

Choose an argument between a king and Church
Describe the main events of this dispute

(20 marks)

SYK Paragraph

The dispute that I have chosen to describe is that between King John and Innocent III, often referred to as the Stephen Langton Affair. This took place between 1205 and 1214.

SWYG paragraph

In July 1205, Hubert Walter, the Archbishop of Canterbury died. John believed that it was his right to choose his own Archbishop as previous kings had done.

However, John wanted to choose his friend John Gray, Bishop of Norwich. The monks at Canterbury soon realised what John was planning to do and decided to send Reginald to Rome to be invested by Pope Innocent III. News reached John and he sent John Gray to Rome.

Paragraph 1

By December 1206 the Pope rejected both Reginald and John Gray, and exerting his authority over John he decided to elect a third man called Stephen Langton. John was not happy and refused to let Stephen Langton into the country and confiscated the lands of Canterbury Cathedral and collected its income.

Paragraph 2

The Pope threatened to put England under an interdict, believing that the Interdict would force the people of England to rebel and force John to back down. John refused to change his mind and in March 1208, England is put under an interdict. All church services were suspended. John reacts by confiscating more church lands and finances.

Paragraph 3

In November 1209, the Pope excommunicated John. The excommunication also meant that the barons no longer have to follow John's orders. This has no affect on the situation. In December 1212, the Pope decided that John is unfit to rule England. He ordered Philip II of France to invade England on a crusade and depose John. Philip's son Louis would replace John as king.

Conclusion/summary

In January 1213, John realised that matters were getting out of hand. A prophecy by a hermit called Peter of Pontefract said that John would not be king in May 1216. Added to this there was a threat of internal baronial rebellion. John wrote a letter of concession to the Pope, hoping to have the interdict and the excommunication lifted. John's concession which, in effect, made England a fiefdom of Rome, worked like a charm. He surrendered the Crown to the Pope, and then received it back in feudal homage to the Pope. In 1214, Langton returned to England to take over as Archbishop of Canterbury.