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Title: “Struggles for Power: The Relationship Between the Church, the State and the Heretical Movements”
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Cortney Cantrell is a History Major with a minor in Spanish who will be graduating in May and plans to eventually go on to graduate school. She is mostly interested in the study of Medieval European history. For the 2010-2011 year she received the Judie and Ralph Violette History Scholarship. Cortney was also chosen as the Outstanding History Senior this year.

Abstract

Throughout the Middle Ages, the relationship between the Church and the State was an uncertain one in which each were either supporting and defending each other or were at odds over who had superior authority. At the beginning of this relationship, when the various states of Europe were just beginning to form, the two parties involved generally supported one another with the State enforcing Church laws and the Church providing the developing states with much needed legitimacy through such actions as coronations. During this early period, the Church had power over the State, which had just come into being. There were only a few instances during this period of either asserting their authority over the other. This harmonious relationship began to shift in the years 1000-1200 when the State began to support the Church only when it was beneficial for them. During this period, there were many more conflicts between these two entities and each began to assert their authority over the other more vigorously. During the years 1200-1400, the State gained even more power over the Church and was, for the first time, successful in asserting their authority over the Church.

This uncertain relationship and gradual shift of power from the Church to the State directly affected the various heretical movements of the Middle Ages. While never truly successful before 1400, the heretical movements of the early period were crushed much more swiftly, due to the overwhelming support of the State towards the Church and its policies, than those of the 14th and 15th centuries. As time wore on and power shifted towards the State, the heretical movements were not stopped so quickly, rather they were given time to spread and make an impact on future, successful heretical movements.