set him apart from many other monarchs. The historian

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<sup>16</sup> Burckhardt, Jacob, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1929), 25.

John Gillingham rejects Kantorowicz's theory because, due to the chaotic atmosphere, the usurpers of Frederick's father's throne kept the young king closely protected and well observed.<sup>17</sup>

Following his detailed introduction, Kantorowicz took the reader on an in depth study on the rest of Frederick's life. However, according to the historian David Abulafia, "Kantorowicz's interpretation of the reign stands at a far remove from his own."<sup>18</sup> Throughout his biography of Frederick II, Kantorowicz's underpinning tone was a call for Germany to reclaim its lost imperial glory.<sup>19</sup> To interpret Kantorowicz's engaging biography on Frederick in this manner discredits the magisterial historical writing and research that Kantorowicz had compiled. Frederick's world is too removed to know if certain history was fact, but in the almost eight hundred years that separate us from him, history was transformed into myth, and his legacy now reaches us in the form of a legend bolstering his brilliance. Kantorowicz was successful because he academically recreated this world for the modern reader, while maintaining the feeling of mysticism that had invigorated Frederick's reign.

Kantorowicz's other book, *The King's Two Bodies*, is a complex study of the theory of divine kingship. According to Kantorowicz, Frederick's use of reason as the basis for legislation and justice qualified him as a modern ruler. Frederick regarded himself bound by reason, which he considered the ultimate arbiter. However, the idea of reason can be seen as the underlying principle of such disparate societies such as Plato's

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<sup>17</sup> John Gillingham, Review of *The Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen. Immutator Mundi*, by Thomas Van Cleve, *The English Historical Review*, April 1976, Vol. 91, No. 359, p. 358.

<sup>18</sup> Louise Katainen, Review of *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor*, by David Abulafia, *Italica*, Spring 1995, Vol. 72, p. 109.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 109.

Greece and the Visigothic law codes of the sixth century.<sup>20</sup>

Thomas Van Cleve's biography described Frederick as a completely modern ruler whom he called: "intelligent, instinctively tolerant, a man of superior wisdom far in advance of his age."<sup>21</sup> However in his book review, by John Gillingham, suggested that Van Cleve's bibliography was very selective, and drew on too many of nineteenth century dissertations. Gillingham claimed that, "this ill-balanced bibliography is an accurate reflection of the author's reading."<sup>22</sup> Gillingham additionally claimed that Van Cleve tended to combine phrases from letters written at different times, in different circumstances, and sometimes even by different people in order to construct a consistent picture of Frederick II.<sup>23</sup> Van Cleve appeared to have taken passages from the enemies of Frederick II and cited them as Frederick's own writings. An example can be found in the text *Iuxta Vaticinium Ysaie*, which was a propaganda piece written in 1245 by Rainer of Viterbo,<sup>24</sup> which Van Cleve attributed to Frederick. Most importantly, Frederick's court lacked any legitimate historians, so the specialist in the field must look through the lenses of such contemporaries as Matthew of Paris, the chronicler Salimbene, and others.

Charles H. Haskins book, *Studies in the History of Mediaeval Science*, is an authoritative text on Frederick. Haskins identified scientific interactions and speculations that went on in Frederick's court. Haskins made many references to Frederick's interaction with the Sultan of Cairo, Al Malik Al Kamil. Haskins did not create a picture of Gregory that could not be supported. His research remains soberly indifferent, and

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<sup>20</sup> *The Visigothic Code: Forum Judicum*. Trans. S.P. Scott. *The Library of Iberian Resources online*. Book I: Concerning Legal Agencies. Title I. What the Method of making Laws Should Be.

<sup>21</sup> Gillingham, 358.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 358.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 357.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 358.

thoroughly researched.

According to the historian David Abulafia, Frederick II was purely a medieval Emperor, who had been misunderstood by such historians as Thomas Van Cleve and Ernst Kantorowicz. Abulafia claimed that Van Cleve's interpretation of Frederick was simply wrong. For example Frederick's brutal policies towards the Milanese and their continued pursuit of autocratic rule, which sowed the seeds of chaos in Northern Italy in the thirteenth century, was the behavior of a medieval.

Current research examines Frederick's interest in the pursuit of logical and clear thought. Certain texts were written within Frederick's court to increase understanding of his devotion to reason. In their edition of Frederick's, *The Art of Falconry by Emperor Frederick II*, Casey A. Wood and F. Marjorie Fyfe consider Frederick's attention to detail appealing to the modern readers. *The Art of Falconry*, which was more than likely written by Frederick, identified strategies on how to catch hawks and falcons. The book specified types of birds, and offered individual strategies on how to catch them. Referring to himself Frederick remarked: "...the august Frederick II, Emperor of the Romans, King of Jerusalem and of Sicily, is a lover of wisdom with a philosophical and speculative mind."<sup>25</sup> Most importantly Frederick stressed the notion that people must go commence their own research and develop their own interpretations:

"There is another reason why we do not follow implicitly the Prince of Philosophers [Aristotle]: he was ignorant of the practice of falconry...in his work, the *Liber Animalium*, we find many quotations from other authors whose statements he did not verify and who, in their turn, were not speaking from experience."<sup>26</sup>

*The Constitutions of Melfi*, edited by James Powell, unveils the sophisticated law

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<sup>25</sup>*The Art of Falconry, by Emperor Frederick II*, trans. Casey A. Wood & F. Marjorie Fyfe, (Boston: Oxford University Press, 1955), 4.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

system which Frederick had established in his realm. The laws were so lasting that, according to the historian William A. Percy, “they remained the fundamental law until Garibaldi’s revolution”<sup>27</sup> in the nineteenth century. Powell additionally claimed that Frederick’s kingdom was the first modern state in Western Europe because of this law system. The essence of this law book lies in ultimate judgment and in giving everyone under his authority a fair trial. There have been claims that *The Constitutions of Melfi*, otherwise known as the *Liber Augustalis*, was of fundamental importance for the development of Europe. Percy claimed that the law system “was expanded by the Habsburgs, Bourbons, Romanovs, and communists.”<sup>28</sup> The law system proposed many modern ideas. For example “we intend to preserve the healthfulness of the air insofar as we can.”<sup>29</sup> Frederick even attempted to separate the union of church and state.<sup>30</sup> Frederick knew what he must do to retain his throne, and, in spite of many modern aspects within his administration, self interest was a determining factor in the law code.

Some of these authors, either directly or indirectly portray Frederick II in a completely modern light, and every historical endeavor they undertake ends with the idea of modernity shining the more brightly in him. Though Frederick bears the imprint of some type of modernity, he is still very much a medieval ruler. Jacob Burckhardt declared that Frederick was a modern ruler, and then subsequently defended some of Frederick’s actions as an example of modernity. One example is Frederick’s persecution of the people of Milan, and Burckhardt’s declaration that Frederick was “persecuting the

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27 William Percy, Review of *The Liber Augustalis or Constitutions of Melfi, Promulgated by the Emperor Frederick II for the Kingdom of Sicily in 1231*, by James Powell, *Speculum*, April 1973, Vol.48, No. 2, p. 402.

28 Ibid, 403.

29 *The Liber Augustalis or Constitutions of Melfi, Promulgated by the Emperor Frederick II for the Kingdom of Sicily in 123*, trans. James M. Powell, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1971), 132.

30 Ibid, 132.

representatives of a free municipal life,”<sup>31</sup> while Frederick disguised his real intentions with the facade of punishing heresy. Simply put, Burckhardt considered consolidation modern, but as we know consolidation has taken place since the beginning of history. Ernst Kantorowicz’s history portrayed most aspects of Frederick’s life in extraordinary detail, but he may have fallen into the trap of bias toward Germany and this has led to the possibility of inaccuracy. However, in *The King's Two Bodies*, Kantorowicz emphasized Frederick’s modern empirical approach to law, but he fell short in his explanation. Abulafia claimed he was more medieval than previously thought, and Haskins appears indifferent to the question. By analyzing the different spheres of thought and certain political maneuvers, it may be possible to understand the dichotomy of Frederick’s rule that led to him being labeled modern or medieval, and why he used manipulation as a political tool. By piecing together the claims of the various historians it is possible to form a more accurate picture of Frederick.

Analyzing the law in which Frederick developed is fundamental to understanding Frederick’s modern approach to justice.

“Both all powerful reason, who commands the kings, and nature impose upon us the obligation to enhance in the times of our imperium the glory of the city...In accordance with civil law we profess our obligation with a word most worthy [of majesty]...For although our imperial majesty is free from all laws, it is nevertheless not altogether exalted above the judgment of Reason, herself the Mother of all Law.”<sup>32</sup>

Frederick used Justinian’s sixth century *Corpus Iuris Civilis* as a template for his own law codes. This text became the foundation for the remainder of his law codes. Title XXXI of the *Constitution of Melfi* presents Frederick as an impartial ruler stating, “it is our concern to administer justice among them [the people] with ready zeal for each and all

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31 Burckhardt, 24.

32 Kantorowicz, Ernst, *The Kings Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, Princeton University Press. 1957), 104.

without favoritism.”<sup>33</sup> It is unlikely that the ‘popular’ mysterious aura of Frederick II was fueled by his attention to law; law was however central to his reign and whatever modernity was embodied within his kingdom. Abulafia claimed that the foundation of Frederick's rule was especially the ideas found in his grandfather’s administration. Regardless of origins, the writing and establishment of law demands a large amount of attention.

According to the historian Matthew of Paris Frederick, was the ‘wonder of the world,’<sup>34</sup> because Sicily appeared to be a beacon for innovative ideas and cultural intermingling, which were brought about by Frederick’s cosmopolitan grandfather Roger II. Despite such descriptions of the Hohenstaufen Sicilian court, there is still an essential problem with the ‘general conception’ of the court. The problem is that the medieval populace is categorized as being in agreement about the astonishing wonder of Frederick’s reign, but this is anachronistic. Our lack of sources about the common person’s ideas, either because they do not exist or haven’t been found yet, hinders an accurate assessment of Frederick II. The historian K.B. McFarlane claimed that to “write a medieval biography is impossible,”<sup>35</sup> mostly because the past is not objective, but more importantly, because the records are tremendously fragmented and are peppered with personal political interests. We are left with only records from Frederick’s court, *Lictere Generales, Liber Augustalis* or administrative writings. The administrative records were written in Latin and unfortunately have not been translated. In the nineteenth century the French historian John Huillard-Breholles edited and wove these records into a twelve

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33 *The Liber Augustalis*, p. 32.

34 Paris, V. 190.

35 Powell, James, Review of *The Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen*, by Thomas Van Cleve, *Speculum*, January 1974: Vol. 49, No.1. 159

volume set, but unfortunately he found no time to translate them. Other than these documents, we have accounts of chroniclers and propagandists who were antagonistic to Frederick II.

To attempt to understand the nature of Frederick's rule and why he was associated with the epithet *Stupor Mundi*, all spheres of thought within his court must be analyzed as well as Frederick's interactions with other cultures. The basic outline of Frederick's modern empirical outlook can be sketched by his devotion to rational observation emanating from his thirst for a rigorous sense of order, which resulted in his key political weapon, manipulation. Frederick was not all-powerful, and the established law and ideas within his court could be bent to achieve imperial interests. The tragic campaign against the Milanese and the Lombard league is a noteworthy example that exposes Frederick's medieval policies. Frederick's troubled relationship with the papacy indicated that he was acting in tune in the medieval world, and that he was forced to participate in medieval politics.

Frederick had a moderate to troubled relationship with the papacy throughout his entire reign. He was excommunicated a number of times, and he did not care for the church's dogma. In spite of his rebellion against the church, he was compelled to respect it. He was forced to go on a crusade to the Holy Land, and then, learning while he was away that the papacy had formed an army to invade Sicily, he rushed back to combat the threat. The chain of events of Frederick's manipulative relationship with the papacy, his rebellious attitude, selfish ambitions, and his sense of autocratic rule contributed to the building of his kingdom and his reputation. Though there were many conflicts with the papacy, they did not hold back innovations in domestic concerns. One of the most

important attributes of his reign was the establishment of the University of Naples.

In 1224 Frederick founded the University of Naples, which taught everything from law to natural philosophy. Education is still a fundamental foundation of modern civilization. Frederick spoke “by having access to a fountain of knowledge...so that they [students], made proficient by study and observation, will serve divine justice...”<sup>36</sup> The document that established the university was titled *Lictere Generales* and it outlined some stipulations that concerned the student’s who attended the university. This document placed limitations on the student’s; it stated that they could not leave the territory to study abroad. Additionally, it stipulated that student’s receive reduced rates from landlords while they attended school, and that they did not have to pay any loans back until they completed their studies. With this document Frederick, once again displayed a mix of modern and medieval ideologies. He limited his students’ movement, which monopolized the people of his realm for his own use. Education coupled with innovations in the sphere of law is where the modern reader may perceive the most modernity within Frederick’s court. Besides law and education, science attracted an abundance of his attention.

Analyzing the scientific sphere is worthwhile because this is where the most intellectual excitement took place. Frederick was the inheritor of a solid historical foundation of scientific inquiry, which was buttressed by his ancestors Roger II, William I, and William II. At their courts these men sponsored translations of Arabic texts, some of which were Claudius Ptolemy’s *Almagest*, and Euclid’s *Data*, *Optica*, and *Catoptrica*.

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<sup>36</sup> Medieval Sourcebook: *Frederick II: Lictere Generales; Establishing the University of NAPLES, 1224*, (Trans. Mario Spagnuolo. 1998).

<sup>37</sup> Frederick's court attracted attention because, in order to further scientific knowledge it had frequent communication with the East. Al Malik Al Kamil of Cairo maintained frequent communication with Frederick II so much so that when Kamil died Frederick was very grieved.

Many other natural philosophers were commissioned at Frederick's court. Names of note were, Master Theodore who was the supreme philosopher of the imperial court, Moses Ben Solomon, Leonard of Pisa, John of Palermo, Adam of Cremona, and a Muslim from the court of al Malik who was learned in astronomy. The important question that Frederick posed to one of his philosophers, and additionally identified his deep thirst for knowledge was:

"Wherefore we pray you, by your love of knowledge and the reverences you bear our crown, explain to us the foundations of the Earth, that is to say how it is established over the abyss and how the abyss stands beneath the earth, and whether it stands of itself or rests in the heavens beneath it."<sup>38</sup>

By noting the scientific inquiry that Frederick supported, the reader may understand Frederick's historical reputation. Additionally, by reading between the lines, we may understand that Frederick held no bias towards ethnicity or religion. He supported Catholics, Greeks, Muslims, and Jews, and because of this support, outsiders attempted to understand his court by assigning it a degree of mysticism that captured their imaginations, most especially Matthew of Paris.

Frederick applied rational inquiry in order to attain a more fundamental and rationalistic view of the world around him. Though for all of his 'modern' ideas, he was still very much medieval due to many other imperial ambitions that forced his hand to acts of aggression. The long history of violence in Sicily, Frederick's administration, the

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43 Haskins, 244.

38 Haskins, 266.

conglomeration of science, law, and education, and finally his keen sense of politics, had all created his imperial strategy, manipulation. Frederick's main tool for attaining his interests was manipulation, and he attempted to use this with everyone, even the papacy.

## I Quid Pro Quo

“The higher a man’s place is in the social scale, the more connections he has with others, and the more power he has over them the more conspicuous is the inevitability and predestination of every act he commits.”

–Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*.

The papacy intended to control the Church in Sicily and southern Italy because in the eighth century tax revenue produced 25,200 gold *solidi* annually.<sup>39</sup> In a tax record from 1308 and 1310, the number of bishoprics and monasteries within Southern Italy and Sicily produced an impressive sum of tax revenue. However, before the reign of Henry VI, there was not consistent flow of revenue into papal coffers, due to the conquests of the Eastern Emperors, the Saracens, and other de facto rulers of Sicily. The large number of bishoprics reveals that Southern Italy and Sicily were rich patrimonies that were capable of contributing a vast amount of money, and Frederick intended to press his authority over the Church. The historian H.J. Pybus claimed that Frederick’s relationship with the church within his own kingdom was one of the “contributory causes of the friction between Pope and Emperor.”<sup>40</sup> The relationship between Frederick, the Church, and Pope Honorius III was essentially ‘quid pro quo,’ in that interests were always met with what was given back in return.

Frederick had the ambition of regaining the privileges from the papacy to which his predecessor’s had been entitled. These privileges originated with the *Privilegium* granted by the late eleventh century Pope Urban II. Urban II permitted the eleventh

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<sup>39</sup> Evans, Austin, *Papal Revenues in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), I, 57.

<sup>40</sup> Pybus, H.J, “The Emperor Frederick II and the Sicilian Church,” *Cambridge Historical Journal*. Vol. 3, No.2, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1930), 134.

century Count Roger I to forbid bishops to attend certain councils outside of his kingdom. Roger I is considered the last great leader of the Norman conquest of Southern Italy, and he died in 1101. The privileges granted to him were in continuity with other late Norman kings who held the right to exclude legates from Sicily.<sup>41</sup> John of Salisbury claimed that the examinations for the candidates for bishoprics were carried out at the royal court under the intense supervision of Roger II.<sup>42</sup>

One of the most important documents that concerned rights over the Church in Sicily was the *Concordat of Benevento* between William I and the Papacy in 1156. This document confirmed the *Privilegium* but confined it to the island of Sicily. Therefore, the king had the power to veto the attendance of bishops at councils and appeals to Rome. The treaty stated, “The Roman Church shall have everything else there that it has in the other parts of our kingdom, except appeals and legations, which shall not occur except at the request of us and our heirs.”<sup>43</sup> Clause eleven within the document allowed the king to interview and reject clergy from positions if they were considered hostile or unloyal to the emperor.<sup>44</sup> The Sicilian crown had to “pay to the Roman Church 600 *schifati* for Apulia and Calabria, and 400 *schifati* for Marsia...”<sup>45</sup> for the preservation of these rights as part of the agreement.

By the time of Pope Celestine III in 1191, royal rights were wrested away from Count Tancred in Sicily. Tancred of Lecce was the illegitimate son of Duke Roger of

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41 Ibid, 135.

42 Loud, G.A & A. Metcalfe, *The Society of Norman Italy*. Kamp, Norbert, “The Bishops of Southern Italy in the Norman and Staufien Periods” (Brill: Leiden. 2002), 208.

43 Weidemann, Thomas and Graham Loud, *The History of the Tyrants of Sicily by ‘Hugo Falcandus’* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 250.

44 Ibid, 250.

45 Ibid, 251. This agreement for Apulia and Calabria was titled the Treaty of Mignano and it took place between Roger II and Pope Innocent II.

Apulia and was crowned king in 1190 with the consent of the Roman Curia.<sup>46</sup> Exactly what Celestine III wrested away can be found in the *Concordat of Gravina*. This document limited the king's of Sicily authority over appeals sent from Rome, and legates were to be sent every five years instead of at the will of the king. Finally, the king had lost his privilege to veto the election of any clerical official within the Regnum. Papal authority had begun to increase with Celestine III, but with the ascension of Innocent III to the throne of St. Peter, papal authority increased dramatically.

Frederick II had run into trouble with Innocent III because he exiled from Palermo some clergy who had appealed to Rome. Following this, Innocent reminded Frederick that he must not rely on the old privileges of his predecessors. Innocent had written, "ab initio magis extorto"<sup>47</sup>, in which he implied that he was now the supreme authority over the temporal and the spiritual realms of Europe. Innocent wrote to bishops and clergy of Sicily and Southern Italy and claimed that appeals to Rome should be unrestricted and that legates were permitted to move freely throughout the kingdom. This was in direct contrast with the rights that the rulers of the south had previously possessed.

Despite these new rights, Frederick still attempted to wrest away privileges for himself. Frederick protested that he had the right to appoint bishops to his own kingdom, and he argued against the constant appeals that some of his clergy made to Rome.<sup>48</sup> The bishops that whom Frederick appointed, were learned in jurisprudence, one example being Pietro Papparnus. Pietro in 1220 was a *doctor decretorum* in Bologna, and offered

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<sup>46</sup> *The Chronicle of Richard of San Germano*, trans. G.A. Loud, (Leeds: 2002), p.6  
<<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/history/weblearning/MedievalHistoryTextCentre/ricsgermano.doc>>

<sup>47</sup> *Epistolae Innocentii III*, Ed. Stephanus Baluzius. (Paris: 1682. Google Books), III, 389. "From the beginning I grasped more authority."

<sup>48</sup> Huillard-Breholles, John L.A., *Historia Diplomatica Frederici Secundi* 12 vols (Paris: Henricus Plon, 1857), IV, ii. 830.

legal advice to many northern Italian cities in ecclesiastical cases. He was eventually appointed by Frederick to teach at the University of Naples and he became Archbishop of Brindisi in 1231.<sup>49</sup>

In 1220, during the pontificate of Pope Honorius III, Frederick established the *Edict of Capua*, which granted him all the privileges issued by his father Henry VI and his mother Constance. This edict ordered the recovery of all royal lands as they had existed before the period of anarchy in Sicily.<sup>50</sup> The *Chronicler of Santa Maria de Ferraria* claimed that Frederick indulged in a policy of wholesale confiscations of lands, which had been granted by himself or his father. The chronicler wrote, “quod redundavit in magnum dampnum ecclesiarum atque acquisite.”<sup>51</sup>

A good example of this confiscation was that Frederick reclaimed the rights over the abbot of the Benedictine monastery Monte Cassino. Richard of San Germano recorded that even this powerful abbot lost the “*jus sanguinis*,”<sup>52</sup> over his monastery. Soon castles were either taken over or destroyed in accordance with the *Edict of Capua*.<sup>53</sup> By the year 1232 Frederick had established a new set of officials called Master Proctor’s, who dealt with secular or church property recovered by the crown. Each town was centered on a local castle which was the regions seat of authority. The policy that these administrators were ordered to carry out was the division of these regions into separate *districtus*.<sup>54</sup> Through this system Frederick was able to consolidate and tax the people of his lands for his own benefit.

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49 Kamp, 206.

50 Pybus, 138. The phrase ‘anarchy in Sicily’ refers to the dismantlement of Imperial authority after the death of Henry VI.

51 Pybus, 139. “This led to great loss of churches and properties.”

52 *Richard of San Germano* ed. by A. Gaudenzi, (Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli, Soc. Di Storia Patria, 1888), 101. “right of blood.”

53 *Ibid*, 103, 111.

54 Barraclough, Geoffrey, *Mediaeval Germany 911-1250* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1938), 116.

Frederick also sought the protection of church rights within his realms. He is quoted saying, and “occasione constitutionis nostre in curia Capue promulgate de feudis integraliter revocandi.”<sup>55</sup> It must be noted that Frederick viewed the Sicilian Church as an entity independent from the Papacy. Frederick had employed bishops and clergy within the workings of his administration, and conversed with them about sensitive political initiatives and ambitions. Frederick used churchmen as notaries, and he left some in charge when he traveled north to Germany.<sup>56</sup> The Archbishop of Capua had even participated in Frederick’s compilation of the *Liber Augustalis* or better known as the *Constitutions of Melfi*<sup>57</sup>. Later in Frederick’s career when his papal enemies threw accusations of heresy at him, some Sicilian clergy vouched for the Emperor.<sup>58</sup>

The most important clergyman that whom Frederick employed within his administration was Berard of Palermo. Much can be discussed about this man’s lengthy and busy career, but some important instances signal Frederick’s ever-increasing trust and dependence on Berard. Frederick frequently sent Berard to Rome to resolve conflicts with the popes, so much so that Berard earned the condemnation of Pope Innocent IV because of his unscrupulous loyalty to the excommunicated Frederick. Frederick proved his loyalty and trust to the church within southern Italy by granting land to Berard and other churchmen:

“Frederick, King of the Romans, to Berard Archbishop of Bari: In return for his (Berard) kind service, he (Frederick) grants and confirms to his (Berardus) church Bictrium, Meduneum, and the canal in the land of Bari, which is at the foot of mount Joanatio, and Latertiam, and the land and field next to the wall of the city of Bari, for the purpose of making reservoirs.”<sup>59</sup>

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55 Huillard-Breholles, II, 281. “Because of the opportunity of our constitution in the court of Capua, we proclaim the fiefs completely, you all must be recalled [referring to usurpers of imperial authority].”

56 Pybus, 142.

57 Ibid, 142.

58 Ibid, 142.

59 Huillard-Breholles, I, i. 232. See Appendix I B.

This passage indicates that Frederick had granted certain pieces of land to the bishop in return for his kind service. This 'kind service' was most likely obedience and aid in the management of the kingdom. Berard was sent to the Eastern court of the Egyptian Sultan Al Malik al Kamil to negotiate on behalf of Frederick for the city of Jerusalem. These negotiations led to Berard carrying home exotic animals such as an elephant among other valuables.<sup>60</sup> Berard also accompanied Frederick on his crusade to the East, and took part in the treaty of San Germano in 1230 between Frederick and Gregory IX. Berard was one of the most important men in Frederick's convoluted administration, and at his death Frederick left Berard as one of his beneficiaries.<sup>61</sup> Berard was involved with delicate administrative decisions throughout Frederick's entire reign, but there were other Clergy who participated within Frederick's government as well.

Another important clergyman was Marinus Archbishop of Bari. Marinus and his family were close to Frederick, for Frederick used Marinus' brother Richard as one of his marshal's.<sup>62</sup> Marinus's importance was in many places within Frederick's administration, but he was remembered for attempting to seek absolution for the excommunicated Emperor in 1227.<sup>63</sup> Lando, Archbishop of Reggio supported Frederick and his administration. Lando participated in Frederick's crusade at the end of the 1220's, and he was present at the peace of San Germano between Frederick and Pope Gregory IX.<sup>64</sup> One of his last duties was a mission to Naples to deal with heretics within the city.<sup>65</sup>

One of the most important churchmen within Frederick's administration was

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60 Richard of San Germano, 128.

61 Pybus, 144

62 Ibid, 149.

63 Richard of San Germano, ed. by Graham Loud, p. 12.

64 Pybus, 148.

65 Ibid, 148.

James of Capua. James aided Frederick in the compilation and writing of the *Constitutions of Melfi*. However, during Frederick's most intense struggle with Gregory IX, Gregory wrote specifically to James urging him not to partake in the completion of the Constitutions.<sup>66</sup> Another church official whom Frederick favored was the procurator Nicholas of Byzantium. Nicholas resided in the region of Basilicata, which is the region nestled against the Gulf of Taranto. Frederick wrote to this man and gave him back ecclesiastical property,

"Nicholas of Byzantium procurator in the domains of Basilicata, whose office is maintained by the power of the imperial mandate gives back the monastery of St. Michael of Monte Caveoso into the possession of its freedom at Monte Caveoso and Pomarico and also the rights of pasture, water, lodging, and the cutting of wood in the area of Genusia."<sup>67</sup>

Though Frederick had many bishops and clerics who supported him, this did not stop him from levying heavy burdens of taxations upon the church within his realms. The record shows that tax on the clergy in earlier administrations on Sicily were rare, but with the advent of Frederick's government taxes appeared to be almost annual.<sup>68</sup> Frederick laid especially heavy taxes on Monte Cassino, and this increased Frederick's wars with the papacy and the Lombards.<sup>69</sup> Frederick received other money and revenues directly through the taxation of the people, this revenue made up one half to two-thirds of his revenue.<sup>70</sup>

Not all Churchmen favored Frederick, Matthew of Paris identified Bishop Carinola as extremely hostile towards Frederick, and he accused Frederick of despoiling

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<sup>66</sup> Pybus, 146.

<sup>67</sup> Huillard-Breholles, IV, i, 394. See appendix G.

<sup>68</sup> Pybus, 159.

<sup>69</sup> Pybus, 160.

<sup>70</sup> Barraclough, 118.

the churches of his kingdom.<sup>71</sup> However, another contemporary of the time, Thaddeus of Sessa declared Carinola's testimony as worthless.<sup>72</sup> There were some who were banished, such as the Bishop of Fondi,<sup>73</sup> and the Bishop of Taranto was even thrown into prison, and finally the Bishop of Squillace suffered violent treatment. Before Frederick's first great struggle with the papacy, he sought the removal of some bishops from his frontiers. One example was that Frederick seized some castles from the Terra di Lavoro through the Abruzzi passes, which led to the Papal States. Frederick removed some Bishops from this area in 1227 and 1228, which was immediately before his first excommunication, because he was unsure if he could trust the Bishops who were in close proximity to the Pope and his states.

Frederick knew extremely well the importance of having loyal Churchmen within his regnum. Those people whose loyalty was questioned or had rebelled against the emperor, were disposed of. From these stories we may understand the origins of hostility between Frederick and the Papacy. At the beginning of his reign, Frederick was not powerful, and he owed the survival of his kingdom to Pope Innocent III. Innocent III continuously checked Frederick's power and held sovereignty over part of the Sicilian kingdom. Contemporaries recorded that Innocent offered advice to the young Frederick,

"Pope Innocent writes to Frederick King of Sicily that the messengers whom he sent to him (Innocent) having been received, he (Innocent) is sending back to him (Frederick) the deacon cardinal of St. Adrian, the legate of the apostolic see, with whose advice concerning stabilizing peace within in the kingdom he agrees."<sup>74</sup>

Pope Innocent III was the very image of a Papal Monarch. His impact shaped the history of the Papacy and Western Europe. One chronicler wrote that the, "Church in his

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71 Paris, IV, I, 437.

72 Pybus, 161.

73 Huillard-Breholles, V, i, 463.

74 Huillard-Breholles, I, i, 106. See appendix I A.

day, in the glory of her bloom and the zenith of her power, held sway over the Roman Empire, and over all kings, and princes of the universe.”<sup>75</sup> Innocent III, a jurist educated at Bologna, knew well the importance of his office. His knowledge was combined with his youthful vigor. Aged just thirty-seven, he was the youngest pope to ascend the throne of St. Peter. Because of this he was destined to play a huge role on the stage of Medieval Europe.

Innocent III had written a text titled *On the Contempt of the World*, which stressed his undying belief in the sanctity of his priestly office. This claim was proven with Innocent’s stewardship over Sicily after the death of Frederick’s mother Constance. In 1197, Innocent claimed Sicily with the justification of feudal custom. In 1198 Innocent wrote to the count of Fondi and claimed that Sicily belonged, “ad ius et proprietatem ecclesie.”<sup>76</sup> Innocent additionally claimed to Frederick early in the young monarch’s reign,

“In order to defend your rights, we have passed sleepless nights, and delayed lunch until it became dinner, so that through thinking matters over by ourselves, or discussion with others, we might be able to find practical ways of pacifying your inheritance for you.”<sup>77</sup>

Innocent had sufficient reason to support Frederick because he was still a young king. Frederick had the distinct advantage of maturing under the close watch of the papacy to become a loyal supporter of the apostolic see. Apart from his stewardship over Frederick, one of the reasons why Innocent became so powerful was because he skillfully installed bishops throughout Europe, which, in Kantorowicz’s words, “crippled Europe.” In the early thirteenth century the great Aristotelian theologian Thomas Aquinas recorded

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75 Kantorowicz, 39.

76 Moore, John C, “Pope Innocent III, Sardinia, and the Papal State” *Speculum* vol.62, No.1, (Jan, 1987): 81-101. 99. “to law and ecclesiastical property.”

77 Loud, 178.

that “submission to the pope was essential to every man for the salvation of his soul.”<sup>78</sup>

Before the advent of Frederick to the imperial throne, Innocent III favored Otto of Brunswick for the office of Holy Roman Emperor. However, due to Otto’s imperial ambitions of uniting his empire with Sicily, he quickly fell out of favor with Innocent III. Innocent III had said that the, “sword that we fashioned for ourselves deals us dire blows.”<sup>79</sup> Frederick quickly filled the void for the seat of Holy Roman Emperor. Innocent eventually excommunicated Otto, which completely set events back in reverse in Otto’s homeland of central Europe. Otto’s power was finally broken at the battle of Bouvines by the French king Philip Augustus in 1214.

Innocent’s favour towards Frederick aided Frederick in the attainment of his throne, and he was aware of the gratitude that he owed the Pope.

“Since no other was to be found, who could have accepted the proffered dignity in opposition to us and to our right...since the princes summoned us and since from their own choice the crown is ours...”<sup>80</sup>

However, despite this gratitude, Frederick knew his lack of power when he ascended the throne of Germany. His weakness was prevalent because from the beginning of his reign the pope attempted to keep Sicily and Germany separated, and forced Frederick to crown his son Henry as King of Sicily. This was a brilliant political maneuver by Innocent; it was in accordance with his diplomacy through much of his reign. This split of Frederick’s lands not only divided his lands but also weakened Frederick. This division forced Frederick to wait many years to regain his power base and eventually claim Sicily.

The ever-mindful Frederick knew that he must be a subordinate to the papacy because it was his only route to survival this early in his reign. Frederick agreed to the

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<sup>78</sup> Kantorowicz, Ernst, *Frederick II* New York: (Ungar Publishing, 1931), 171, 41.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 55.

*Golden Bull of Eger*, which was an oath that Frederick took not to interfere with the property of the Church.<sup>81</sup> Frederick, when crowned king, took this oath to the church to win papal support, Frederick was quoted as saying:

“Therefore, most reverent father and lord, pope Innocent....we will show to you and to your catholic successors and the Church of Rome all the obedience, honour, and reverence which our predecessors, catholic kings and emperors, are known to have shown your predecessors. We wish in no wise to diminish, but rather to enlarge these, to the end that our devotion may be clearly manifest... We renounce and will refrain from the abuse of appropriating the properties of the deceased prelates, or the revenues of vacant churches... We relinquish to the Sovereign Pontiff and to the other prelates of the Church the free disposition of all spiritualities, in order that, all apportioned, the things which are Caesar’s may be rendered to Caesar and the things that are God’s to God.”<sup>82</sup>

However, small segments of manipulation did begin early in his reign. Frederick and Innocent III met one time in Rome, and the result was that Innocent gave money to Frederick for his homage. Following this Frederick made concessions to Innocent in an attempt to increase the pope’s support of him. Frederick secured the internal church powers of Italy to Innocent and handed over the disputed regions in central Italy that Otto had taken over.<sup>83</sup>

Shortly after the fourth Lateran council in 1215, Innocent sent prelates to Germany to seek increased papal support and revenues. They were successful, and the clerical influence within the towns of Wurzburg, Cologne, and Magdeburg increased papal rights over the respective Archbishops.<sup>84</sup> These rights were conceded by Frederick, who later said, “they had their origin in the plenitude of our good will.”<sup>85</sup> Frederick intended to show his approval of papal interests to keep the relationship strong. To further enhance his image with the papacy, Frederick swore to depart on crusade at San

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81 Moore, John C. 96.

82 Van Cleve, Thomas, *The Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1972), 70.

83 Huillard-Breholles. I, part i, 200-203.

84 Ibid, I, part ii, 456.

85 Ibid, I, part ii, 457.

Germano:

“Immediately after the celebration of Mass, and unexpectedly, the King accepted the sign of the living cross and, both in his own person, and with the support of the crusading preachers, he admonished all princes and nobles of the kingdom to do likewise; and thus he influences many to join with him...”<sup>86</sup>

This crusade vow was made for one important reason. The crusades were the ideas and ambitions of the popes, especially Innocent III. Frederick, by vowing to travel to the East and claiming responsibility for the crusade, gave himself the reins of power for the whole enterprise. Frederick now decided when he was to go; no one decided for him. Now Frederick had leverage over the papacy because he was responsible for the entire enterprise. Later on in 1220, when Innocent was long gone, Pope Honorius III, who was still waiting on Frederick to depart to the Holy Land, decided to coronate Frederick Emperor because he believed it was essential to the success of the crusade.

“Pope Honorius responds to Frederick, King of the Romans, that he received his legate, the abbot of Fulda, and although, in similar occasions, his predecessors were accustomed to send an archbishop or at least a bishop, nevertheless he was willing to reconsider his [Frederick] rank as long as his promotion be particularly useful to the Holy Land and ecclesiastical freedom and necessary to the suppression of heretics and trouble-makers.”<sup>87</sup>

However, despite his early lenience on specific matters which concerned landed estates, Frederick still protested against Innocent III in regard to the bishops in his kingdom. Specifically, he protested against the practice of bishops and clergy appealing to Rome, and he claimed that it was his right to nominate his own bishops. Innocent contested this quickly. He admonished Frederick and claimed that Frederick remain sovereign of only his lands. Innocent warned Frederick that to dabble in the politics of the church could only lead to the injury “of you and your kingdom.”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Van Cleve, 96.

<sup>87</sup> Huillard-Breholles, I, part ii, 751. See Appendix I C.

<sup>88</sup> Van Cleve, 65.

One conflict between the two men concerned Walter of Palear, a deserter from Frederick's kingdom during his adolescence. When Frederick came of age in 1210, Walter was one of the first to be dismissed, but Innocent protested vigorously on Walter's behalf. Innocent had warned the Emperor that men would be hesitant to offer their allegiance to a lord who was ungrateful to their service, by which he was referring to Walter. Though there was never any falling out and condemnation between Innocent and Frederick, they still argued about certain rights. Frederick knew how far he could bend the Pope to his will without breaking his tolerance, but Frederick only bent far enough to eventually attain the nomination for the seat of Holy Roman Emperor which occurred at the fourth Lateran Council in 1215. Frederick manipulated Innocent just enough to attain his most desired goal, the subjugation of Sicily with papal approval, and later he would seek more, doing whatever he had to attain his limitless ambitions.

Chroniclers of the period recorded Frederick's real intentions, "Frederick II therefore directed his attack against Rome, [he] boldly attempted to lay hold of the hierarchical organization of the Church at its very centre, and sought to bring it as a whole within the constitutional structure of the state."<sup>89</sup> Frederick claimed, "From our earliest days...our heart has never ceased to burn with the desire to re-establish in the position of their ancient dignity the founder of the Roman Empire and its foundress, Rome herself."<sup>90</sup> This attitude had taken its full shape under the pontificate of Honorius III.

Pope Honorius III was the successor to Innocent III, and he was quite different from his predecessor. Where Innocent III was the *summus imperator* of his time,

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<sup>89</sup> Van Cleve, 102.

<sup>90</sup> Huillard-Breholles, V, part ii, 761.

Honorius was described as placable and gentle. When Honorius ascended the papal throne in Rome he maintained a tolerant relationship with Frederick II. Perhaps Frederick perceived the new pope's differences from Innocent as a weakness, and he began to grow more ambitiously. One of Frederick's first acts was that he demanded the imperial regalia and emblems from the deceased Otto of Brunswick. Frederick used Honorius III as a conduit to achieve this end, Honorius wrote to Henry, the brother of Otto demanding the regalia with the bane of excommunication.

"Frederick, King of the Romans, writes to Pope Honorius that on account of the difficult state of the Christian army in the holy land, he, having been moved by pious care, has proclaimed and a goal to all those marked with the cross. And in the curia of Fulda he has convoked another solemn court concerning this matter at Magdeburg in the middle of Lent. He urges the pope to propose excommunication for those who did not take up the journey to the feast of St. John the Baptist. In addition, he seeks to compel Henry Duke of Brunswick through the threat of force to hand over to him the imperial insignia."<sup>91</sup>

Frederick had a tremendous amount of trust for Honorius because, when Frederick spoke of departing on his promised crusade, he asked Honorius to be the imperial regent over his kingdom while he was gone.<sup>92</sup> Frederick's trust in Honorius III led him to attempt to take advantage of the Pope's weakness. Frederick's manipulation of Honorius had begun when Honorius called Frederick in for securing his promise of departing on a crusade.

Honorius called in Frederick's aid because news had reached Rome that the Fifth Crusade of 1221, which had taken Damietta in Egypt, was a disaster. The Crusader forces were surrounded by the Nile floods, and King Louis IX was in danger of being captured by the forces of the Egyptian Caliph Al Malik al Kamil. Before he would embark Frederick demanded some items in return. Frederick wanted to settle the complication of the *Sicilian Question*. The problem was that under Innocent III, Frederick swore to loosen

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<sup>91</sup> Huillard-Breholles, I, part ii, 584. See Appendix I D.

<sup>92</sup> Kantorowicz, *Frederick II*, 97.

his authority over Sicily in lieu of his son Henry. Frederick wrote to Honorius and claimed that he had always wanted his son to be crowned king of Germany,<sup>93</sup> for, argued Frederick, that transition of imperial power may travel more smoothly if he was elected in Germany. In light of the current situation of the doomed Fifth Crusade, Frederick understood the opportunity at hand.

A prelude to this event had hinted at Frederick's original ambitions. When Innocent died in 1216, Frederick had his son proclaimed Imperial Prince of the Duchy of Swabia essentially to set him up for the future kingship of Germany. Frederick claimed that it was always his ambition that his son be king of Germany.<sup>94</sup> The impact of his son's election to the kingship of the Germans would in effect unite the Empire under Frederick. His son as acting king over Germany was solely a facade to display the division of the empire, but in reality the Empire was united under the single authority of Frederick. This was Frederick's masterstroke. Using the bending of papal policies as stepping-stones to achieve his ambitions he united the empire. Honorius responded with the request that if Frederick were to become king of Sicily he would have to rule as a vassal of the church. Frederick responded:

"Who would be more obedient to the Church than one who had been suckled at her breast?...Who would be more loyal, more mindful of received benefits...than one who, conscious of his indebtedness, tries to pay his debt according to the will and order of his benefactor?"<sup>95</sup>

To avoid any unnecessary conflict Frederick claimed to have no knowledge of the election of his son to the throne of Germany. Frederick protested that he wasn't present within the kingdom to witness the election, and this lifted the suspicion of his real

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93 Huillard-Breholles, I, ii, 629-630.

94 Ibid, I, i. 802.

95 Van Cleve, 115.

ambitions of uniting the Empire. Frederick secretly engineered the votes of certain lords in order to have his son elected. Additionally, Frederick offered a number of cities liberalities, which meant that citizens were granted exemptions from personal services and taxes with full trading privileges throughout the realm.<sup>96</sup> Frederick offered these men the free disposal of their wealth and rights of custom and coinage in the bishops' lands, but Frederick limited his own freedom within their lands.

In an attempt to win further support, Frederick offered the *Confoederatio* to those in central Europe, which granted independent sovereignty over the principalities of the people. By this agreement ecclesiastical princes were guaranteed the right to seize the fiefs of vassals who violated feudal law, and were assured that the king would not claim the fiefs for himself. The *Confoederatio* was granted for perpetuity. It is likely Frederick granted this right in perpetuity because a fragmented Germany was too unwieldy to reign over. Sicily was much more suitable place for the throne of Frederick.

Another form of manipulation was that Frederick told Honorius that he wanted to revoke some land back for the crown. This resulted in the *Edict of Capua*, which reclaimed the rights of Frederick as was already described above. In an attempt to remain on Honorius's good side Frederick wrote a letter to him in March of 1221 stating that he would not violate the rights and the properties of ecclesiastics within his regnum. He wrote, "No ecclesiastical or secular person may act as justiciar [arbiter] save those to whom the office has been entrusted by us."<sup>97</sup>

Historical conceptions portray Honorius as weak willed, however, having been the successor of Innocent III may have dimmed Honorius' historical image. Honorius did

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 104.

<sup>97</sup> Powell, James M, "Frederick II and the Church in the Kingdom of Sicily 1220-1224." *American Society of Church History*, Vol. 30, No.1 (March, 1961): 30.

know the limits of his authority and he did check up on the church within the kingdom of Sicily. Honorius sent papal legates to verify that Frederick was giving up his rights in Sicily, who Frederick calmly assured the legates of his oath to give up his rights over the churches. Frederick pushed events like this aside until events were ready to move forward.

Honorius III claimed to have overlooked Frederick's past offenses early in his reign. Honorius said that the trespasses were natural to "the fiery spirit of the youth."<sup>98</sup> When Frederick wrested away rights and taxes from the churches in Sicily, Honorius claimed that Frederick was young and persuaded by evil advisors. Due to Honorius' passivity, Frederick was able to resist departing on the Crusade that he had vowed to take at San Germano. Frederick claimed that he was unable to embark because he was waging war against the Saracens in Sicily.<sup>99</sup> Honorius agreed to postpone the crusade until 1227.

However, Frederick had to agree to the new stipulations of San Germano in order to receive Honorius's consent of postponing the crusade. Frederick had complete responsibility for launching the crusade. This included: funding the crusade with 100,000 ounces of gold; departing with a 1,000 knights; holding his forces there for at least two years; and holding transports in order to transport another 2,000 men to the East. Honorius may have consented, but he successfully redirected the costs of the crusade to the Emperor.

Frederick, having been successful in postponing his crusade, moved forward to regulate church money and lands. Frederick forbade the purchase and the acquisition of gifts by churches and monasteries, and claimed "the Church would ere long have bought

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<sup>98</sup> Kantorowicz, *Frederick II*, 136.

<sup>99</sup> Frederick wasn't fighting against Muslims because of their beliefs; rather he fought them because he was trying to consolidate his authority over central Sicily and route out the rebels.

up the entire kingdom.”<sup>100</sup> Frederick, who was becoming bolder, began to depose bishops who were not fit for office. One example was that he suspended the Bishop Arduin, and charged him with squandering church property. Another Bishop, who did not support Frederick, was Archbishop Nicholas of Taranto, who held similar charges against him. Honorius did very little in spite of these transgressions against the Church and he gave Frederick much leniency when it came to policies of Frederick’s kingdom.

Frederick held sway over episcopal elections within Sicily. It is worth noting that Southern Italy held 21 archbishops and 124 bishops.<sup>101</sup> Frederick knew that he needed control over these seats, and he held control over most of them. The record unveils only a few cases where Frederick disagreed about where bishops were seated. Relations between Pope and Emperor began to deteriorate when Frederick led his troops to Northern Italy to hold a diet. Honorius protested this, taxed Frederick, and reproached him for his ingratitude to the Church. Frederick responded with the statement, “Quosque tandem patientia mea abutetur pontifex!”<sup>102</sup> Frederick complained that the pope had accepted all the people that Frederick had exiled from Sicily, and that Honorius tried to enhance his rights in Sicily.

Bitterness developed between the two men, Honorius refused to formally give full rights of Episcopal elections to Frederick. In a statement echoing that of Innocent II, Honorius warned him that he must not rely on the evil policies of his ancestors. Frederick threatened not only to deny those the Pope appointed, but to even close the towns that were the future seats of the papal candidate. Tensions between Honorius and Frederick never reached a climatic finale resulting in Frederick’s excommunication. However, the

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100 Kantorowicz, *Frederick II*, 141.

101 *Ibid*, 143.

102 *Ibid*, 155 ‘At last whichever pontiff so misuses my patience!’

road was paved for the ascent of the audacious and stubborn Gregory IX as Pope. His pontificate was destined to result in the most climatic showdown between Emperor and Pope since the quarrel between Gregory VII and Henry IV in the eleventh century.

## II Papal Manipulation Fails

“Slowly the poison the whole bloodstream  
fills, it is not the effort nor the failure tires, the  
waste remains, the waste remains and kills.”  
–Sir William Empson

When Gregory IX ascended the throne of St. Peter in 1227 he quickly understood the ambitions of the man Matthew of Paris labeled *Stupor Mundi*. Some chroniclers of the period claimed that Gregory IX was a papal tyrant whose own audacity only succeeded in his expulsion from Rome. Ernst Kantorowicz described Gregory IX as a, “tiara-crowned, papal Emperor,”<sup>103</sup> “drunk with hate.”<sup>104</sup> David Einstein, another historian of Frederick, wrote that Gregory possessed a “fearless will and dynamic force of immeasurable power.”<sup>105</sup> Gregory IX, whose papal predecessor was the more lenient Honorius III, took a completely different approach to dealing with Frederick. Gregory was compelled to compass the destruction of the Hohenstaufen because of Frederick’s limitless ambitions in Italy.

Gregory IX was possessed with a fiery zeal for papal control over all of Christendom, which had its origins in the pontificate of Gregory VII in the eleventh century, and began to coalesce into its final form in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The ideology of authority produced by Gregory VII had immersed itself within the mentality of the subsequent popes, and they believed they were the imperators of Christendom. We may understand this through the character of Gregory IX, who was so

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103 Kantorowicz, *Frederick II*, 171.

104 Ibid, 171.

105 Einstein, David, *Emperor Frederick II* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), 213.

extreme that his contemporaries claimed that his actions were instigated by the devil.<sup>106</sup> In the words of his papal predecessor, Honorius III, Gregory was “forceful in word and indeed.”<sup>107</sup> Additionally, the nineteenth century historian Joseph Francois Michaud described Frederick and Gregory as “both animated by boundless ambition, jealous to excess of their power, implacable in their revenge and always ready to employ the arms which the church or fortune placed in their hands.”<sup>108</sup>

After his excommunication, Frederick claimed that, “from him [Gregory IX] in whom all men hope to find salvation of body and soul comes evil example, deceit, and wrongdoing.”<sup>109</sup> Frederick, who encompassed the idea of apocalypse, which was preached by the thirteenth century visionary Joachim of Fiore,<sup>110</sup> and Gregory IX, who was one of the most stubborn papal imperators as reported by his contemporaries, were destined for unending conflict. The emergence of such a struggle was brought about by the greed for power of both men, the Pope’s anxiety about preserving the future lands and authority of the papacy, and from the manipulation of the clever Frederick.

When Gregory IX first became pope in 1227, he noticed that the Papal States were nearly enveloped by the lands of Frederick. The only region that stood between the Papal States from being completely surrounded was the rebellious cities of Lombardy in Northern Italy. If Frederick were to take control of Northern Italy, Gregory IX was well aware of the mounting pressure that would be placed upon him to safeguard the Papal States from Frederick’s influence. Frederick could not easily manipulate Gregory IX as

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106 Van Cleve, 198.

107 Abulafia, David, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor* (London: Allen Lane the Penguin, 1988), 164.

108 Michaud, Joseph Francois, *Histoire des Croisades* ed. W. Robinson (London: George Routledge & Co, 1852), 50.

109 Huillard-Breholles, II, ii, 706.

110 Reeves, 24.

he had done with Honorius. Gregory was a realist and a pragmatist, and he therefore took a sober view towards Frederick's ambitions for a possible unified empire.

Despite Gregory's firm understanding of Frederick's ambitions, the relationship between the two men was cordial at first. Gregory initially referred to Frederick as "the church's beloved sapling."<sup>111</sup> Gregory detected Frederick's ambitions from the Lombard Diet,<sup>112</sup> and saw that he had to take offense against the ambitions of the Emperor. As soon as Gregory ascended the pontificate he sent an abbreviated version of the agreements between Frederick and the Lombard League to remind Frederick of his oath of peace. This event signaled that Gregory was well aware of the possibility that Frederick intended to conquer Northern Italy.

Additionally, Gregory sent Frederick a letter regarding his failed promises to depart on a crusade. This letter was a veiled threat and read, "do not put yourself in a position where I have to take action against you; go on a crusade as promised, or else."<sup>113</sup> In an attempt to remove the imperial threat from the Papal States, Gregory understood that he had to remove Frederick from the region. Once removed, Gregory believed that this might increase his authority in the area. To accomplish this Gregory called in Frederick's promise to depart on a crusade, which he made at San Germano many years earlier. If Frederick failed to disembark Gregory would have enough grounds to excommunicate him, but if he did go, Frederick would be gone for many years.

Frederick had delayed his crusade for many years and it is apparent why. His kingdom of Southern Italy was one of the most beautiful locations in the world; if one were to travel there today they may see the impressive mountains and cliffs of Southern

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111 Kantorowicz, *Frederick II*, 170.

112 *Ibid*, 170.

113 Abulafia, 165.

Italy, where through ingenuity, people have lived for many years. These mountains and cliffs reveal homes, smart resorts, and stores standing upon them as if defying gravity. It is no wonder why Frederick was hesitant to leave the beautiful environment of Sicily and Southern Italy.

Gregory additionally recruited more cardinals that who were in agreement with his policies to increase his authority. On September eighteenth of 1227 Gregory nominated several new Lombard cardinals to support him. Ten days later, on the twenty-eighth, Gregory excommunicated Frederick. The excommunication materialized because Frederick failed to depart on a crusade yet again. However, Frederick did attempt to set out on crusade. He assembled an army, and the disembarkation point was the town of Brindisi in Southern Italy. The assembly of soldiers was successful because Frederick made promises to some for future grants and lands, and he spread the word that he was to sponsor the entire trip. Frederick's willingness to cover the costs for the trip aided him in assembling many men, and made it clear that Frederick was intent on departing. Despite Frederick's maneuvers to recruit people, he was halted by other circumstances that appeared to be out of his control.

The hot August sun beat down on the coastal town of Brindisi where thousands of crusaders were assembled. Hygienic practices, if there were any, were probably few and far between, and due to the proximity of people, plague broke out and spread like wild fire. One chronicler wrote:

“Brindisi was an ill-chosen trysting place, being most unhealthy; the badness of the air, and the rain that fell killed off many crusaders.”<sup>114</sup>

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114 Einstein, 215.

The disease that broke out was most likely typhoid cholera,<sup>115</sup> and it decimated the crusaders. Many people who were in route to Brindisi had to turn back in fear of the disease. Frederick caught the disease and was rendered extremely weak. As a result he decided to delay his departure for at least a little while. Frederick still sent men and money to the East. He enlisted twenty-eight galleys under the authority of the master of the German order, and he named Henry of Limburg as the commander of the crusade.<sup>116</sup> The money that Frederick had pledged still flowed through to the crusaders to support them, it was said that Frederick gave 100,000 gold ounces to support the crusade.<sup>117</sup>

Following Frederick's failed departure because of plague, Gregory excommunicated him. First he proclaimed that Frederick had been persecuting the church in Sicily, where he showed no rights and liberties. One charge was that Frederick exiled many leading ecclesiastics in his kingdom.<sup>118</sup> Gregory blamed Frederick for the deaths of thousands of soldiers at Brindisi, and claimed that it was a poor location to assemble. However, this charge appears to be hollow, because at the fourth Lateran council in 1215 Brindisi was one of the official locations designated by the council for disembarkation to the Holy Land<sup>119</sup>. The pope additionally claimed that, "He, [Frederick II] however, contemptuous of all promises...was allured by the customary pleasures of his kingdom, making frivolous pretence of illness."<sup>120</sup> Another accusation pinned on Frederick was that he was responsible for the catastrophe at Damietta on the previous crusade to Egypt. However, Kantorowicz claimed, "Frederick had in fact forewarned the Pope of the

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115 Abulafia, 165.

116 Loud, *Richard of San Germano*, 147.

117 Huillard-Breholles, iii. 45.

118 Matthew of Westminster, *Flowers of History* ed. C.D. Yonge (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853), 155.

<sup>119</sup> Evans, II, 86.

<sup>120</sup> Van Cleve, 198.

dangers incurred about that crusade to Damietta.”<sup>121</sup> Following these smaller accusations, Gregory wrote letters to the bishops of Southern Italy in which he referred to Frederick:

“The little bark of St. Peter...From far quarters the tempests are now assailing our bark: the armies of the infidels-; the rage of the tyrants, asserting their temporal claims prescribes justice and tramples underfoot the liberties of the church; the folly of heretics seek to rend the seamless garments of Christ and to destroy the sacraments of truth; false brethren and wicked sons, by their perversity, disturb the bowels and tear open the sides of their mother....To combat these matters,...the Holy Apostolic See reckoned in these later times in a nursling whom she had taken up the Emperor Frederick, as it were, from his mother’s womb, fed him at her breasts, borne him on her shoulders; she had often rescued him from those who sought his life; instructed him, educated him with care and pain to manhood; invested him with royal dignity; and to crown all his blessings, bestowed on him the title of Emperor, hoping to find him a protecting support, a staff for her old age.”<sup>122</sup>

So far in this passage Gregory reminded the bishops of how the church saved the kingdom and the life of Frederick during his adolescence. However, Gregory’s letter continued, and explained Frederick’s repeated promises to depart for a crusade.

“But he [Frederick] breaking all his promises, bursting every bond, trampling underfoot the fear of God, despising all reverence for Christ Jesus, scorning the censures of the Church, deserting the Christian army, abandoning the Holy Land to the unbelievers, to his own disgrace and that of all Christendom, withdrew to the luxuries and wonted delights of his kingdom, seeking to palliate his offence by frivolous excuses of simulated sickness.”<sup>123</sup>

The pope complained about Frederick’s lack of fidelity towards the church, he claimed:

“That we may not be esteemed as dumb dogs, who do not bark, nor fear to take vengeance upon him, the Emperor Frederick who has caused ruin to the people of God, we proclaim the said emperor excommunicated; we command you to publish this our excommunication throughout the realm; and to declare that in case of his continuance, we shall proceed to still more awful censures.”<sup>124</sup>

Gregory also claimed that, “we can no longer tolerate these acts or, with good conscience withhold our punishment. It profited a man nought if he gain the whole world to the detriment of his soul.”<sup>125</sup> Soon after the excommunication Gregory wrote to the diocese

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121 Kantorowicz, *Frederick II*, 173.

122 Einstein, 218.

123 Einstein, 219.

124 Ibid, 219.

125 Van Cleve, 197.

of Canterbury and beckoned for money to use against the Emperor. In a text recorded within the *Vetus Registrum Sarisberiense* Gregory claimed:

“Fredrick, called emperor, not content that wherever he had power , trampling underfoot the church of God with studied malignity, he openly subverted ecclesiastical liberty, , now when the business of the Holy Land has been miserably confused , not being able to veil further the wicked design , afterward innumerable set forward wicked lies and fraud against the Rome Church , inflaming himself entirely to its persucution...we ask affectionately , warn carefully, and ordering you strictly by apostolic writings , command your discretion , of which we have full faith in the lord , that in the case of necessity , in which the cause not only of the Roman Church but of the whole universal Church is involved , you give liberally and freely to us the aid of suitable subsidy by giving us with spontaneous freewill the tenth of all of your rents and revenues...”<sup>126</sup>

Then Gregory claimed that he was ready to restore Frederick but “otherwise we shall proceed accordingly as God and justice dictate.”<sup>127</sup> Technically, Gregory was within his rights to excommunicate Frederick because of the oath taken at San Germano, in which Frederick stated that he would leave for the crusade by August of 1222.

Following this Frederick appeared to be penitent for his failure to embark on a crusade, and he took the vow again knowing that the pope must hear his penance. To avoid this, Gregory took up a new line of attack, and that was where the accusation that Frederick enslaved the Church of southern Italy made its debut into the story. Frederick’s supposed enslavement of the Church and the exile of the barons was “a mass of new, baseless accusations, some of which can be proved to have been entirely false,”<sup>128</sup> as Kantorowicz claimed. In another attempt of reconciliation, Frederick sent ambassadors to Rome to explain Frederick’s actions, but the Pope did not even hear the ambassadors, but refused to meet with them. The mission of Curia that was sent to Gregory was to remind the Pope that Frederick had sent more than a thousand knights to Syria, and that the gold that Frederick had promised was paid, and that Frederick had finally made himself

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<sup>126</sup> Evans , I, 92.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 197.

<sup>128</sup> Kantorowicz, *Frederick II*, 173.

responsible for their transportation. Frederick also claimed that the Lombards were supposed to send 400 knights, which they had failed to do, and this bore no fruit.<sup>129</sup>

Beyond the reasons recorded in the historical record, it is obvious why Gregory excommunicated the Emperor; this was Gregory's only chance to do so in an attempt to quell the manipulation and the ambitions of Frederick. Frederick, however was no atheist, and he was not anti-papal, he was aware of the authority that the papacy had throughout Christian Europe. Frederick knew what he must do to display to the world that the papacy was not justified in his excommunication.

When was excommunicated he was very sick due to the plague that almost wiped out the crusading army that he assembled. This is probably the reason why he was quiet at first in the face of Gregory's anger. Frederick eventually replied to Gregory. First Frederick circulated pamphlets which explained the recent events. These pamphlets described the real occurrences at Brindisi, and claimed that Frederick possessed no real intention of widening the breach between himself and the pope. One chronicler announced that these pamphlets "confused almost the whole Christian world with new unaccustomed miseries."<sup>130</sup>

After the circulation of these pamphlets, Frederick explained other papal injuries. He explained that the Pope had taken the side of the rebellious Milanese, who were his enemies, and that the Pope had issued orders to take up arms against Frederick. Finally Frederick claimed that the pope had already fomented insurrection against him in Sicily. In the letter Frederick said:

"pray cause this is our present letter to be read aloud and listened to with honour and respect, so that from its contents the certainty of our innocence may be clear to all. And clear also the shame which is being done

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129 Ibid, 173.

130 Ibid, 175.

to us and our empire.”<sup>131</sup>

After Frederick had sent these letters across Europe, he tried to corrupt the inner workings of the eternal city. To win support Frederick used the Filangieri and the Pierloni families of Rome. The Filangieri family had a long history within the Norman kingdom of Italy, for they had served in the curia of Roger II in the twelfth century. Under Frederick they served as marshals throughout the kingdom, and were the emperor’s governors in Jerusalem.<sup>132</sup> Most were educated, some in canon law at Bologna. Frederick bought their lands which he gave back to them in Rome to increase their loyalty. Not long after this a professor of jurisprudence from the University of Bologna brought to the city by the two families read the vindication of Frederick in the streets of Rome.

Following this strategy Frederick wrote to the crusaders who were on their way to Jerusalem. Frederick claimed that the church was his father and that he had honored the Vicar of Christ before this whole incident. But now Frederick condemned Gregory for inciting hatred. Frederick next criticized the papacy as ‘money grabbers guilty of usury’<sup>133</sup> and he accused the church of abandoning its own founding principles of poverty.<sup>134</sup> Frederick had long believed that Gregory was hiding his real intentions of the destruction of the Hohenstaufen. Frederick wrote:

“We speak reluctantly, but we cannot dissemble that which we have too long kept silent: that the hopes which have deceived many have perhaps deceived us also. We appear to be approaching the end of time in which love is seen to grow cold not only in its branches but also in its roots. For, not only does people rise against people, not only does kingdom menace kingdom, not only do pestilence and famine fill the hearts of the living with terror, but charity itself, by which both heaven and earth are ruled, is threatened not just in its streams, but at its very source. The Roman Empire, ordained of Divine providence as defender of the

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131 Ibid, 175.

132 Kamp, 206.

133 Abulafia, 167.

134 Ibid, 168.

Christian faith, is seriously threatened not by the lowest but by those whom honours and whom it had considered as fathers...what can we do when the Vicar of Christ, the successor of the blessed Peter, in whom we had place our trust, viciously and unworthily attacks out person, and seems totally devoted to exciting hatred against us?"<sup>135</sup>

This letter went out with the purpose of defending Frederick's actions, but also with the purpose of labeling the papacy as corrupt. The letter seems calm and collective, and was an argument well presented in order to win support against Gregory IX.

Frederick next sent a personal letter to King Henry III of England in an attempt to gain his sympathy. He wrote that the popes were

"disguised in sheep's clothing, these ravenous wolves send legates hither and thither to excommunicate, to suspend, to punish not as sowers of seed, that is the word of God, but to extort money, to harvest and reap that which they did not sow."<sup>136</sup>

Frederick ended the letter by invoking all of the western monarchs "to look to your own house when that of your neighbor is on fire."<sup>137</sup> Frederick additionally said that the papacy had abandoned their founding principles for the sole interest of gaining more authority. Again, Frederick wrote to Henry III, "has not the king of England seen his father, King John, held in excommunication until both he and his kingdom were made tributary?"<sup>138</sup> Frederick said that the popes were "insatiable leeches, their language sweeter than honey, softer than oil."<sup>139</sup>

After the attempt at winning support from other western monarchs, Frederick also analyzed the political theology of the pope's authority to use it against Gregory. After reviewing the authority of the Papal See, Frederick must have seen a distortion of the papal power when he analyzed the jurisprudence first attributed to Pope Gelasius I:

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135 Huillard-Breholles, V, part I, 329.

136 Paris, iii. 153.

137 Ibid, iii. 153.

138 Van Cleve, 200.

139 Ibid, 200.

“The Spiritual and temporal powers are entrusted to two different orders, each drawing its authority from God, each supreme in its own sphere and independent within its own sphere from the others.”<sup>140</sup>

This line of thought is in common with the political conceptions of the day. In the eleventh century, Pope Gregory VII instituted reforms in an attempt to gain more authority. From these reforms a new ideology was born in which western monarchs needed to successfully combat the ideology of Gregory VII, if they ran the risk of experiencing a type of decadence in their authority. This new ideology claimed that kings were ordained and chosen by God to rule, and therefore they were under the authority of God, not the papacy. This divided the king’s office into two units, one being eternal the other being ephemeral. The office was eternal and whoever entered it was ordained by God. The body of the king was ephemeral, only present to fill the office and to be the conduit of God’s will until the next monarch ascended the throne. Ernst Kantorowicz labels this the “*halo of perpetuity*.”<sup>141</sup> Frederick saw this political theology in his own day and used it against Gregory to his advantage, and reminded the other kings of Europe in an attempt to win support.

Frederick appealed to many princes, but this still did not lift the excommunication. In order for that to be accomplished Frederick had to adhere to the Pope’s pleas. These pleas were the abandonment of all sovereign claims to Sicily, a demand Frederick was not willing to meet. Gregory understood that Frederick had been recruiting support from all over Europe, and he now went on the offensive with increased ferocity. Gregory saw who might benefit him in the struggles against Frederick II, and he saw this in Northern Italy.

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140 Carlyle, A.J, *Medieval Political Theory* (New York: Putnam & Sons, 1909), i. 175-176,

141 Kantorowicz, Ernst, *The Kings Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, Princeton University Press. 1957), 78.

Gregory began to focus in on some of Frederick's enemies, and he found Frederick's greatest enemies in the Lombard League of Northern Italy.<sup>142</sup> This event goes hand in hand with Gregory's previous installation of several new Cardinals within this region, who sided with Gregory during his fight with Frederick. Gregory's attack was spread through letters that appealed to bishops throughout Christendom. One letter reads as follows:

"We have excommunicated him because he did not sail at the time agreed; because he will not allow the archbishop of Otranto to return to the See; because he robbed the templar's and hospitalars; and because he maltreats his nobles. We have orders all the suspension of diving offices where he may be; we shall proceed against him like a heretic; we shall absolve his subjects from their oath of allegiance; we shall strip him of his kingdom, which is out fief, and for which he has rendered us homage."<sup>143</sup>

This letter stressed the notion that Frederick's realm was a fief of the papacy. Secondly, Gregory released the oaths of Fredericks' vassals. However, in this case it was in vain because no-one adhered to it. Additionally Gregory sent pieces of propaganda regarding Frederick's young wife Yolante who died. Gregory claimed the Frederick abandoned her and was not concerned for her well being. David Einstein says, "The Church, however, in waging its war against the Emperor, did not hesitate to seize upon the wildest of stories and impress upon them the stamp of truth."<sup>144</sup> Another letter written to Frederick by Gregory is as follows:

"The noise and howling of the Churches of Sicily and Apulia, plundered by you, has come to our ears. We are placed here to defence Christ's church; we warn you to restore everything."<sup>145</sup>

Frederick knew that in order to settle the dispute with Gregory he could do nothing short of giving away his rights of sovereignty over Sicily. Frederick had his way with the last pope, Honorius III, but with Gregory he knew that there was only one route

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142 Kantorowicz, *Frederick II*, 174.

143 Einstein, 228.

144 Ibid, 233.

145 Ibid, 234.

that could lead to reconciliation. Frederick was intent to depart on crusade. Gregory saw this as a threat in itself, and therefore reacted in a way to deter Frederick.

Gregory concentrated his energies to halt Frederick's crusade. Gregory forbade the Sicilian Church to pay its crusading tithes to the Emperor.<sup>146</sup> The Pope additionally authorized the Lombard League to seize and pillage crusaders who made their way down to Southern Italy to depart in hopes of limiting the number of participants. Frederick attempted to gather German princes at Ravenna to discuss matters concerning the crusade, but Gregory and the Lombard League prevented this by forbidding passage through their territory, or seizing anyone who dared to venture across their lands.<sup>147</sup>

Once Gregory had the cooperation with the Lombard League, he labeled all those who aided Frederick as heretics. Despite these attempted setbacks, Frederick still departed on a crusade, and the Pope said, "without penance and without absolution...and without anyone's knowing for certain whither he sailed." Frederick retorted, "With Christ as our leader we have just left Brindisi for Syria, sailing swiftly before favorable winds."<sup>148</sup>

As soon as Frederick departed to the East without the blessing of the Pope, Gregory named another person king in Germany. The chronicler of Cologne claimed that the Pope sent to Germany a legate named Otto of St. Nicholas 'to do injury to the emperor and to this end to seek the counsel of Duke Otto of Luneburg. But the latter advised against undertaking anything against the Emperor."<sup>149</sup> Gregory attempted to foment trouble, but as the chronicler of Cologne has shown, people were neither hasty

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<sup>146</sup> Loud, *Richard of San Germano*, 150.

<sup>147</sup> Kantorowicz, *Frederick II*, 174.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>149</sup> Van Cleve, 205.

nor comfortable with the idea of rebelling against Frederick. This was the risk Frederick had to take; he believed that he must depart to Jerusalem in order to further his future ambitions. By taking the crusade, Frederick had fulfilled his oath that he had sworn at San Germano, and this was a step towards the lifting of his excommunication. However, more propaganda flowed out from Gregory's curia, this time Gregory focused on Frederick's unnatural relationship with Islam.

Frederick's relationship with Islam was the scandal of Europe. A description of contemporary attitudes regarding the death of Muhammad has been left to us by Matthew of Paris:

"At a certain hour in the evening...intoxicated with wine and perceiving that his accustomed sickness was coming on him, [Mohammed] went out, forbidding anyone to follow him...He then fell on dung heap and...rolled about, gnashing his teeth and foaming at the mouth. A hungry pig, upon discovering that shameless man whose open mouth exhaled the stinking undigested meat, set upon him and suffocated him until he was half-dead, dismembered and torn. Hearing the loud noise of the swine, his wife and family went out and were stunned to find the body of their lord for the most part gnawed away."<sup>150</sup>

Attitudes similar to one above were venomous towards the Islamic East, and some may have considered Frederick as a part of the Islamic culture. Arab chroniclers even described Frederick as having the appearance of a slave, and that when he spoke; it appeared that he did not believe in the Christian religion.<sup>151</sup> Kantorowicz claimed that Frederick was fluent in Arabic, which enhances his mystique.<sup>152</sup> Gregory "considered the sultan [Malik] as his [Frederick's], acknowledging fidelity in the infidels, and detesting the unfaithfulness of the faithful..."<sup>153</sup> Frederick never had a violent relationship with Islam because Sicily had a large Muslim population. Frederick used people from the Muslim population as mercenaries and administrators, but he confined most Muslims to

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<sup>150</sup> Lewis, 100.

<sup>151</sup> Amari, Michele, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia* (Rome: Catani, 1938), iii p. 701.

<sup>152</sup> Kantorowicz, *Frederick II*, 179.

<sup>153</sup> Matthew of Westminster, 157.

the city of Lucera in Italy. That he did not attempt to murder them is remarkable considering the crusader ideology of Frederick's contemporaries as described by Matthew of Paris.

The Middle East in the thirteenth century was on the verge of civil war between the sultans of Damascus and Cairo. Al Malik al Kamil ruled from Cairo, and it was with him that Frederick had intense cross-cultural interactions. Kamil contacted Frederick first because he had heard of Frederick's crossing of the sea. Instead of fighting a foreign monarch, Kamil took a practical and pragmatic approach to the situation, and sought an alliance with Frederick against his brother in Damascus. The chronicler for Kamil, Ibn Wasil recorded:

"The idea of the approaches made to the emperor, the king of the Franks, and of his invitation, was to create difficulties for al-Malik al -Mu'azzam [of Damascus] and to prevent his availing himself to the help offered to him by the Sultan Jalal ad-Din ibn 'Ala ad-Din Khwarizmshah and Muzaffar as-Din of Arbela, in his quarrel with al-Kamil."<sup>154</sup>

Frederick was more a political manipulator than a warrior in the field of battle. He read this letter, and was interested to work with al-Kamil in hopes of mutual successes between the two. Their relationship moved on to gift giving, and Frederick sent his archbishop of Palermo, Bishop Berard, to meet with al-Kamil's ambassador, Fakhru' Din, and the two men exchanged gifts of fabrics, gems, camels, and mules.<sup>155</sup>

Frederick wished to retrieve Jerusalem from al-Kamil in exchange for peace because al-Kamil worried about other rival sultans in the region. The Pope was aware of the dealings between emperor and sultan, and Gregory took it upon himself to write a letter to al-Kamil that urged him not to hand over Jerusalem to Frederick. Gregory forged letters, which he claimed were from Frederick, in an attempt to deter the Sultan from

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<sup>154</sup> Abulafia, 171.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid, 183.

aiding him.<sup>156</sup> It is quite remarkable that a pope in the thirteenth century had written to a sultan in an attempt to deter the submission of Jerusalem to a Western monarch. Gregory feared that if Frederick received Jerusalem it may seem that God supported Frederick and not the papacy. In spite of many attempts to quell Frederick's reputation, Gregory achieved nothing. However, contemporary attitudes that regarded Frederick's dealings with Islam described a shadow over his popular image. A Swabian poet named Freidank called for "an end to the whispering,"<sup>157</sup> but he did not speak for Christian Europe.

Frederick received Jerusalem from al-Kamil, but attached was a ten-year truce that kept Jerusalem open for all. The agreement stipulated that Kamil was not permitted to rebuild fortifications in Jerusalem and there was to be no war for ten years. Frederick also demanded that the Muslims were not to be harassed.<sup>158</sup> Frederick accepted the treaty, and to the scandal of the papacy, he took Jerusalem for himself. Gerold, the patriarch of Jerusalem wrote to the Pope and described Frederick as a fool who allowed himself to be tricked by a Muslim.<sup>159</sup> Following this, in an attempt to quell Frederick's success, Gregory placed Jerusalem under interdict. This event was extraordinary to Christian Europe because Frederick took Jerusalem peacefully without violence. David Abulafia claimed that, "in this respect Frederick performed magnificently."<sup>160</sup> The chronicler, Roger of Wendover, described Frederick's entrance into Jerusalem:

"On the Seventeenth day of the month of March in the second indiction, which was the Sabbath, with all the pilgrims who with us had followed Christ, the son of God, faithfully, we entered the Holy City of Jerusalem, and there as Catholic Emperor, on the next day, after worshipping at the sepulcher of the Lord, we wore the crown which God the Omnipotent, through his special grace, provided for us from his majestic

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156 Ibid, 184.

157 Ibid, 186.

158 Maqrizi, Ahmad ibn, *History of the Ayyubids Sultans of Egypt* Ed. R.J.C Broadhurst, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), 526-527.

159 Ibid, 187.

160 Abulafia, 184.

throne...’’<sup>161</sup>

Muslim chroniclers left many descriptions of Frederick during his visit to the Middle East. To the Muslims, “it was clear that he was a materialist and that his Christianity was simply a game to him.”<sup>162</sup> Another chronicler describing Frederick wrote ‘as a slave in the market, he would not have fetched two hundred dirhams; and he was red faced, going bald, and had weak eyes.’<sup>163</sup> In Frederick’s interaction with Islam, Gregory saw a vulnerable point at which he struck. Frederick tried to lift his own excommunication by sending a correspondence back to Gregory to inform him of his arrival and thereby challenged the pope to lift the excommunication. But Gregory did not do this.<sup>164</sup> While Frederick was in the East, he may have had a glimmer of hope that his excommunication would be lifted, but little did he know that the Pope had recruited mercenaries, led by Frederick’s father-in-law, John of Brienne, into Southern Italy. Gregory deposed Frederick and installed John de Brienne in his stead.<sup>165</sup> The Papal army did not wear the symbolic cross on their tunics; rather they wore the symbolic keys of the papacy.

The *war of the keys* was an extraordinary event because it was purely a ‘crusade’ to remove a western monarch from his throne, and involved no ideology. Rather it was the work of mercenaries in search of booty, led by a man who had been insulted by Frederick, and funded by a pope who feared the growing power of Frederick. One cardinal, John of Colonna led a small army, but due to lack of Papal money, he had to pay his mercenaries out of his pocket. In an attempt to acquire support, Gregory spread news

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<sup>161</sup> Roger of Wendover, *Flowers of History* Ed. G.A Giles (London: J. Haddon Printers, 1849), iv. 192-193.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, 186.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid, 186.

<sup>164</sup> Abulafia, 181.

<sup>165</sup> Matthew of Westminster, 157.

of Frederick's death, but this was to no avail, people simply did not support the war, and it dragged on. The papal army penetrated deep into southern Italy, but when Frederick landed in Italy, people flocked to him. Soon Frederick drove out the papal army and halted at the border of his realm with the Papal States. Frederick appeared to want to rely on his continuing successes to defeat Gregory IX. Perhaps he had the West's sympathy, but if he had taken his army into Rome, he would have lost much support.

Reconciliation with the Pope was once against possible according to Frederick. Frederick took the oath of the crusade, captured Jerusalem without a fight, and returned back to his kingdom. He sent his most trusted advisor Herman Von Salza, who was in command of Sicily while he was away, to negotiate with Gregory IX. Gregory appeared to have no reason to keep Frederick excommunicated because now Frederick appeared to be the new David, appointed to bring deliverance to his people, and some even said that he was the king chosen by Christ to reign over the entire earth.<sup>166</sup>

Herman Von Salza and Thomas of Capua, Cardinal priest of St. Sabina, made the first successful approaches to reconciliation with the papacy. Eventually the two men came to an agreement in the *peace of ceprano*, which stipulated that Frederick grant amnesty to the pope's partisans in Sicily, and restore all church property. Additionally, the Sicilian clergy were no longer amenable to secular law, and were not subject to taxation.

It may appear that Frederick's policies had relapsed, and that his priorities had actually changed. Frederick wanted to annex the rebellious cities in northern Italy, which had become a larger irritation. Frederick was unable to accomplish this with the status of an excommunicate and as an enemy of the Pope. When Honorius III was on the papal throne, Frederick manipulated him in a number of ways, these being either grants of land,

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid, 188.

or control over certain parts of the church within his kingdom. Frederick was not able to manipulate Gregory IX who was much more astute than Honorius III, and for this reason the two men clashed in a great conflict.

It may seem that Frederick was the loser in this struggle, but he was not. Frederick understood that his imperial ambitions lay in northern Italy. The rebellious Lombards had their freedom, and were never part of the Empire. Frederick's Grandfather, Frederick Barbarossa, had tried to annex the Lombards, but had failed. Barbarossa did not have the support of the Papacy in his struggle. Frederick II, an expert manipulator saw, this and understood that he could never conquer the North while having the Papacy as his enemy. It is unlikely that Frederick cared about being an excommunicate; he cared only about the limitations it placed on his political interests. Even though Frederick relinquished some rights over the church, he still had manipulated Gregory IX into lifting the excommunication, and therefore laying the foundation for his future campaigns in northern Italy.

### III Imperial Consolidation

“The dream of reason produces monsters.”  
–Francisco Goya, *Los Caprichos*.

Northern Italy had always been an elusive prize that had escaped the ambitions of the Hohenstaufen in their pursuit of the complete unification of the empire. Frederick Barbarossa’s imperial ambitions in the twelfth century fell upon the rebellious regions of Lombardy, Friuli, Tuscany, Veneto, the Piedmont, and Emilia-Romagna, all of which furiously fought for their independent sovereignty. These independent autocracies have filled history books with their constant struggles for independence from the Empire, and in 1176 Frederick Barbarossa lost an important battle at Legnano which broke imperial might in the region for over fifty years. Frederick II, who had recently had his excommunication lifted by Pope Gregory IX, set in motion that mighty military machine towards his enemies with the force of destiny. His military was armed with war elephants,<sup>167</sup> whose appearance was last seen in Italy during the invasions of Hannibal, Muslim mercenaries from Lucera<sup>168</sup> who modeled themselves on the elite Mamluks<sup>169</sup> of Egypt, and his own loyal supporters. His army, said to exceed 100,000 men,<sup>170</sup> began to snake its way towards the cities of Northern Italy, with Milan at the center of emperor’s ambitions.

Frederick’s ambition to snare the Pope into assisting him in his campaigns against the North was obvious because of his support of the pope against the people in Rome. In

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167 Coulton, 41.

168 Abulafia, 302.

169 Soldiers of slave origin whose existence in the Muslim world spanned over ten centuries. They were a powerful military caste who were responsible for beating back the Mongols and the crusaders.

170 Paris. I, 65.

the attempt to strengthen the trust between Frederick and Gregory, Frederick supported Gregory with military force when the people ousted Gregory from Rome. Gregory had fled to Perugia where he remained until the quarrel passed over. Frederick intervened on behalf of Gregory, and according to Roger of Wendover:

“The united armies of the emperor and the supreme pontiff then destroyed about eighteen villages inhabited by the Romans situated around the city, and cut down the trees in their vineyards; the citizens then enraged at this sallied forth from Rome...but when this senseless crowd had got out of the city and proceeding without regard to discipline and in disordered masses, the trained troops of the pope and the emperor burst forth from places of ambuscade, and, rushing on the Romans, caused dreadful slaughter amongst them...”<sup>171</sup>

However, the political context of the rest of Italy was different. Referring to the Lombard league in Northern Italy, Matthew of Paris remarked that “in Italy the weeds are beginning to suffocate the wheat.”<sup>172</sup> In August of 1235 Frederick prepared to invade Northern Italy with his army. In attempt to morally weaken these rebellious centers in the North, Frederick demanded that the Pope excommunicate the towns that did not come to a settlement with the Emperor by Christmas.<sup>173</sup> Frederick, who now relied on his restored relationship with Gregory, demanded aid against these rebellious centers:

“He therefore made a serious complaint of their insolence to his holiness the pope, asserting that the pride of those who hated him always prevailed, and asking the pope, with the assistance of the whole of the Roman court, to give all his attention to bring about the restoration of an honorable peace between him and them; or else to afford him effectual assistance so that he might, with outstretched arms, tame and subdue them, and reduce them to their accustomed subjection...the emperor complained most severely of the city of Milan, which was the nurse and protectress of heretics...”<sup>174</sup>

Matthew of Paris recorded that Frederick continued to show his faith in Catholicism saying, “I am a Christian and however unworthy a servant of Christ, I am

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171 Roger of Wendover, II, 601.

172 Ibid, 292.

173 Abulafia, 291.

174 Paris, I, 28-29. This remark is interesting, and perhaps is still to this day a successful form of propaganda for Frederick. He appears to have dressed his intentions of conquering the Milanese with the facade of heresy to justify his other imperial ambitions.

prepared to subdue the enemies of the Cross,”<sup>175</sup> a remark that contradicts other accusations made against him during the thirteenth century. Matthew of Paris revealed Frederick’s policies of manipulation, “again, I am alone and am human, and therefore not capable of such a great undertaking as that of subduing the enemies of the cross, without the great force to assist me...”<sup>176</sup> Frederick, who knew the history of his ancestors, understood that political involvement from other entities was important and more vital to success than brute military force.

Frederick announced his plans publically at the Diet at Piacenza in July of 1236, where he declared that he was determined to move against the rebels in Northern Italy and subdue them. Frederick intended to conquer all of the rebellious lands and to control all lands granted to the church in Italy. Gregory resisted and referred back to the forged eighth century document called the *Donation of Constantine*, which not only awarded mass tracts of land to the papacy but was interpreted by the papacy as giving it the authority over the conduct of the emperor.<sup>177</sup> Frederick retorted to some cardinals in Italy regarding Gregory,

“Is it not remarkable that he [Gregory] should take part, on mere impulse, against the Roman prince, who is the advocate of the church, and whose duty it is to maintain the preaching of the gospel, by drawing the spiritual sword unjustly in favor of the rebel Lombards?”<sup>178</sup>

In 1236 when Gregory’s complaints regarding Church property and certain rights became louder, Frederick responded arguing, in continuity with his predecessors, for his rights over the Church.

“...we do not think that we’re committing any injustice against anyone while using what is our right: that is, if we request what is owed to our court concerning these domains which churches or

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175 Paris, I, 39.

176 Paris, I, 39.

177 Powicke, Maurice, *The Thirteenth Century: 1216-1307* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), 98.

178 Paris, I, 179.

clergymen hold from us either as feudal estates or as inheritance (paternal) estates, and in which the rights of certain secular people are respected...if we claim back for our own revenues (treasury) our property rights, both with regard to people and with regard to lands...if we change, in the meantime, [our agreements] with the venerable places while preserving their indemnity..if we reserve [for ourselves] the right of elections due to our ancestor according to the ancient dignity of the imperial rule...”<sup>179</sup>

Despite Gregory’s argument Frederick still “called together all the imperial forces he could muster to attack the insolent Italians...”<sup>180</sup> Pope Gregory strictly forbade this maneuver but was nonetheless too weak to stop him. In another attempt to deter Frederick in November of 1236, Gregory urged Frederick to depart to Jerusalem. Gregory claimed that departing for the crusade should be his highest priority. In a papal document, Gregory expressed his ideas about Frederick’s vendetta against the Milanese; Gregory claimed that Frederick stood in the way of ‘peace and the cross’ while attempting to subdue Milan.<sup>181</sup> Gregory sought another crusade because the ten-year truce that Frederick made with the Egyptian sultan Al Malik al Kamil was nearing its end. Frederick promised to depart, but only after his ambitions in Italy were satisfied. Instead of unequivocally threatening Frederick, Gregory relied on his own cunning diplomacy to somehow steer Frederick in the wrong direction. Gregory initially supported Frederick in his imperial ambitions, but he treacherously sent money over to Milan in support of its continued resistance.<sup>182</sup> Matthew of Westminster remarked that this treachery did more to harm the Pope than to help him:

“And because the lord the pope undisguisedly favored the side of the Italians, and especially the Milanese, whose character was abroad for many heresies, and usurious and simoniacal practices, he day by day lost the devotion of the many faithful.”<sup>183</sup>

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179 Huillard-Breholles, IV, ii, 830. See appendix F.

180 Paris, I 38.

181 Ibid, 302.

182 Ibid, 39.

183 Matthew of Westminster, II 178.

However, many cardinals also disagreed with Frederick's imperial ambitions. In an indirect response to thwart Frederick's plan, Gregory appointed James of Palestrina as a papal legate in Lombardy because he was hostile towards Frederick.<sup>184</sup> Frederick appeared to understand this as a serious breach in negotiations with Lombardy. However, Pierre de la Vigne, who was Frederick's source for his propaganda, wrote letters and sent them to many cardinals which explained to them that their individual powers were equal to those of the Pope in an attempt to stir up more disagreement with Gregory. Abulafia claimed that Frederick was aware of some divisions of policy regarding the rebellious centers of northern Italy within the Papal Curia, and that Frederick attempted to capitalize on this disunity the writings of the propagandists Pierre de la Vigne. Additionally Frederick had written to the French and the English complaining about the Papacy. Frederick attempted to justify his actions on the grounds that the Lombards were rebels and heretics to imperial authority, saying that after he had crushed them he would head back to Jerusalem.<sup>185</sup>

Despite the resistance of some church officials, many Christian princes supported Frederick in his ambitions of subduing the Milanese. Matthew of Westminster remarked: "About the same time, while the lord Emperor was contriving the blockade around Milan, nearly all the princes of the world taking example from the king of England, sent him aid..."<sup>186</sup> King Henry III of England sent his own knights to aid Frederick against Milan and the other northern states,<sup>187</sup> among whom was the extremely cruel despot Ezzelino da Romano. The chronicler Salimbene remarked:

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184 Abulafia, 295.

185 Ibid, 295.

186 Matthew of Westminster, II, 186.

187 Powicke, 98.

“This Ezzelino was feared worse than the devil: he held it of no account to slay men, women, and children, and he wrought such cruelty as men have scarce heard. On one day he caused 11,000 men of Padua to be burnt in the field of St. George in the city of Verona...I believe most certainly that as the Son of God wished to have one especially whom He might make like unto himself, namely St. Francis, so the Devil chose Ezzelino.”<sup>188</sup>

In November of 1237 a detachment from Frederick’s imperial army spotted a Milanese detachment moving through the Lombard countryside. Frederick’s army inspected their armor, brandished their swords, and maneuvered their horses into position. After patiently waiting the army bore down upon the Milanese like a bear protecting her young. The bloody battle of Cortenuova ensued. The historical record indicates that there were about 35,000 men who fought in this battle, 19,000 whom were Frederick’s, but this is no doubt an exaggeration. The result was an overwhelming victory for Frederick in which he claimed that 10,000 Lombard men were either killed or captured. Pierre de la Vigne immediately set to writing, and boasted about the might of the empire, writing that Frederick had left the enemy dead in piles.<sup>189</sup>

After this victory, Frederick and his men marched through the streets of Cremona as heroes. Most of the city hailed their triumphant entry. The parading imperial forces carried the symbol that tied the Lombard league together, and the battle standard for imperial resistance, the *carroccio*. The *carroccio* was a four-wheeled platform that carried the standard of the rebellious city, in this case Milan. Frederick marched into Cremona with glory similar to that of the Roman emperors of antiquity, and the *carroccio* followed him that was pulled by an elephant. Attached to it were degraded Milanese prisoners. With his excommunication lifted Frederick made his intentions public of unifying the empire.

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188 Coulton, 118.

189 Abulafia, 303.

This victory at the Cortenuova field was ineffective because the events following the battle moved painfully slowly. The following year 1237, negotiations were held in the city of Mantua. Frederick sent Herman Von Salza, regent in Italy during Frederick's crusade, and Pierre de la Vigne to the city. When they all finally sat down to negotiate the papal legates were not prepared to punish the Milanese or any rebels, but they demanded that the Lombard League be disbanded under the promise of not to re-unite.<sup>190</sup> These negotiations took place after a terrible year of violence. The descriptions left to us of the state of northern Italy under him were dismal. They reported that Ezzelino and imperial forces were "mutilating prisoners, and gave abysmal treatment even of widows and orphans, and desecrated churches: all the horrors of war..."<sup>191</sup> Gregory IX encouraged a swift resolution to the negotiations, and pressed Frederick to depart on another crusade to Jerusalem. However, events were not dismal for Frederick and his army, and they were not forced to concede. Unfortunately for Gregory, he could play only a side role in the struggle between the Lombard League and Frederick, he needed an opportunity to intervene in Northern Italy.

At the town of Brescia events began to unfold in favor of the Lombard League, and a glimmer of hope was created for the Pope to fully intercede in the struggle. The town of Brescia at the foot of the Alps nestled between Milan and Venice. Twenty-five miles to the south runs the Po River, and leading up to the river is a plain that allows for swift movement for an army. However, Brescia being at the foot of the Alps, is susceptible to massive rainstorms, and torrential down-pours limited the movement of Frederick and his army. The plain was transformed into a sloppy bog, which ultimately

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190 Abulafia, 300-301.

191 Ibid, 301.

slowed the soldiers down and decreased morale. Additionally, a man named Calamandrino, a siege engineer for Frederick, defected to Brescia in return for money.<sup>192</sup> The record shows that Calamandrino was responsible for the heroic defense of Brescia against the Emperor, which beat back Frederick's army and opened an opportunity for Gregory IX to fully intercede.

Brescia's heroic defense saved Milan, because the road from Brescia led straight to Milan's walls. Gregory appointed a new papal representative, Gregorio di Montelonge, who was a source of irritation for Frederick since he was a vehement supporter of Gregory.<sup>193</sup> The opportunity for Gregory had come. If Frederick did not come to terms, the treaty of San Germano would be at an end, and this would effectively place Frederick in a difficult position because the possibility of excommunication would once again loom over him. Frederick's ambitions in the North also forced Genoa and Venice to unite against the emperor. Both cities agreed to protect each other's fleets, and resist anyone who threatened passage around Italy. Genoa came to this decision because Frederick had broken their monopoly over the city of Syracuse earlier in the century.

Despite many potential disasters towards which the war in the North appeared to be heading, Frederick still had time to manipulate and claim sovereignty over the island of Sardinia. In 1239 Frederick reclaimed the territory, stating: "I have sworn as the world well knows, to recover the scattered portions of the empire, and this I will not be slow to fulfill."<sup>194</sup> Matthew of Paris recorded that, "the hatred that sprung up between the pope and emperor, like an old wound, produced foul matter."<sup>195</sup> Gregory made papal claims

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192 Ibid, 308.

193 Ibid, 309.

194 Paris, I, 163.

195 Ibid, 163.

over Sardinia demanding that the four judges who controlled the island swear oaths of fidelity to him,<sup>196</sup> but they could not resist Frederick's ambitions. Frederick's swift coup of Sardinia demonstrated his lack of faith for the *Donation of Constantine*, which popes had utilized at every opportunity until the discovery by Lorenzo Valla in the Renaissance that it was a forgery. However, Frederick still laid claim to Sardinia,

"...he had taken into his own possession, and still held, the land and castles of the bishop of Sardinia, and constantly declared that they were a portion of the empire to the utmost of his power, and would also collect the scatters portions of it...he [Gregory] advised him often by many special messengers whose authority ought to have obtained from him the greatest attention, to restore the possessions he had seized on, and to desist from depriving the church of her possessions..."<sup>197</sup>

This was not the first time Frederick attempted to take the island. He had tried once before under the pontificate of Innocent III, but Innocent, who took an authoritative tone with Frederick, reminded him that Sardinia and even Sicily were Church property, 'ad proprietatem ecclesiae.'<sup>198</sup> Additionally, Innocent managed to have Sardinia included in the *Golden Bull of Eger* in accordance with which Frederick swore to respect the possessions of the Roman church.<sup>199</sup> Frederick was also still much too weak to combat Innocent III, but with Gregory's gaze set on Northern Italy, Frederick did not hesitate to increase his holdings.

In 1238 and 1239, Frederick made clear his ambitions of a unified empire. This was evident when Frederick appointed his son Enzo as vicar for the whole of Italy, and Andre of Cicada as imperial captain over Sicily. He had also placed his own *podestas* over subjugated towns in Northern Italy and Central Italy.<sup>200</sup> Frederick sought to attain a tight knit administration over all of the Italian Peninsula.

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196 Moore, 96.

197 Paris, I, 166-167.

198 Moore, 99. "towards the property of the church"

199 Ibid, 96.

200 Van Cleve, 445.

However events came to a climax in 1239 when Gregory IX excommunicated Frederick yet again. The Chronicle of Matthew of Westminster reports:

“The same year, on Palm Sunday, the emperor Frederic was excommunicated by pope Gregory IX, for certain reasons delivered in writing, and the lord pope commanded this sentence to be promulgated, with the reasons alleged for it, in every country, by all the prelates in every church under their authority, having the bells rung and the tapers lighted with all due solemnity.”<sup>201</sup>

Frederick responded to the princes of England and to the Pope claiming:

“that he was in all things willing and ready to obey the pope, and that he had sent formal ambassadors to convey this assurance to him...”<sup>202</sup>

Next, Matthew described the actions of the pope next,

“the pope, being aware of this beforehand, in great haste, on purpose to do so, before the ambassadors could arrive, had fulminated this sentence against him.”<sup>203</sup>

Gregory was aware of Frederick’s intentions, and he was not to be taken advantage of again. Matthew of Paris offered a detailed list of the reasons why Gregory had excommunicated Frederick. In the record he presented, Matthew’s description of the excommunication is a bit more dramatic in that Gregory “Consigned him [Frederick] with terrible denunciations to the possession of Satan at his death...”<sup>204</sup> Matthew of Paris identified the reason for Frederick’s excommunication was interference with legates sent to report on the Albigensian Crusade.<sup>205</sup> This indicates that Frederick may have resisted joining the bloody Albigensian crusade begun by Innocent III.

Frederick was excommunicated again because he did not allow vacant churches to be filled. Gregory lists “Reggio, Accriviara Squilata, Resa...”<sup>206</sup> Frederick was excommunicated because he seized, imprisoned, and killed clerks who were under

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201 Matthew of Westminster, 190.

202 Ibid, 190.

203 Ibid, 190.

204 Paris, I, 167.

205 Ibid, 167.

206 Ibid, 168.

authority of the church and the pope.<sup>207</sup> He additionally did not allow churches to be repaired, took property from monasteries and churches in order to build castles.<sup>208</sup>

Frederick responded to these claims and warned the pope to not to pay much attention to them. In the following letter addressed to Gregory IX, Frederick wrote:

“Frederick emperor of the Romans has refuted the complaints of the pope concerning the injuries which are said to have been inflicted on the churches and prelates in his kingdom and he warns him [pope] not to give a more receptive ear to the words of those accusers; but concerning the Saracens in Sicily whom he forces to remain among the Christians in Capitanata<sup>209</sup>, he explained how much this advances Christianity since already a third of them have already returned into the practice of the faith. And he [Frederick] asks that he [pope] not bring an unjust excommunication against the Veronese who have returned from an alliance with the Lombards into the loyalty of the empire...”<sup>210</sup>

Finally, Frederick was responsible for impeding another crusade to Jerusalem, for which Gregory aggressively fought. It is not known how many of these accusations were true, for Gregory’s propaganda that demonized Frederick was placed everywhere as the historical record indicates. However, what is true is that Frederick did interfere with the conflicting interests of the pope, who sought the survival of the Papal States. The pope understood that the only route to the survival of the Papal States was through one course of action; the destruction of the Hohenstaufen and the dismantling of the empire. Frederick answered the charges regarding his faith, and suggested that the cardinals not be afraid of the pope,

“Frederick emperor of The Romans answers the charges made against him by the pope concerning his Christian faith, after he has urged the cardinals to refrain the pope from his unjust accusations. Otherwise let the cardinals be afraid that he [the pope] may be compelled to face imperial punishment.”<sup>211</sup>

The excommunication portrayed Frederick as a despot only fit for a partnership with Satan, not with the Pope, had to be meaningful.

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207 Ibid, 168.

208 Ibid, 168-169.

209 Region in Italy situated next to Apulia.

210 Huillard-Breholles, IV, ii, 828. See appendix E.

211 Ibid, V, i, 348.

Soon after Frederick was excommunicated, he appeared before the citizens of Parma, with his propagandist Pierre de la Vigne. Pierre displayed all the solemnity he could while he described the circumstances that placed the emperor under excommunication. Pierre chose an excerpt from the *Heroides* by Ovid to better capture the support of the people; “One ought to bear patiently that which one suffers, if it is merited. It is the punishment that is inflicted upon us unjustly that brings sorrow.”<sup>212</sup> Pierre additionally explained that if the sentence of excommunication was based on justice, then the emperor would confess his wrongdoings, but no misdeed had been done to warrant such a penalty.<sup>213</sup>

Gregory explained why he excommunicated Frederick. It is worth noting that in Frederick’s youth, since there was no centralized imperial authority within the kingdom, lands and rights were given wholesale to ecclesiastics, and this ultimately led to bishops acting as virtual lords over their own lands. When he came of age, Frederick in order to increase his authority refused to confirm these rights. Whether or not Frederick had the power to confirm rights over ecclesiastical lands, as his predecessors had, Gregory still claimed rights over the church and still slandered Frederick.<sup>214</sup>

Frederick had answered papal legates who had visited him in 1239 on behalf of the pope. The text is a question and answer dialogue. The legates questioned Frederick regarding the state of the Church within the kingdom. Frederick denied all accusations against him, as the following dialogue shows:

*“Proposition of the church:-* The churches of Mont royal, Cephaledi, Catania, and Squillate, and the monasteries of Mileto, St. Euphemis...have been despoiled of almost all their property; also, almost all the cathedral and other churches and monasteries have, by an unjust inquisition, been deprived of almost all

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212 Van Cleve, 428.

213 Muratori, L.A, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores* 24 vols. (Milan: 1723-1751), viii, part I, 65.

214 Abulafia, 315.

their dependants. *The emperor's answer*:- With respect to the injuries to the church, which are put forth indefinitely, some which have been committed through ignorance, have been ordered to be remedied, without delay, and some have already corrected...<sup>215</sup>

The text continues on for another ten pages in which the church accuses Frederick, and Frederick duly responds by either the denial of the claim, or that reparation has already been made.

Despite this meeting with the papal legates, in the eyes of Gregory nothing changed. He carried out his mission for the destruction of the Hohenstaufen forcefully and cunningly. Gregory authorized his commissioner in Hungary to send money received in commutation of vows originally taken for a crusade to the Holy Land to be used for the papal war against the emperor.<sup>216</sup> Gregory sent friars throughout Italy to proclaim the condemnation of Frederick and to warn people of the papal ban placed upon him. These friars urged many others to renounce their loyalty to Frederick, but it is unknown how effective this papal strategy was. The friars claimed 'that through unfaithfulness they would be faithful, obedient through disobedience.'<sup>217</sup> Gregory's main weapon was the power of the written word, which he used to its fullest extent. The Pope wrote letters to places as far afield as England stating that the excommunication of Frederick should be published every Sunday.<sup>218</sup> He then wrote to the archbishops of Canterbury and York, complaining bitterly of the illegal conduct,

"and imputing to him [Frederick] the guilt of heresy. And he wrote not only to those archbishops. But also to the legate, to publish that letter throughout all the lands which were under his authority, and subject to him as legate, adding, that that same Frederic, the emperor, was at that moment invading, in a hostile manner, the possessions of the church, and with wicked daring, making himself master of them, like an avowed enemy of the church."<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Paris, I, 182.

<sup>216</sup> Evans, I, 119.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid, iii. 621.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid, I, 198

<sup>219</sup> Matthew of Westminster, II, 190.

Pierre de la Vigne responded to Gregory's propaganda with his own portrayal of Frederick. In April of 1239 Pierre appealed to the rulers of Europe condemning Gregory, WHOM he described Gregory as an, "impure priest, unjust judge, unseeing prophet."<sup>220</sup> This propaganda was dispersed to all of the leaders of Europe and was the catalyst for Frederick's continued manipulation. Frederick understood that to portray Gregory in an evil light, would aid him in recruiting more support against Gregory. Pierre demonized Gregory in the height of his propaganda:

"he himself is the great dragon who led astray the entire world; he is the Antichrist, whose forerunners he said we were; and he is another Balaam, hired for a price to curse us, the prince among the princes of darkness who misuse the Prophets."<sup>221</sup>

The propaganda war between the two men and their courts created the story that all modern historians of Frederick observe and study. Gregory additionally labeled Frederick the antichrist, and charged that Frederick had condemned Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad as the three impostors and that he mocked the idea of the Virgin birth. Gregory also labeled Frederick as a sodomite and a friend to Islam.<sup>222</sup> Frederick retorted quickly by saying that Gregory was a terrible pope who preferred gold and silver, and that he was trying to supplant Frederick on the Imperial throne. Frederick's courtiers also wrote that Gregory extorted money from the world and that God knew that Frederick did not wander from the path of truth.<sup>223</sup> Frederick wrote to the people of Rome, and threatened to strip away favor from those to whom he had shown it in the past if they did not support him.<sup>224</sup> Frederick claimed that he was an advocate of the church, and that he

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220 Abulafia, 317.

221 Jansen, Katherine et al, *Medieval Italy Texts in Translation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 287.

222 Abulafia, 318.

223 Paris, I, 170.

224 Ibid, I, 178.

sought to “unsheathe the spiritual sword against the Lombards.”<sup>225</sup> Frederick held no reserves while he defended himself, his courtiers spread word that Frederick’s digressions from the church had already been corrected and that violence should be directed against the enemies of the church. Pierre de la Vigne wrote a persuasive piece of propaganda designed to ridicule the papal curia:

“The Pharisees and prelates assembled and held council together against their lord, the Roman Emperor. ‘What shall we do,’ they asked, ‘now that this man is so triumphant over his enemies? – If we give him a free hand he will crush the Lombard completely, and in the manner of Caesar, he will not long delay in routing us from our position, and he will destroy our species...Then, disregarding the words of the prince, let us attack the enemy...strike so that will wound; let him be so wounded that he falls, so falls that he cannot again rise- so that he will perceive the futility of his dream.’”<sup>226</sup>

The outcome of Frederick and Gregory’s quarrel was the survival of Frederick’s liberties over the church, the defense of ecclesiastical freedoms, which have been fluctuating since the pontificate of Urban II in the late eleventh century, the security of the holy land, and most importantly Frederick’s success against the Milanese.

Until his excommunication, Frederick’s ambitions and manipulations had allowed him to invade the North with an imperial army with little to no political resistance. Frederick’s aim was the complete destruction of the independent state through the transformation of the people into a multitude empty of will and of resistance, and through this we find not a people but a disciplined multitude of subjects.<sup>227</sup> The only obstacle that stood in Frederick’s way was northern Italy.

Papal propaganda appeared to be effective since many cities and regions deserted the empire in support of the papacy. Emilia Romagna, Bologna, Treviso, and Ravenna are

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225 Ibid, 179.

226 Van Cleve, 431.

227 Burckhardt, 24.

just some that succumbed to papal legates.<sup>228</sup> Gregory was also successful not only because of papal innuendos directed towards Frederick, but also because he threatened to place the cities where the emperor stayed under interdict. Gregory ordered his legates to inform bishops and all ecclesiastical men, even bishops and archbishops, that if they aided Frederick in any way they would be excommunicated.

Frederick, who had witnessed towns and cities succumbing to papal claims began to revoke land and money from rebellious abbots and bishops.<sup>229</sup> He also won to his side the minister general of the Franciscan order Elias of Cortona, who had been under his patronage for some time. Elias charged Gregory with sealing documents in his chambers without gaining the approval of others; Elias claimed that Gregory only sought his own interests.<sup>230</sup> Another member of the papal curia, cardinal John of Colonna, who was involved in the *war of the keys* in the 1220's, defected from the guidance of Gregory for he was offended by Gregory's dishonorable nature. The interaction is as follows:

"I am ashamed of having granted a truce to Frederick, the enemy of the church...Go immediately to him as say that I am not disposed to honor the truce. In defiance of him, say that henceforth I shall be his enemy, as I now am and as I have been in the past. John replied, "On no account will I assent to this dishonorable procedure, but firmly oppose it." Gregory replied, "I no longer consider you my cardinal," and John replied, "I no longer consider you my pope."<sup>231</sup>

This incident shows the discord within the papal curia, but also Gregory IX character.

As time progressed, Frederick said that his army would stop ravaging the Campagna if Gregory would negotiate with him. However, negotiations however fell through, because Gregory continued to threaten those who supported Frederick. Negotiations began again in 1240, but they ceased between the pope and emperor for

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228 Van Cleve, 433.

229 Huillard-Breholles, V, I, 437.

230 Paris, *Chronica Majora*, III, 628.

231 Van Cleve, 446.

nothing was to be agreed upon. Though in 1241 Gregory summoned a general council, but the people who were invited to partake in this council were mostly Frederick's enemies, therefore Frederick was unwilling to go.<sup>232</sup> Frederick immediately wrote,

“wrote to the king of England to entreat him diligently to extort the prelates of his kingdom not to go to a council which was an object of suspicion to him, knowing that a free passage through the imperial dominions was utterly denied by land and by sea to their persons and possessions.”<sup>233</sup>

Frederick continued his most successful form of diplomacy, which was manipulation, and he did not hesitate to use this strategy against the College of Cardinals.

Frederick's courtiers delivered the following message to the cardinals:

“We have such firm faith in your sense of justice and consider you and yourself brothers of such steadfast character that, no matter how closely you are bound to the Roman pontiff by the bonds of reverence and love... as the hinges of the world, and as its most inflexible pillars, you will not be easily coerced into obstructing our just cause or into impairing our rights. And however much you may yield at first to the present turmoil, to avoid as we believe the loss resulting from a schism, we believe that you really wish to find a fundamental solution by whose power the evils which have arisen may be healed and the troubles stirred up in the world may be quieted.”<sup>234</sup>

This attempt was most likely a heavy burden upon Gregory. Frederick targeted the cardinals, but events unfolded differently, and some cardinals were forced to withdraw their support from Frederick. Six hundred miles north of Sicily, the English and French papal legate Otho began his journey down to Rome to partake in the council that Frederick refused to attend. Pope Gregory sent another legate to meet Otho in Genoa, and from there they planned to disembark to Rome. Their vessels were dipping and plunging in the Tyrrhenian Sea, and they were soon approached by a Pisan fleet and other 'imperial pirates',<sup>235</sup> who tracked them and boarded their ships. These imperial servants seized and captured all the people who were with the Genoese. Matthew of Westminster reported:

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232 Paris, *Chronica Majora*, IV, 65.

233 Matthew of Westminster, 200.

234 Van Cleve, 448.

235 Matthew of Westminster, 201.

“and those whom they took alive, they dragged over long tracts of the sea, exposing them to be scorched by intolerable heat, and guarding them in chains and strict custody, they brought them to Naples, where, by command of the emperor, they were thrown into prison, to the disgrace and infamy of the whole church.”<sup>236</sup>

Another account offers a more detailed description of the battle:

“A most bloody fight then ensued at sea between the Pisan’s...and the Genoese in which the Genoese were defeated, and the prelates and legated were made prisoners, with the exception of some who were slain or drowned...Of this unfortunate event we are informed by the following letter, to which common rumor bears testimony...and entering into a confederacy with the rebellious Genoese...they assembled a large naval force, manned by armed pirates, with whom they agreed to come to the pope, for the sake of increasing discord. To oppose their progress and prevent their approach, we caused our fleet...to be sent to the places and ports, which they could not fail to pass...with orders to oppose them by force. Our chief then attacked their galleys with outs, and the all-powerful God who sees and battles from on high...considering their wicked ways and the malice of their hearts, as well as their insatiable cupidity, by his divine favor delivered these legated and prelates bound into our power, from which they could not escape either by land or sea.”<sup>237</sup>

The Pisan’s had always been under the sway of Frederick, and we may gain an understanding of this by observing that earlier in 1220 when a count named Raynerius rebelled against Frederick, “he incarcerated him, and when also that same count and his supporters from Tuscia, were intending hostile operations against Sicily, he ordered to the Pisan’s that they block their passage into Sicily.”<sup>238</sup> After this calamitous sea battle, Frederick still sought the possibility of peace because the Tatars had begun to invade the eastern boarders of Germany. Frederick wrote,

“We cannot remain silent on a matter which concerns not merely the Roman Empire, whose responsibility it is to care for the spread of the Gospel, but it touches also all the kingdoms of the world that practice Christian worship, and threatens the destruction of the whole of Christendom.”<sup>239</sup>

Shortly after the treacherous sea battle, Frederick had garrisoned part of his military a mere twelve miles from the city of Rome. This army threatened the stability of the Eternal City and the well being of Gregory. However, after Frederick’s zeal for the

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236 Ibid, 201-202.

237 Lewis, 259.

238 Ibid, 260.

239 Van Cleve, 452.

preservation of Christendom due to the Tatars, Gregory IX died in the year 1241 at his summer residence of Anagni in Viterbo. Gregory's death halted the conflict between pope and emperor, and Frederick now understood that a clear path lay between him and the subjugation of the northern Italy. Gregory's papal predecessor, Innocent IV, a man who understood the legacy of such a papal name, thwarted this ambition for another imperial campaign. Innocent was a stalwart protector of papal doctrine with the ambition of destroying the Hohenstaufen line forever

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The story that this paper describes is that the manipulation of Frederick II led to his quarrelsome relationship with Pope Gregory IX, and not his supposed lack of religion as described by the chroniclers of his day. The propaganda that was written throughout the struggle between the two men created lasting legacies of blame and mystique. The varieties of writings, no matter how apocryphal they are, permit many to attain a simple understanding of a world driven behind the façade of religion with an interior motive of political and materialistic interests.

Frederick's political strategy of manipulation began early in his reign under Pope Innocent III. Frederick was the 'beloved sapling' of the church, as he needed to be for obvious reasons. We can recall Frederick's imperial foe, Otto of Brunswick who was all too ready to kill Frederick, but his papal protector, Innocent, thwarted this. Frederick had to be obedient not only because of Otto, but also because the island of Sicily was divided into factions between Muslims and other rebels who threatened the kingdom's stability. Innocent strove to shield Frederick with his one hand, while he intended to create a servant of the church with the other. Frederick still strove for some ecclesiastical rights

under Innocent III, but Innocent calmly reminded Frederick that the rights over the church were not Frederick's. There was no confrontation between the two men because Frederick understood that he must be patient if he wanted to attain his long-term interests.

Frederick attempted to manipulate Innocent's papal successor, Honorius III, who was a different type of person than Innocent III. Innocent resembled a papal emperor who had his hands in the many areas of Christendom from St. Francis to the Albigensian crusade. Honorius appeared to be much calmer, and had less ambition than his predecessor. The fact that Honorius was not as extreme as Innocent does not denote that Honorius was weak-willed. Rather, he had a different set of goals for his pontificate. Due to this, Frederick saw the opportunity to snatch some rights for himself from the church. He managed to have his son elected king of Germany, which was against the policy of Innocent III, delayed his promised crusade for many years, and had Honorius fight on his behalf in disputes with other monarchs.<sup>240</sup> Towards the end of Honorius pontificate, their relations were strained because of Frederick's ever-persistent interests and ambitions. However strained, their relationship never resulted in an excommunication.

The condemnation of excommunication fell upon the shoulders of Pope Gregory IX, who knew Frederick's ambitions. Gregory, who understood the dynamics of thirteenth century politics in Italy knew that Frederick was an expert at the political game. Gregory knew that he could not budge one inch for Frederick because that might lead into a catastrophe for the church and the Papal States. Too much was at risk, as Gregory understood it, in central Italy, and it was apparent to all that Frederick wanted to subjugate Northern Italy. Gregory called in Frederick's agreement at San Germano to depart on a crusade in 1227, which Frederick had delayed since 1220. Frederick delayed

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<sup>240</sup> One example being Otto of Brunswick.

yet again, and Gregory, making against Frederick, excommunicated him.

Even though Frederick eventually departed, Gregory still did not lift the excommunication. Gregory won a small victory because Frederick was now in a position to bow down to the Papal See. It took a lot more wooing and the releasing of papal prisoners to have his excommunication lifted, but Gregory eventually did lift it. This was Frederick's masterstroke. By giving certain of Gregory's demands, Frederick snuck by his guard as the protector of Christendom, and was now set to invade the rebellious center of Northern Italy. Frederick knew that he could never invade the North without having his excommunication lifted. He had manipulated Gregory one last time, and this led to the most catastrophic series of event in the reigns of both men.

Frederick manipulated as many people as he could, from the many monarchs through the College of Cardinals. Frederick manipulated John de Brienne because when Frederick married his daughter solely to attain the throne of Jerusalem. This title was purely honorific because Frederick was still in Sicily when he received it. Gregory did not give into Frederick's demands in the 1230's, and he excommunicated Frederick again for his imperial campaigns in Northern Italy. Other accusations were aimed at Frederick, such as violation of rights, being a heretic, and most interestingly, impeding the progress of the Albigensian crusade.

It is unlikely Frederick was seeking the end of Christianity as some of his contemporaries claimed. The best perspective from which to understand the nature of Frederick must not come from Europe, but rather from another location of the world that held no bias towards him, Islam. During the high middle ages Islam was experiencing its classical age, while Europe was behind in many aspects of civilization. Arab chroniclers

such as Ibn-Wasil, and others from the court of Al Malik al Kamil offer the best description of Frederick, a picture not spattered with an unearthly aura of sophistication, pomp, or a type of quasi-divinity. Rather, they described Frederick as mundane, and of being of no impressive physical stature, but open minded to the ideas and to the mysticism of the east. Frederick's relationship with Islam appeared to be one of respect and even admiration. One anecdote shows Frederick's respect for Islam. On hearing that the call of there Muezzins was not rung in the city because of Frederick's presence, Frederick ordered the Muezzin's to be sounded, whether he were there or not, Muslims were still free to practice their religion.

"O qadi, why did the muezzins not give the call to prayer in the normal way last night?  
 "This humble slave prevented them, out of regard and respect for your majesty." Frederick responded, "my chief aim in passing the night in Jerusalem was to hear the call to prayer given by the muezzins, and their cries of praise to God during the night."<sup>241</sup>

The Arab chroniclers described Frederick with unbiased minds. They described him as one who investigated the secrets of the universe, and a man who echoed the modern perspective of the multiculturalism. But this modern ideology was present in the mind of Frederick, but it was ultimately absent from the socio-economic-political-theological reality of medieval Europe. Frederick's actions were confined by the Judeo-Christian cultural framework of medieval Europe. As Leo Tolstoy wrote, "consciously a man lives on his own account in freedom of will, but he serves as an unconscious instrument in bringing about the historical ends of humanity."<sup>242</sup> This rings true for Frederick because he was forced to adhere to certain ideologies, and the cultural

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<sup>241</sup> Abulafia, 185.

<sup>242</sup> Tolstoy, Leo, *War and Peace*. Trans. by Constance Garnett. (New York: Barnes & Noble's Books, 1904), 555.

framework of Europe guided his actions. However, Sicily was a crossroads of varying beliefs and cultures, and because of this mingling of ideologies, Frederick developed his political weapon of manipulation and his mystical reputation.

Frederick was not a heretic, for the word heretic denotes that one must adhere to a certain set of beliefs wholeheartedly which deviate from the orthodox faith. Frederick rather adhered to none, but only symbols of authority and theology in the Judeo-Christian cultural framework, which in turn aided him in attaining his interests. This is why in some texts he was described as defending Christianity and the Gospel.

The propaganda aimed at Frederick is still with us today. As I stopped in a certain medieval professors' office one day I could not peel my eyes off of a modern day action figure which recalled the struggle between the temporal and spiritual authority in the thirteenth century. Action figures bring to mind super heroes of some sort, but this action figure was of Pope Innocent III, who held a scroll with a Latin inscription stating "Sons of the Hohenstaufen, kiss my ass." It is apparent that Frederick II of Hohenstaufen reputation has lasted through the centuries to embody the theme of an action figure whose message is purely antagonistic towards the man himself, and continues to convey his evident anti-papal nature to us as described through the papal propagandists of the thirteenth century.

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Appendix Original Medieval Latin:

- A. "Innocentius papa Friderico regi Sicilias scribit se, receptis nuntiis quos ad se destinavit, ad ipsum remitter G. Sancti Adriani diaconum cardinalem, Apostolica Sedi legatum, cujus consiliis de pace in regno stabilienda acquiescat." -Huillard-Breholles, I, i, 106.
- B. "Fridericus, Romanorum rex, Berardo archiepiscopo Barensi pro gratis ejus servitiis, concedit et confirmat at ecclesiae ejus, Bitrictum, Meduneum, canale in terra Bari quod est sub monte Joannatio, Latertiam, terram juxta murum civitatis Barensis et campum ad faciendas." -Huillard-Breholles, I, i. 232.
- C. "Honorius papa Friderico, Romanorum regi respondet se legatum ejus abbatem Fuldensem recepisse; et licet in occasione simili praedecessores ejus archiepiscopum vel saltem episcopum mittere solerent, se nihilominus ejus honori intendere velle; dum ejus exaltation sit Terrae Sanctae et ecclesiasticae libertati plurimum utilis, nec non ad haereticorum et turbulentorum oppressionem necessaria." -Huillard-Breholles, I, part ii, 751.
- D. "Fridericus, Romanorum rex, Honorio papae scribit se propter difficilem exercitus Christiani in Terra Sancta statum, pia sollicitudine motum, omnibus cruce signatis terminum indixisse et in Fuldensi curia solemnem aliam curiam de hac re apud Magdeburg in media quadragesima convocasse; hortatur papam ad excommunicationem intenendam eis qui ad festum Sancti Johannis Baptistae iter non arripuerint. Petit insuper ut per coercionem Henrisum ducem de Brunswick ad assignanda sibi insignia imperialia inducere velit." -Huillard-Breholles, I, part ii, 584.
- E. "Fredericus, Romanorum impertor, querelas papae redarguit de injuriis quae in regno suo ecclesiis et praelatis illatae dicuntur, monetque ne verbis obloquentium faciliorem aurem praebeat; de Saracenis vero Siciliae quos in Capitanata inter christianos fecit morari, exponit quantum id christianitati proficiat, quum jam par eorum ad fidei consortium sit reducta; rogat etiam ne contra Veronenses qui a societate Lombardorum in fidelitatem imperii redierunt, excommunicationem immeritam ferat, supe negotio regni Cyprum cum in Italiam fuerit reverses, responsurus." - Huillard-Breholles, IV, ii, 828.

- F. "Possemus utique certius negare non facta et efficacius facta corrigere, si fuissent distinctius singular denotata. Sed ut generalis instantis generale falsificet argumentum, hoc generaliter respondemus quod hec omnia a nostra scientia et conscientia sunt remota, nisi quod omnino non credimus ut odio vel injurie adscribatis quod juris execution aut cautela deposcit. Sit etenim propter ea que a nobis ecclesie vel persone ecclesiastice forsitan de feudis vel patrimoniis tenent, in quibus laicorum quorumlibet jura censeantur, debita curie nostre deposcimus, si demania nostra tam in hominibus quam in terris ad nostra fiscalia revocamus, si cum locis venerabilibus ipsorum indemnitatem servata permutamus interdum, si just electionum ex antique regni dignitate nostris progenitoribus debitum reservamus, nullam facere putamus injuriam dum utimur jure nostro." -Huillard-Breholles, IV, ii, 830.
- G. "Nicolaus de Bisantio, procurator demaniorum Basilicatae, vigore mandate imperialis cujus tenore inseritur, reducit monasterium Sancti Michaelis de Monte Caveoso in possessionem libertatum apud Montem Caveosum et Pomaricum, nec non jurium pasculandi, aquandi, pernoctandi et ligna incidendi in demaniis terrae Genusii." - Huillard-Breholles, IV, i, 394.

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