

THE LATER ROMAN EMPIRE

In the new edition of Langer we pick up the story on page 131 which begins the section on the later Empire, the period 284-527 A.D. In terms of the history of Rome and Italy, we pass through many different phases. We are now coming to that period, as a result of a significant internal breakdown, when the Empire was divided into two parts, east and west!

Changes Under Diocletian

Notice the third paragraph in column one: "According to Diocletian's system . . . the empire was divided for practical administrative purposes into two spheres, eastern and western, the line between which ran from the Danube to the Adriatic south of Dalmatia." Thus the Dalmatian coast of Yugoslavia remained to the West. Much later this same kind of division manifested itself in the difference between the Holy Roman Empire of the Hapsburg period and the Turkish realm that took over the East. Turkey ultimately devoured most of the Balkans, and one could almost say that the expansion of Turkey was equivalent to the eastern part of the Roman Empire in terms of geography—not expressly, but to a great extent.

The key individual here is Diocletian who ruled 284-305. You should take the time here to read the details of how the Roman Empire, about 300 A.D., came to be reconstituted. That is, what was coming apart politically was being restored from time to time by short-lived rulers militarily. And there came to be a recognition of the need of a new political solution to a problem. At the bottom of column one we read: "The military power, which during the 3rd century had absorbed all the functions of government, was now wholly separated from the civilian." You see what was taking place! This was an attempt to resolve the problem. There was a division of the country into what are called praefectures.

The Image of the Beast

Now here we want to draw attention to the fact that the Roman Catholic Church, up to this time, had been growing in the Roman Empire for certainly 250 years! By this time, in other words, the Roman Catholic Church was taking on characteristics of the civil government.

The Church patterned itself, as I may briefly summarize here, after what we would call a local municipality or diocese. After all, the Church found that it could administrate itself politically best by using the Roman political unit. You see, the problem was, What kind of a pattern of government was the Church going to adopt? It didn't mean that the geographic pattern was necessarily wrong—it was the form of government, a human form of government! This is why we finally have adopted the zip code pattern as the method of visiting in the church today. The zip code is based on the fact that no matter what the area looks like, anybody carrying mail gets there faster in the present geographic division—it saves time and trouble. So the zip code system in America is the system our visiting program has had to adopt because it tells us more of the means of communication. I'm telling you now of the form in which the Catholic Church grew in terms of communication. On the other hand, the Catholic Church did more than adopt the geographic unit, which was the basis, but also adopted the method of the political unit—which means the structure of government! So they formed the local unit after the local diocese. A number of local dioceses unified to form, what we would call in the Roman system, a province (At this point Dr. Hoeh summarized material that is covered in the article "New Facts About the Image of the Beast.")

Notice again toward the bottom of column one on page 131 that Diocletian divided the Roman Empire into "four praefectures, Gaul, Italy, Illyrium, and the East." Now please bear in mind that the Catholic Church had so developed itself, before the four praefectures were instituted, that the Catholic Church never patterned its government beyond the local diocese, the province, and the great diocese. They did not adopt the method of the praefecture! Notice that the praefecture of Gaul was farthest to the West, Italy was in the center, and Illyrium was immediately to the east. All three of these were in the West! There was only one in the East!

It is further stated on page 131 in this same paragraph, "Each praefecture was divided into several dioceses under vicars"—are you familiar with the word "vicar"? "Every bishop is a vicar of Christ, then a vicar of the Emperor", you see. Then the provinces made up the subdivisions of the dioceses—but that's not when all this was done. A lot of this had been done before. "These provinces were subdivisions of those of the early empire and their number increased from 60 to 116"—so there were variations in the total number, the population shifted and/or increased.

Anyway, to get back to the key point: There were three praefectures in the West and only one in the East. Yet in the east was this giant praefecture called "the East" which contained four of the five major cities in the Roman Empire! There was Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and later Constantinople. In other words, in the East were several major Patriarchs of major cities—but only one praefecture. By contrast, in the West there were three major praefectures but only one religious leader in Rome! There was no other major city to compete. Places like Paris and London were only small rural towns at this time. Therefore the Roman Catholic Church, in its subdivisions, stopped with the great diocese and did not go on to form a structure where you had praefects ruling over the major praefectures in the West. It had already come to the place where the church at Rome was the dominant church in all the West! This included Britain, Gaul, Spain, North Africa, Italy, Illyria. But in the East you had a city in Egypt, one in Palestine, one in Syria, one in Asia Minor (Ephesus)—and finally one right next door in the European area when Constantinople was established by Constantine. You see that the East had the greatest amount of Christian subdivision and this is why the Eastern (Greek) Orthodox Church has always tended to be more divided.

This time in the history of Rome is very important because it is the period when the final structure of Rome was settled and, in fact, when you see it, will tell you immediately how the Catholic Church patterned itself after Rome—and to what extent it indeed did not. That is, it had already grown to be an institution before. Part of the problem with the pattern was not its geographic subdivisions, but the fact that the method of government came to be so similar to Rome that the Bible speaks of it as "the image." You see, finally, the Catholic Church adopted the concept of Cardinals in the West—"men of the hinge" on whom the government turned, shall we say! There were factors such as these that were not just geographic in structure, but were of political significance.

The Burden of the System

In column 2 on page 131 we read about the increase in the army: "The total forces now numbered about 500,000 men, an increase over the Augustan 300,000, which accounts in part for the financial problems of the later empire." In other words, it cost almost again as much now to keep up the army—maybe the population increased too, but so did the graft and corruption which is usually what happens.

Farther down the page a very interesting point is discussed here—taxes: "The rest of the population were crushed by heavy taxes which were largely collected in kind"—wheat or whatever the product was—"after the collapse of the currency, and which were reassessed every 15th year The taxation bore especially heavily . . . on the small landowners who had to provide recruits for the army and see that waste lands were kept under cultivation. Thus freemen found it wisest to flee the country, enter monasteries, or become serfs on large estates. Craftsmen and tradesmen were rigorously confined to their professions. The whole caste system" that was developing "was arranged to insure the maintenance of the administration and the army."

There had been a time, in other words, when everybody in the Empire was free (except the slaves) to do his part in the society, and the Empire worked—it functioned! But gradually, the more people became self-centered, the greater the number of people, the greater the problems, then the government had to spend more and more time in assigning everybody to a particular task, to a particular piece of property or job, to the point that whether or not you were fit for it this is basically where you stayed! So most people began to flee the rural areas and go into the cities because of the heavy imposition of military burdens and taxes; and gradually more and more of the countryside came to be included in the latifundia which were great economic units with coloni or serfs working the land.

Continuing on page 132: "Since, therefore, it benefited no one but the great landlords or imperial officials, the vast majority of the population lost interest and either accepted the barbarian invasions supinely or even welcomed relief from Roman oppression. Whether, however, this lethargy, which pervaded not only the political and economic life but also the intellectual, save in the Christian Church, resulted from the system or whether the unwieldy and inflexible system indicated the poor mental caliber of the rulers, so many of whom were of peasant or barbarian origin, and the effete-ness of the hereditary upper class, cannot be determined."

Well, certainly the human element—the kind of people—has to be a problem to start with because the system doesn't begin without people. The people came before the system! The system was made by the people! It has been said—and I think it is true—that Britain and the British people would be very great if they didn't have their present system. Only trouble with that is, nobody else imposed the system on them but they themselves. The British system stagnates individualism. True; but no other nation or group of people did it to them. The British did it to themselves!

What about the U.S.? Has any nation imposed our system on us? No, it's our own structure of government—our own elected officials! After all, we can blame the Supreme Court, but it's the President who appoints the Court, it's the Congress that approves the Court, it's the people who elect the President (or is it really the people?—but, I mean, you know, it's said that the people do it; at least the people go through the formality of voting). Our system, our party system and everything that we have in this country—if there's something wrong with the system, no other people did it to us. Our own people did it to themselves!!

You will read in Roman history that the Romans already knew what modern America is only beginning to learn: Every form of human government has within itself the seeds of its own destruction! Every form of human government has within itself some fatal flaw, the seeds of its own destruction, which otherwise may be defined as "the human element"!

What we had here in the Roman system was a method of trying to solve this problem of the human element, and they could not! At first they had tried a kingship, then they had a Republic, they tried the Emperor; and then the military had to be-

gin to take over because political units were not functioning properly. People saw the problem there, and some great leaders made decisions that kept the military from absolute control and created a new structure which, it was hoped, would allow it to survive. And yet, you see, the problem was that the people were becoming immersed in lethargy, they had lost interest, everybody was out to please himself. This is exactly what has taken place in Britain today, and in most of Western Europe, and in America. What we will see in Western Europe is a revival of religion just like occurred in ancient Rome under Constantine—and then the collapse!!

Stamp Out Christianity!

In column 2 on page 132 we read that in 303 A.D. Diocletian declared "a general persecution of the Christians which, however, Constantius did not enforce in his praefecture Gaul—see column one/. The persecution was stopped in the entire west in 306 but raged in the east until 313." And most of the Christians were in the east, hence the ten years of persecution referred to prophetically as ten days in the history of the Smyrna Era of God's Church: ". . . and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

These were the ten years of persecution when there was a direct attempt—now listen!—not to merely punish the individual Christian, but to extirpate the religion itself in all forms no matter what the truth or the heresy might have been that went under the name of Christianity!!

Do you want to know why the Catholic Church in the West survived to be so strong? Because the persecution was the least there! Only for three years—303 to 306 A.D. Hence the Roman Church was much stronger when it was over than the church in the east.

Constantine

Constantine ruled 306-337. The Edict of Toleration was enacted in 311 A.D. Then the Edict of Milan, the final one, is properly dated in 313 A.D. I'm sure this is the case, early in 313. This is the traditional date. Disregard the question mark placed next to this date by Langer at the top of column one on page 133. Read this paragraph carefully telling of the battle at the Milvian Bridge when Constantine is said to have seen a cross in the sky.

As a result of the fact that they could not stamp out Christianity, it came to be realized that if you were going to stamp out Christianity you would for practical purposes have to stamp out so many people in the Empire that you would destroy it! Now there was only one thing for Constantine to do: Make Christianity legal! Even more, bring it into the government and tie it into the government so the government can control it!

Constantine "had already interfered in the affairs of the Church (at its invitation) when in 316 he tried to settle the Donatist schism." Now, in 325, he "summoned the first ecumenical (world-wide) council of the Church." Have you ever realized that this was the first ecumenical council, that the council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 had nothing to do with this sequence of events? Because that was of the true Church and this was of the heretics as a whole! Constantine, an Emperor, calls it. And he called it to meet in Nicea in Asia Minor.

What does this mean?

This means that Asia Minor was still regarded as the primary center of Christianity—still regarded as such! You look at the places where Paul went and you see that more time was spent in what is now modern Turkey—Galatia, Troas, that's most of the story. The rest was the little island of Cyprus, or Greece proper, Syria, Palestine, but those were all divided; the center was Asia Minor.

The reason for the Nicæan Council "was to settle a controversy that had arisen in Alexandria /Egypt/ between the priest Arius, who maintained that Christ was of a different substance from God, and the Bishop Alexander (succeeded in 328 by Athanasius) who supported the doctrine that they were of the same substance." All these arguments were basically meaningless! The council agreed on a creed favorable to Alexander"—well actually, even though the name used here is Alexander, it is Athanasius who picks up the controversy. I should define it that way. We have never thought of it in church history in terms of Alexander himself, but of his primary successor, Athanasius. The statement in Langer continues by saying that the council, in addition, "adopted certain canons giving privileges to the bishops (patriarchs) of Alexandria, Antioch, and Rome. Constantinople" which was to be founded five years hence in 330 "later acquired similar rights. The primacy of Rome . . . had been generally recognized in the west since the " limited council, these are the non-ecumenical ones "Council of Arles in 314. The prominent part taken by Constantine in this council laid the basis for the later supremacy of the emperor in the eastern Church. Though Arius died a horrible death in 336, Constantine and his successors swung the Church increasingly toward Arianism, and strife in the Church on this subject was not ended until the reign of Theodosius I" near the end of the century. "The west remained firmly Athanasian." This was the orthodox Roman Catholic position.

An important point: All the barbarians who invaded the West were Arian except the Franks. This is why the Franco-German state of Charlemagne was Roman Catholic because in the end the only barbarian tribe that was supported by the Church was the tribe that held the Western view that the Father and the Son were of one substance.

I don't know how they ever got into this argument. It happened to be, of course, that God the Father and God the Son are Spirit, they're not two different or diverse substances. They're Spirit! But, you know, they have to have something to argue about in religion. It is interesting to realize that the Arians did not accept the doctrine of the Trinity; and they maintained that the crucifixion was on Wednesday and the resurrection on Sabbath afternoon!

Now we continue with the top of column two on page 133: On May 11 in 330 A.D. "Constantine dedicated as his capital Constantinople, which he had spent four years in building on the site of Byzantium, commanding the strategic center of the east, the Bosphorus." It is very striking that by this time the center of focus of the Empire was shifting from Rome to the East. You see, Rome conquered the world. Nevertheless, the great bulk of the world that was conquered was still centered in the East. In the West Rome conquered North Africa, Spain, Gaul, Britain, parts of Germany, see? But in the East, beginning with Illyrium, they conquered Greece, and all Asia Minor, and Egypt, Palestine, Syria, controlled Mesopotamia for a time; and all the major wars were centered in the north—not from the west, see—but in the north or east. So Constantine divided the Empire and made the primary capital the one in the East and Rome became the second important capital now in the West. And even though Diocletian had set up a system of four rulers (two Augusti and two Caesars, page 131), it ultimately got back down to one ruler—Constantine reunited the Empire under his sole rule (p. 133). You simply could not have four heads over a monstrosity like this and make it work!

So Constantine was the Emperor. He resided in the East. Thus the Church in the East was directly under the Emperor. But in the West, now, the most important official remaining in the city of Rome was the Bishop at Rome! He was the most important official left in the city of Rome and eventually attained the status of Pope. (Later the political headquarters of the West was moved from Rome to Ravenna--in 402 A.D.)

Constantine died in 337. On his death bed he was baptized! He was baptized by aspersio. That is, since he was too sick to be put in a tub he was sprinkled! This is the first recorded act of sprinkling in the whole of church history--the Emperor Constantine! Eusebius said "he was baptized if it be lawful to call this baptism"--you know, a few drops of water! You should read something of Constantine in Eusebius' Church History or one of the religious encyclopaedias such as Schaff-Herzog.

Christianity continued as a major religion in the Roman Empire until the reign of Julian "the Apostate" (361-363). "He is known chiefly for his attempt to substitute paganism for Christianity and to organize a pagan church." However, he was unable to succeed because paganism was basically dead. Nevertheless, it is significant that Julian mentions in the record that Christ was executed under Pilate. He shows that Jesus was a human being, that He was born and brought to trial, that the Roman records showed this. He pointed out to Christians that "you worship as a god one who was punished as a criminal!" Now the statements made by Julian are so obviously true that atheists have a very difficult time laying aside this evidence! Here was a man not trying to support Christianity, not taking anything for granted, who uses as his major argument the fact that "we know all about this man Jesus, and you Christians have invented a fiction that He's a god when He was nothing but a criminal." You see? This was his approach. There was such a person as Jesus! Whether He was tried and found guilty justifiably one cannot determine from the Roman records because Pilate was very careful about how this event was presented. I don't know how he ever explained the case! Maybe he never did explain it right! He let the mob influence him because he didn't want to lose his job!

Battle of Adrianople

Next note the top of the first column on page 134 under the date 376: "The Visigoths (West Goths) crossed the Danube. Valens fell in battle against them at Adrianople (378, Aug. 9). The Goths continued to ravage the Balkan region."

This Battle of Adrianople is perhaps the turning point! From here on nothing basically seemed to go right for the Empire. This was the beginning of the end because once the Romans lost this battle, they were never able thereafter to completely expel any barbarian tribe!

New Facts About the Image of the Beast

What is this mysterious "image"? You will soon be compelled to worship it or face martyrdom. If you submit, you will suffer the wrath of God!

by Herman L. Hoeb

MANY ministers know the facts which prove the identity of the "image of the beast," but they are afraid to tell you. This present generation, confused over the real significance of the "image," is destined to be forced to worship it! Many who haven't been told the facts are already practicing this species of idolatry.

The "image of the beast" (Rev. 13:14-15) can not be understood until the "beast," described in Revelation 13:1-10, is known. It is symbolic of a power whose identity is revealed in the second and seventh chapters of the book of Daniel.

The June, 1952, issue of "The Plain Truth" contained the Biblical explanation which conclusively proved that the "beast" John delineated is the Roman Empire. After receiving its deadly wound, it continued 1260 years from its restoration under Justinian (554) to the downfall of Napoleon (1814). For one last time this Roman system will be revived in Europe by a federation of ten nations. It is already beginning to solidify and emerge on the continent.

The "dragon" which gave this Empire its authority is the devil according to Revelation 12:9 and 20:2. The adversary told Jesus that the kingdoms of this world were delivered to him, "and to whomsoever I will I give it" (Luke 4:5-7). The Roman Empire and its revivals is Satan's civil government on earth.

Not only does the devil have his civil rulers doing his will, but he also has ecclesiastical rulers—ministers who masquerade as the "ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:13-15). John saw this pictured under the symbol of the "beast" which had two horns like a lamb (Rev. 13:11-17). According to the Bible, it is the hierarchy of order—the Pope, bishops, priests and deacons of the Roman Catholic Church, the explanation of which is given in this issue of "The Good News." This church is responsible for the creation of the "image of the beast."

What Is the Image?

There are five fundamental points to

consider before fully grasping the Biblical interpretation of this "image." (1) The lamb-like beast, by its miraculous claims, deceived the people who dwell on earth, saying to them (2) that they should make an image to the beast—Satan's civil government, the Roman Empire. (3) The great church figuratively gives life to the image. It was made to live and (4) to speak. Furthermore, the image (5) caused that every person not worshipping itself should be killed. It did not martyr, it merely caused the death of those who would not submit to such idolatry. Once again, in this generation, the already widespread worship of this "image" will be forced upon the world.

What could it be? What is an "image"? According to the dictionary, an image is a "copy, representation, model, semblance, counterpart." It is a "likeness." Therefore the church which John mentions was saying to the people: "You should make a model, a copy of the civil Roman Governments"—for the "beast" is a government (Daniel 7:23).

Instead of preaching the gospel of the Kingdom or government of God—divine government with divine laws—this church established human church governments. The church of God is constituted by those saints who are begotten and led by the Holy Spirit. It is not a kingdom, for Christ's kingdom is not of this present world or age (John 18:36). But here is a great church that deceived the people into forming a duplicate or image of the civil government of the Roman Empire.

The PAPACY is "the Roman empire, again extended over Europe by a universal code and a provincial government; by a hierarchy of religious praetors or proconsuls, and a host of inferior officers, each in strict subordination to those immediately above them, and gradually descending to the very lowest ranks of society: the whole with a certain degree of freedom of action, but a restrained and limited freedom, and with an appeal to the spiritual Caesar in the last resort" (*History of Latin Christianity* by Milman, p. 28).

This church government—the PAPA-

CY—is the image of the beast! It is an ecclesiastical model of the pagan Roman Government.

"Long before the fall of Rome there had begun to grow up within the Roman Empire an ecclesiastical state, which in its constitution and its administrative system was shaping itself upon the imperial model. This spiritual empire," says Myer's *Ancient History*, p. 582, "like the secular empire, possessed a hierarchy of officers."

The Papacy, according to these historians, is a model, a counterpart—an image of the "beast" which is the Roman Government. This ecclesiastical government compelled people to worship a man-ruled church organized into a worldly government. Although palmed off as the government of God, it is in reality an image of a human civil government. And worshipping any image is idolatry!

Just as the old Babylonish idolatry spread and altered its form as it propagated throughout the world, so this modern Babylon the Great, a Mother Church, has propagated daughter churches which came out protesting (Rev. 17:5), and all of them have different forms of church government—different "images of the beast,"—each patterned in some way after the human government of the Empire. When religious people speak of "MY Church," they mean their humanly organized denomination which teaches pagan doctrines and customs labeled "Christian." They IDOLIZE their Church, believing its teaching can't be wrong. This is idolatry and God calls everyone of his people out of it (Rev. 18:4).

Where did this practice of human government in the churches develop? And how? What is the historical proof that most of you haven't been told because ministers are afraid to let you understand that their churches are not governed by Christ as the head, but by human boards or "spiritual Caesars"?

Government in the Early True Church

Unlike any denomination of today, the Christians in the early inspired

Church were governed by the will of God expressed in the Bible. The Father set Christ to be the continuous, living Head of the Church, the Head of those individuals who are led by the Spirit of God. Under Christ were those ministers He chose. *They were not elected*; the ministers of the gospel were never voted into office. They were ordained according to the Biblical specifications because their fruits proved that *God had already chosen them*. Compare John 3:27, Acts 13:2, 3 and 1 Timothy 3.

Every office of service in the church for spreading the gospel was and ought to be today according to the *gifts* of God proven by the fruits (Eph. 4:11-13). Jesus has always been the absolute Head of the Church, not any board, man or *vicar* ruling in the place of Christ (Eph. 5:23).

Edward Gibbon rightly says "that the apostles declined the office of legislation." (*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chapter 15.) The laws governing the lives of true Christians are not human canons or traditions sanctioned by boards or Church councils, but the inviolate laws of God revealed in the Scripture.

There were *elders* in every city to instruct, correct and to be examples to the churches (1 Peter 5:3). The original Greek word for "elders" is also translated "presbytery" in 1 Tim. 4:14. From Acts 20:17, 28 it becomes obvious that presbyters or elders were also called overseers or bishops—"two appellations which," according to Gibbon in his excellent fifteenth chapter on church history, "in their first origin, appear to have distinguished the same office and the same order of persons. The name Presbyter was expressive of their age, or rather of their gravity and wisdom. The title of Bishop denoted their inspection over the faith and manners of the Christians who were committed to their pastoral care."

How vastly different church governments are today! What happened that church offices are so radically altered? When did it happen?

How the People Began to Form the "Image of the Beast"

The Roman Empire in the days of the apostles was *authoritarian*, and the use of *elections* for many offices was an honored practice. After the death of the apostles, the prophesied great apostasy set in (2 Thess. 2). Some of the very elders or bishops to whom Paul talked at Ephesus (Acts 20:30) were ring-leaders in *deceiving the people* into holding public church meetings and *elections* of officers following the *pattern of Roman municipalities*. Each lo-

cal congregation took for itself, with variations, the *form* of the Roman *collegia*, associations, which were modeled after the *Roman municipal government*. (Boak, *A History of Rome to 365 A.D.*, pp. 398, 364.)

Here was *the beginning* of the "image of the beast"—ecclesiastical leaders deceiving the people into creating a government in the church after the mode of the Roman civil administration and attributing to it divine origin.

In various congregations were numerous people, unconverted, who wanted the "say-so." They *elected* teachers who sanctioned elections and pleased their whims and who led them back into the customs of pagan Rome and Greece (2 Tim. 4:3, 4). Gradually those ministers who were chosen of God were rejected and forced out of the visible church congregations (3 John 10). The *visible* churches were ceasing to be governed by Jesus Christ. A universal or catholic apostasy permeated almost the whole Christian world.

"The order of public deliberations soon introduced the office of a president, invested at least with the authority of collecting the sentiments, and of executing the resolutions, of the assembly," says Gibbon. Here were local congregations, making their *human resolutions* instead of following the Bible, and causing the formation of human government in the churches.

The Bishops Grow in Power

Occasional elections induced the apostatizing Christians to constitute permanently *one* of the elders or presbyters with the office and "duties of an ecclesiastical governor. It was under these circumstances that the lofty title of Bishop began to raise itself above the humble appellations of Presbyter; and while the latter remained the most natural distinction for the members of every Christian senate, the former was appropriated to the dignity of its new president."

Did you notice? Each local congregation in its legislative practices developed into a little "senate" with one of its elders, elected to the permanent office of president, styled a "Bishop." From this time forward, only the leading elder, the president, was called "Bishop." The people were following the pattern of the Roman civil government, introducing it into the churches in place of the government of God. They found that voting on resolutions was a very satisfactory way of getting pagan "religious ceremonies, which imperceptibly increased in number and variety" into the churches. Rather than receive the correction of the Bible, the congrega-

tions wanted to have their own way and the leaders were glad to have it so, because it invested them with *legislative power* over the flock.

In the same fifteenth chapter of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* we read: "Whenever the episcopal chair became vacant by death, a new president was chosen among the presbyters by the suffrage of the whole congregation." No longer were the ministers being chosen by Christ and ordained by the elders and apostles. Instead, in the Catholic churches the elders were elected and one of them, specially elected to preside over the local meetings, appropriated the title of "Bishop" *above* his equals.

Coupled with the advancement of the "Bishop" or president in each local congregation, was the rapid tendency to form local dioceses "by the union of several country churches with a church in a city" after 100 A.D. (Milman's footnote in Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*). Toward the middle of the ensuing century, numerous churches within a city united under the leadership of the most important Bishop of the leading church in each local *diocese*. Thus far, the "image"—church government shaped according to the model of the Roman civil institutions—was formed only after the city government and its municipal officials and jurisdiction. There was as yet no supreme leadership over all the churches.

The Image Called a Divine Institution

The episcopal form of government was adopted within a hundred years after the death of the apostles by ALL the congregations scattered over the Roman Empire. It soon acquired the deceptive sanction of a *divine institution* because the bishops styled themselves the "vicars of Christ." Bingham's *Antiquities of the Christian Church* gives several cases in the early Catholic writings wherein "every bishop is *vice Christi*, Christ's vicar or viceregent" (Bk. II, ch. II, sect. 10).

The Bible nowhere teaches that man rules in place of Christ. Christ has no one ruling in his place. Every minister in the Church is ruled by Christ and carries out Christ's will, not his own or the people's! But those early bishops deceived the gullible, unconverted "Christian" into believing that they stood *in the place of Christ* and that the episcopal form of church government was a holy institution which the people should hold *in reverence*. The congregations voted those beguiling leaders into office since they taught what the people desired to hear in order to gain authority and prestige over them. (2 Peter 2:3; Jude 16). This is how the *worship* of
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the image—the idolizing of church government—developed!

The Roman "Province" Adopted

With the progress of time the development of jurisdiction increased apace. Not only had a local elder usurped authority over his fellow elders, thus receiving the *exclusive* title of "Bishop," but he had also acquired the dominion over all church congregations pertaining to a city—termed a *diocese*. The next step that occurred was the adoption of the Roman civil division of the "province" in order to *unify* the dioceses and the conflicting traditions that were developing in church customs.

Bingham, page 342, says: "A province was the cities of a whole region subjected to the authority of one chief magistrate, who resided in the metropolis, or chief city of the province. This was commonly a praetor, or a proconsul . . . so likewise in the same metropolis there was a bishop, whose power extended over the whole province, whence he was called the metropolitan, or primate, as being the principal bishop of the province."

The government of the churches, the episcopate, was no longer a local association of bishop and elders, but *monarchical*. "The bishops were now regularly nominated by the clergy, approved by the congregations, and finally inducted into office by the ceremony of ordination." (*A History of Rome to 565 A.D.*, p. 398.) Toward the close of the second century irregular synods in Ephesus, Jerusalem, Pontus and at Rome were held to assist in substituting the heathen Easter for the passover (Milman's footnote to Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*). By 250 A.D., these synods were held regularly, especially in Greece and Asia Minor.

From where did *this* practice come? Not from the Bible.

Says the historian Gibbon: They "borrowed the model of a representative council from the celebrated examples of their own country. . . ."

"It was soon established," he says further, "as a custom and a law, that the bishops of the independent churches should meet in the capital of the province at stated periods of spring and autumn." The proceedings were moderated "by the presence of a listening multitude. Their decrees, which were styled Canons, regulated every important controversy of faith and discipline. . . ."

The church government was beginning to issue decrees! The IMAGE was beginning to SPEAK with the force of law! Faith and discipline ceased to proceed from Scripture. Pagan traditions and customs became "the law."

"Suited to Private Ambition"

With uncanny accuracy Gibbon explains that the "institution of synods was so well suited to private ambition, and to public interest, that in the space of a few years it was received throughout the whole empire . . . and the catholic church soon assumed the form, and acquired the strength, of a great federative republic."

Synods were universally accepted. Each local diocese, like a republic with its elected representatives and an ecclesiastical governor, joined together to form a province in the "public interest." It was the *people* who permitted the ministers and bishops to deceive them into modeling church government after the civil government. From the provincial councils there poured forth an ever increasing flow of correspondence *federating* all the provinces of the catholic or universal churches.

Exactly as the bishops had so recently grasped authority over every presbyter—who now became a *priest*—so in these provincial synods the difference in rank of the city from which each came caused the bishop of the metropolis or chief city of the province to prepare secretly to usurp authority over his fellow bishops and to acquire "the lofty titles of Metropolitans and Primate."

By now the mutual alliance of the bishops enabled them to attack the original "rights of the people" in having their "say-so." The participation of the people gradually ceased amid the *superstitious* reverence for the "divine authority" of the assemblies of the bishops. The bishops owed no allegiance to any higher human authority than their own assemblies in which they *voted* on matters of faith.

Constantine Begins Universal Councils

After permitting the Catholic Faith to become the State religion of the Roman Empire, Constantine found it essential to unify conflicts within its ranks. To this end he called universal or ecumenical councils. Says Boak: "Procedure in the councils was modelled upon that of the Roman Senate; the meetings were conducted by imperial legates, their decisions were issued in the form of imperial edicts, and it was to the emperor that appeals from these decrees were made." (*A History of Rome to 565 A.D.*, p. 492.)

There was as yet no Pope. The Roman Emperor was head of this Church. The laws of the councils were laws of the State. The Roman Senate, not a Biblical example, was the model. The "image" was gradually being fashioned more and more like the Roman civil government.

It was also during the age of Con-

stantine that the Roman Empire was divided into great *dioceses*, thirteen in number. These were made up of numerous provinces over which bishops with the titles of Metropolitan or Primate presided. With the enforced universal councils being the highest assembly ruling the churches, Gibbon says it was not "long before an emulation of preeminence and power prevailed among the Metropolitans themselves, each affecting to display . . . the temporal honors and advantages of the city over which he presided. . . ."

Naturally the Metropolitans who resided in the capitals of these great dioceses were to dominate all the other Primates over the provinces in his realm. Thus was the title of "Exarch" or "Patriarch" acquired by less than a dozen great bishops. There were now four grades of bishops: country bishops who became parish priests, city bishops, Metropolitans, Patriarchs.

Who would eventually be the Universal Bishop? We shall soon see.

It is notable that the title *vicars* (vicars) was given by the Civil Government to the civil administrators of the great dioceses. Although the Patriarchs of the Catholic Church were really the *vicars* of the Emperor, who was head of the Catholic State Church, they claimed to be the vicars of Christ, as *all* bishops had done decades prior in order to gain their eminence.

The Roman Empire was also divided into four *Prefectures*. While the Catholics did not institute any ecclesiastical office to compare to the *prefects*, they did soon find that among the *Patriarchs* over the dioceses, there was a rivalry that brought forth four dominant Patriarchs in the East and one in the West. These were of Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria in the East and Rome in the West.

Bingham, pages 344, 345, and other authors point out a highly important fact. The dioceses in the West, with the exception of Africa, *lacked* Patriarchs in Spain, Gaul and Britain, or else failed to send them to the councils. **ROME WAS THE ONLY WESTERN PATRIARCHATE THAT REPRESENTED THE WEST IN DEALINGS WITH EASTERN BISHOPS.** says Boak in the aforementioned book, pages 492, 493. It was easy to foresee that the bishop at Rome would be the dominant Patriarch since the Roman church was the greatest and its bishops claimed the inheritance of the attributes of the office of the apostle Peter by *progressive traditions*.

Was the Roman Bishop Always the Head of the Church?

That the bishop at Rome was *not* from the time of Peter the head of the
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Church is admitted by the Roman Catholic Du Pin, who states, to the later embarrassment of Catholic doctrine, that Germany, Spain, France, Britain, Africa, Illyrcum and seven of the Italic provinces were, NOT UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE BISHOP AT ROME during the early ages (Du Pin de Disciplin. Eccles. Dessert. l. n. 14. p. 92, quoted in Bingham's *Antiquities*, p. 348).

The bishop of Milan, Italy, was never ordained by the bishop of Rome, as he would have been if he were under his jurisdiction. This is even admitted by Pope Pelagius in one of his epistles (Bingham, p. 348). The African Church under the Patriarch of Carthage was originally independent as Justinian declares. In the 22nd canon of the Council of Milevis, the African churches prohibited appeals to the bishop at Rome. For centuries, Baluzius declares, the French synods "never allowed any appeals from their own determination to the pope" (Bingham, p. 349). The British or Celtic Church did not come under Roman dominion until the Synod of Whitby (664) brought about British conformity to the Roman Catholic mode of Easter observance. (E. R. Edman, *The Light in Dark Ages*, p. 184.)

The advancing star of the Roman Bishop developed rapidly with the transference in the fourth century of the capital of the Empire to "New Rome"—Constantinople. Up to this time there were no great pontiffs that provoked jealousy, neither were there such factions that split the East. The bishops of Rome were carried upward by the sweep of dominant opinion. Eastern feuds disrupted the patriarchates in that area and left only the most recent, Constantinople, in the leadership. The domination of the Emperor in Constantinople was a disastrous handicap for the Eastern churches. The bishop of Rome was immeasurably freer to expand.

In 343 the Council of Sardica, COMPOSED OF WESTERN LEADERS ONLY, not a universal or ecumenical council, confirmed the Western feeling that the bishop of Rome ought to be the Head of the Church by sanctioning Pope Julius as the final arbiter in disputes resulting from the Arian controversy. Thirty-five years later the bishop at Rome became the "Pontifex Maximus" or Supreme Pontiff. This title once belonged to the high priest of the pagan Roman priesthood before Julius Caesar, the first Emperor was granted it. Thereafter, the office was passed to succeeding Emperors until Gratian refused it in 376. Two years later Damasus, Bishop of Rome, was declared Supreme Pontiff by imperial edict. (Bower's *Lives of the popes*.) The pagan Roman College of Pontiffs later became the Catho-

lic business," wrote Boak in his previous work, *Pontifex Maximus* "had charge of the calendar, fixed dates of the public festivals, and announced each month what days were open and what closed to public business," wrote Boak in his previously mentioned work, page 67. Little wonder that the Catholic Supreme Pontiff should "think to change times and laws" (Daniel 7:25) in opposition to Jesus Christ who is the actual High Priest of the Church (Heb. 7:21; 10:21).

The Papacy Finally Develops

Many early writers and the populace termed the bishops in the Catholic Church "princes" in imitation of Isaiah 60:17 which they read: "I will make thy princes peace, and thy bishops righteousness." It became the customary view that the Church was the Kingdom and its leaders the rulers therein—a view exactly opposite to the gospel of Jesus which spoke of the Kingdom of God yet to be established (Bingham, p. 22).

With the rapid decline of the Western Roman Empire, the bishop of Rome rose in respect with the people. He determined to be the King of Kings in the government of the Church. We shall now see how the Roman bishops sought by their claims and obtained by popular approval the position of *Ecclesiastical Caesar*.

At the close of the fourth century Augustine wrote the "City of God," a book envisioning a Universal Catholic Empire of which the Roman Empire was the pattern. A few years later Innocent I pushed the claims of the papacy vigorously. Following him came Leo I, styled by many the first Pope. He was the first Latin preacher; for prior to him there seem to have been no public preaching by Catholics in Rome according to Sozomen (Milman, *Latin Christianity*, p. 56). Leo claimed to be the heir to Peter's primacy, advocated the complete "organization of the Church on the model of the Empire, with the pope as its religious head." He said resistance to his will was worthy of "hell," and advocated the death penalty for heresy.

Boak wrote in his book: "It was Leo also who induced the western emperor Valentinian III in 455 to order the whole western Church to obey the bishop of Rome as the heir to the primacy of Peter" (p. 493). Despite this decree that made the bishop of Rome the head of Western Christendom, the Council of Chalcedon, 451, a universal council claiming divine authority, placed the Patriarch of Constantinople "on an equality with the pope, a recognition against which the Pope Leo protested in vain."

By this time, too, the term *parochiae*—parish—began to be applied specifically to individual churches in the episcopal dioceses, rather than to the dioceses themselves. Within another fifty years the common term "papa" from which "pope" is derived was applied almost exclusively in the West to the bishop of Rome, although, in prior years, "it was a common title of all bishops." However, the Eastern Catholics did not recognize this papal title, for in the time of Pope Gregory I, 590-604, the Patriarch of Constantinople claimed the title of "Universal Bishop." Against this Eastern usurpation of authority, Gregory stormed. He refused to appropriate the title to himself for obvious reasons, yet he exercised all the authority of a universal bishop.

After the Council of Constantinople in 869, the Roman and Eastern Churches ceased to meet together in ecumenical councils. In 1123 it was decided that the popes should appoint all bishops. The head of the "image of the beast" now governed with absolute power the entire ecclesiastical government. About 750 years later (1871), the Pope secured the declaration of infallibility when speaking "from the chair."

To assist the Roman Pontiff there have been developed through the centuries certain agencies. The College of Cardinals (Cardinals are bishops of dioceses) collectively advise the Pope. Under them are twelve Congregations, three Tribunals and five Offices of the Roman Curia (bureaus, boards and courts) organized to administer Church affairs.

The "image" or "model" against which John warns is the hierarchy of jurisdiction, "the governing body of the Catholic Church—the Pope and the other bishops throughout the world." They possess according to Catholic sources "the power to make laws, to sit in judgment, and to fix spiritual penalties when necessary."

Its attributes belong ONLY TO GOD. To attribute them to any organization of men is to set that organization in the place of God—to commit idolatry—to worship the image of the beast! Not only does the Roman hierarchy claim such powers, but also millions of PROTESTANTS ARE WORSHIPPING SIMILAR IMAGES OF THEIR OWN MAKING—human church governments which pretend to exercise the powers of God.

Everyone committing such idolatry which will soon be forced on the world will suffer the wrath of God, the seven last plagues without mercy! Your only hope is to COME OUT OF THIS IDOLATROUS SYSTEM THAT IS GRIPPING THE WORLD. "Come out of her my people," says God (Rev. 8:4).