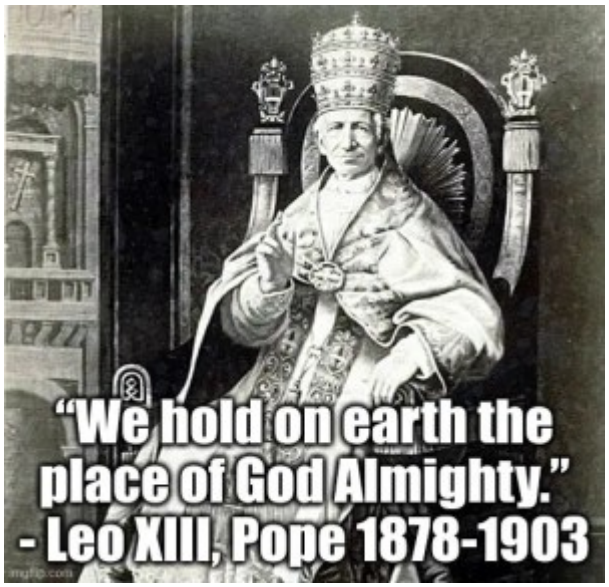
History of the Papacy Chapter II. Rise and Progress of Ecclesiastical Supremacy.



Continued from Chapter I. Origin of the Papacy

The first pastors of the Roman Church aspired to no rank above their brethren.[1] The labours in which they occupied themselves were the same as those of the ordinary ministers of the gospel. As pastors, they watched with affectionate fidelity over their flock; and, when occasion offered, they added to the duties of the pastorate the labours of the evangelist. All of them were eminent for their piety; and some of them to the graces of the Christian added the accomplishments of the scholar. Clemens of Rome may be cited as an instance. He was the most distinguished Christian writer, after the apostles, of the first century. Even after the gospel had found entrance within the walls of Rome, Paganism maintained its ground amongst the villages of the Campagna.[2] Accordingly, it became the first care of the pastors of the metropolis to plant the faith and found churches in the neighbouring towns. They were led to embark in this undertaking, not from the worldly and ambitious views which began, in course of time, to actuate their successors, but from that pure zeal for the diffusion of Christianity for which these early ages were distinguished. It was natural that churches founded in these circumstances should cherish a peculiar veneration for the men to whose pious labours they owed their existence; and it was equally natural that they should apply to them for advice in all cases of difficulty. That advice was at first purely paternal, and implied neither superiority on the part of the person who gave it, nor dependence on the part of those to whom it was given. But in process of time, when the Episcopate at Rome came to be held by men of worldly spirit,—lovers of the pre-eminence,—the homage, at first voluntarily rendered by equals to their equal,—was exacted as a right; and the advice, at first simply fraternal, took the form of a command, and was delivered in a tone of authority.[3] These beginnings of assumption were small; but they

were beginnings, and power is cumulative. It is the law of its nature to grow, at a continually accelerating rate, which, though slow at the outset, becomes fearfully rapid towards the end. And thus the pastors of Rome, at first by imperceptible degrees, and at last by enormous strides, reached their fatal pre-eminence.

Such was the state of matters in the first century, during which the authority of the presbyter or bishop—for these two titles were employed in primitive times to distinguish the same office and the same order of men[4]—did not extend beyond the limits of the congregation to which they ministered. But in the second century another element began to operate. In that age it became customary to regulate the consideration and rank which the bishops of the Christian Church enjoyed, by that of the city in which they resided. It is easy to see the influence and dignity which would thence accrue to the bishops of Rome, and the prospects of grandeur and power which would thus open to the aspiring prelates who now occupied that see. Rome was the mistress of the world. During ages of conquest her dominion had been gradually extending, till at last it had become universal and supreme; and now she exercised a mysterious and potent charm over the nations. Her laws were received, and her sway submitted to, throughout the whole civilized earth. The first Rome was herein the type of the second Rome; and if the spectacle which she exhibited of a centralized and universal despotism did not suggest to the aspiring prelates of the capital the first ideas of a spiritual empire alike centralized and universal, there is no question that it contributed most material aid towards the attainment of such an object,—an object which, we know, they had early proposed, and which they had begun with great vigor, steadiness, and craft, to prosecute. It acted as a secret but powerful stimulant upon the minds of the Roman bishops themselves, and it operated with all the force of a spell upon the imaginations of those over whom they now began to arrogate power. Herein we discover one of the grand springs of the Papacy. As the free states that formerly existed in the world had rendered up their wealth, their independence, and their deities, to form one colossal empire, why, asked the bishops of Rome, should not the various churches throughout the world surrender their individuality and their powers of self-government to the metropolitan see, in order to form one mighty Catholic Church? Why should not Christian Rome be the fountain of law and of faith to the world, as Pagan Rome had been? Why should not the symbol of unity presented to the world in the secular empire be realized in the real unity of a Christian empire? If the occupant of the temporal throne had been a king of kings, why should not the occupant of the spiritual chair be a bishop of bishops? That the bishops of Rome reasoned in this way is a historical fact. The Council of Chalcedon established the superiority of the Roman see on this very ground. “The fathers,” say they, “justly conferred the dignity on the throne of the presbyter of Rome, because that was the imperial city.”[5] The mission of the gospel is to unite all nations into one family. Satan presented the world with a mighty counterfeit of this union, when he united all nations under the despotism of Rome, that thus, by counterfeiting, he might defeat the reality.

The rise of Provincial Ecclesiastical Councils wrought in the same way. The Greeks, copying the model of their Amphictyonic Council, were the first to

adopt the plan of assembling the deputies of the churches of a whole province to deliberate on affairs of consequence. The plan in a short time was received throughout the whole empire. The Greeks called such assemblies *Synods*; the Latins termed them *Councils*, and styled their laws or resolutions *Canons*.[6] In order to temper the deliberations and to execute the resolutions of the assembly, it was requisite that one should be chosen as president; and the dignity was usually conferred on the presbyter of greatest weight for his piety and wisdom. That the tranquillity of the Church might not be disturbed by annual elections, the person raised by the suffrages of his brethren to the presidential chair was continued in it for life. He was regarded only as the first among equals; but the title of Bishop began now to acquire a new significance, and to raise itself above the humble appellation of Presbyter. The election to the office of perpetual president fell not unfrequently upon the bishop of the metropolitan city; and thus the equality that reigned among the pastors of the primitive Church came to be still farther disturbed.[7]

The fourth century found the primitive simplicity of the Church, as regards the form of her government, but little encroached upon. If we except the perpetual president of the Provincial Synod, a rank of equal honour and a title of equal dignity were enjoyed by all the pastors or bishops of the Church. But this century brought great changes along with it, and paved the way for still greater changes in the centuries that followed it. Under Constantine the empire was divided into four prefectures, these four prefectures into dioceses, and the dioceses into provinces.[8] In making this arrangement, the State acted within its own province; but it stepped out of it altogether when it began, as it now did, to fashion the Church upon the model of the Empire. The ecclesiastical and civil arrangements were made, as nearly as possible, to correspond.[9] Pious emperors believed that, in assimilating the two, they were doing both the State and the Church a service,—and the imperial wishes were powerfully seconded and formally sanctioned by ambitious prelates and intriguing councils. The new arrangements, impressed by a human policy upon the Church, became every day more marked, as did likewise the gradation of rank amongst the pastors. Bishop rose above bishop, not according to the eminence of his virtue or the fame of his learning, but according to the rank of the city in which his charge lay. The chief city of a province gave the title of METROPOLITAN, and likewise of Primate, to its bishop. The metropolis of a diocese conferred on its pastor the dignity of EXARCH. Over the exarchs were placed four presidents or patriarchs, corresponding to the four praetorian prefects created by Constantine. But it is probable that the title of Patriarch, which is of Jewish origin, was at first common to all bishops, and gradually came to be employed as a term of dignity and eminence. The first distinct recognition of the order occurs in the Council of Constantinople, A.D. 381.[10] At that time we find but three of these great dignitaries in existence,—the Bishops of Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria; but a fourth was now added. The Council, taking into consideration that Constantinople was the residence of the Emperor, decreed “that the Bishop of Constantinople should have the prerogative, next after the Bishop of Rome, because his city was called New Rome.”[11] In the following century the Council of Chalcedon declared the bishops of the two cities on a level as regarded their spiritual

rank.[12] But the practice of old Rome was more powerful than the decree of the fathers. Despite the rising grandeur of her formidable rival, the city on the Tiber continued to be the one city of the earth, and her pastor to hold the foremost place among the patriarchs of the Christian world. In no long time wars broke out between these four spiritual potentates. The primates of Alexandria and Antioch threw themselves for protection upon the patriarch of the west; and the concessions they made as the price of the succour which was extended to them tended still more to enhance the importance of the Roman see.[13]

This gradation of rank necessarily led to a gradation of jurisdiction and power. First came the Bishop, who exercised authority in his parish, and to whom the individual members of his flock were accountable. Next came the Metropolitan, who administered the ecclesiastical affairs of the province, exercised superintendence over all its bishops, convened them in synods, and, assisted by them, heard and determined all questions touching religion which arose within the limits of his jurisdiction. He possessed, moreover, the privilege of having his consent asked to the ordination of bishops within his province. Next came the Exarchs or Patriarchs, who exercised authority over the metropolitans of the diocese, and held diocesan synods, in which all matters pertaining to the welfare of the Church in the diocese were deliberated upon and adjudicated.[14] There needed but one step more to complete this gradation of rank and authority,—a primacy among the exarchs. In due time an arch-Patriarch arose. As might have been foreseen, the seat of the prince of the patriarchs was Rome. A gradation which aimed at making the civil and ecclesiastical arrangements exactly to correspond, and which fixed the chief seats of the two authorities at the same places, made it inevitable that the primate of all Christendom should appear nowhere but at the metropolis of the Roman world. It was now seen what a tower of strength was Rome. Her prestige alone had lifted her bishop from the humble rank of presbyter to the pre-eminent dignity of arch-patriarch; and in this she gave the world a pledge of the future dominion and grandeur of her popes.

A gradation of rank and titles, however suitable to the genius and conducive to the ends of a temporal monarchy, consorts but ill with the character and objects of a spiritual kingdom: in fact, it forms a positive and powerful obstruction to the development of the one and the attainment of the other. It is only as a spiritual agent that the Church can be serviceable to society: she can make the task of government easy only by eradicating the passions of the human heart. A sound policy would have dictated the necessity of preserving intact the spiritual element, seeing the Church is powerful in proportion as she is spiritual. With a most infatuated persistency, the very opposite policy was pursued. Religion was robbed of her rights as a co-ordinate power. She was bound round with the trappings of state; the spiritual was enchained, the carnal had free scope given it, and then the Church was asked to do her office as a spiritual institute! A defunct organization, she was required to impart life!

The condition under which alone it appears possible for both Church and State to preserve their independence and vigour, is not *incorporation*, but *co-ordination*. God created society as he created man at the beginning, not ONE,

but TWAIN. There is a secular body and there is a spiritual body upon the earth. We must accept the fact, and deal with it in such a way as will allow of the great ends being gained which God intended to serve by ordaining this order of things. If we attempt to incorporate the two,—the common error hitherto,—we contradict the design of God, by making one what he created twain. All former attempts at amalgamation have ended in the dominancy of the one principle, the subserviency of the other, and the corruption and injury of both. If, on the other hand, we aim at effecting a total disseverance, we not less really violate the constitution of society, and arrive at the same issue as before: we virtually banish the one principle, and install the other in undivided and absolute supremacy. Co-ordination is the only solution of which the problem admits; and it is the true solution, just because it is an acceptance of the fact as God has ordained it. It declares that society is neither matter solely nor spirit solely, but both; that, therefore, there is the secular jurisdiction and the spiritual jurisdiction; that these two have distinct characters, distinct objects, and distinct spheres; and that each in its own sphere is independent, and can claim from the other a recognition of its independence. Had the constitution of society been understood, and the principle of co-ordination recognised, the Papacy could not have arisen.[15] But, unhappily, the State drew the Church into conformity first, which ended inevitably in incorporation; and this, again, in the dominancy of the spiritual over the secular element, as will always be the case in the long run, the spiritual being the stronger. The crime met a righteous punishment; for the State, which had begun by enslaving the Church, was itself enslaved in the end by that very arrogance and ambition which it had taught the Church to cherish. But we pursue our melancholy story of the decline of Christianity and the rise of the Papacy.

Rome had the art to turn all things to her advantage. There was nothing that fell out that did not minister to her growth, and help onward the accomplishment of her vast designs;—the rivalship of sects, the jealousies of churchmen, the intrigues of courts, the growth of ignorance and superstition find the triumph of barbarian arms. It seemed as if the natural operation of events was suspended in her case, and that what to other systems wrought nought but evil, to her brought only good. The great shocks by which powerful empires were broken in pieces, and the face of the world changed, left the Church unscathed. While other systems and confederations were falling into ruin, she continued steadily to advance. From the mighty wreck of the empire she uprose in all the vigour of youth. She had shared in its grandeur, but she did not share in its fall. She saw the barbaric flood from the north overwhelm southern Europe; but from her lofty seat on the Seven Hills she looked securely down on the deluge that rolled beneath her. She saw the crescent, hitherto triumphant, cease to be victorious the moment it approached the confines of her special and sacred territory. The same arms that had overthrown other countries only contributed to her grandeur. The Saracens brought to an end the patriarchate of Alexandria and of Antioch; thus leaving the see of Rome, more especially after the breach with Constantinople, undisputed mistress of the west. What could be concluded from so many events, whose issues to the Papacy were so opposite from their bearing on all besides, but that, while other states were left to their fate, Rome was defended by an invisible arm? Instinct she must be with a divine

life, otherwise how could she survive so many disasters? No wonder that the blinded nations mistook her for a god, and prostrated themselves in adoration. We cannot write the history of the period; but we may be permitted to point out the general bearing of the occurrences which we have classified as above, upon the development of the Papacy.

The disputes which arose in the churches of the east favored the pretensions of the Roman Church, and helped to pave her way to universal domination. Desirous to silence an opponent by citing the opinion of the western Church, the eastern clergy not unfrequently submitted questions at issue among themselves to the judgment of the Roman bishop. Every such application was registered by Rome as a proof of superior authority on her part, and of submission on the part of the east. The germinating superstition of the times,—owing principally to the prevalence of the Platonic philosophy, from the subtile disquisitions and specious reasonings of which Christianity suffered far more than she did from the persecuting edicts of emperors and pro-consuls,—likewise aided the advance of the Papacy. This superstition, which was in truth, as we have already explained, nothing but the revived Paganism of a former age, continued to increase from an early part of the third century and onward. The simplicity of the Christian faith began to be corrupted by novel and heathenish opinions, and the worship of the Church to be burdened by ridiculous and idolatrous ceremonies. When the Church exchanged the catacombs for the magnificent edifices which the wealth, the policy, and sometimes the piety of princes erected, she exchanged also the simplicity of life and purity of faith, of which so many affecting memorials remain to our day, for the accommodating spirit of the schools, and the easy manners of the court. Already, in the fourth century, we find images introduced into churches, the bones of martyrs hawked about as relics, the tombs of saints become the resort of pilgrims, and monks and hermits swarming in the various countries. We find the pagan festivals, slightly disguised, adopted into the Christian worship; the homage offered anciently to the gods transferred to the martyrs; the Lord's Supper dispensed sometimes at funerals; the not improbable origin of masses; and the churches filled with the blaze of lamps and tapers, the smoke of incense, the perfume of flowers, and the goodly show of gorgeous robes, crosiers, mitres, and gold and silver vases; reminding one of the not unsimilar spectacles which might be witnessed in the pagan temples. "The religion of Constantine," remarks Gibbon, "achieved in less than a century the final conquest of the Roman empire; but the victors themselves were insensibly subdued by the arts of their vanquished rivals."[16] And as it had fared with the worship of the Church, so had it fared with her government. First, the people were excluded from all share in the administration of affairs; next, the rights and privileges of the presbyters were invaded; while the bishops, who had usurped the powers of both people and presbyters, contended with one another respecting the limits of their respective jurisdictions, and imitated, in their manner of living, the state and magnificence of princes.[17] At last the Church elected her chief bishop in the midst of tumults and fearful slaughter.[18] "Hence it came to pass," says Mosheim, that at the conclusion of this century there remained no more than a mere shadow of the ancient government of the Church."[19] Notwithstanding that the Church contained every man of the age who was distinguished for erudition and eloquence, we look in vain for any

really serious attempt to check this career of spiritual infatuation. There was one moment peculiarly critical, inasmuch as it offered signal opportunities of retrieving the errors of the past, and preventing the more tremendous errors of the future. Galled by the yoke of ceremonies, the Christian people began to evince a desire to return to the simplicity of early times. There needed only a powerful voice to call that feeling into action. Many eyes were already turned to one whose commanding eloquence and venerable piety made him the most conspicuous person of his times. The destiny of ages hung on the decision of Augustine. Had he declared for reform, the history of the Papacy might have been cut short; the ambition of a Hildebrand and a Clement, the bigotry and despotism of a Philip and a Ferdinand, the fanaticism and cruelties of a Dominic, and the carnage of a St. Bartholomew, might never have existed. But the Bishop of Hippo, alas! hesitated,—gave his voice in favour of the growing superstition. All was lost. The history of the Church becomes from that hour little better than the history of superstition, hypocrisy, knavery, and blood.[20] Poisonous plants thrive best amid corruption; and thus the young Papacy drew nutriment from the follies and superstitions of the age.

The time was now come when the empire should fall. Hosts of barbarians from the deserts of the north were already assembled on its frontier. The distracted State, threatened with destruction, leant for aid upon the arm of the Church, whose infancy it had first attempted to crush, and next condescended to shelter. Thus the decline of the imperial accelerated the rise of the spiritual power. In the year 378 came the law of Gratian and Valentinian II., empowering the metropolitans to judge the inferior clergy, and empowering the Bishop of Rome (Pope Damasus), either in Person or by deputy, to judge the metropolitans. An appeal might be carried from the tribunal of the metropolitan to the Roman bishop, but from the judgment of the pontiff there was no appeal; his sentence was final. This law was addressed to the praetorian prefects of Gaul and Italy, and thus it included the whole western empire, for the latter prefect exercised jurisdiction over western Illyricum and Africa, as well as over Italy.[21] Thus did the Roman bishop acquire legal jurisdiction over all the western clergy. When the bishops applied to the Pope in doubtful cases, his letters conveying the desired advice were styled *Decretal Epistles*; and to these decretals the Roman canonists came afterwards to attach as much importance as to the Holy Scriptures. In order to the due publication and enforcement of these decrees, bishops were appointed to represent the Pope in the various countries; and it became customary to ordain no bishops without the sanction of these papal vicars. The jurisdiction thus conferred on the Roman bishop over the west was submitted to with reluctance: it received only a partial submission from the churches of Africa, and was successfully resisted for some considerable time by those of Britain and Ireland.[22]

The edict of Gratian and Valentinian II., which was coincident, as respects the date of its promulgation and the powers which it conferred, with the decree of a synod of Italian bishops, forms a marked epoch in the growth of the ecclesiastical supremacy. Up till this time the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome had been exercised within the somewhat narrow limits of the civil prefect. His direct power extended only over the vicarage of Rome or

the ten suburban provinces.[23] However, within this territory his authority was of a more absolute kind than that which the exarchs of the east exercised within their dioceses. The latter functionaries could ordain only their metropolitans, whereas the Roman prelate possessed the right to ordain every bishop within the limits of his jurisdiction.[24] Thus, if his authority was less extensive than that of the oriental patriarch, it was already of a more solid kind. But now it underwent a sudden and vast enlargement. By the edict of the Emperor, and the sanction of the Italian bishops, the Roman prelate took his place at the head of the western clergy. A post so distinguished, though conferring as yet, on the whole, but a nominal authority, must have offered vast facilities for acquiring real and substantial power. When was it that the occupants of Peter's chair lacked either the capacity to comprehend or the tact to improve the advantages of their position? Ambition and genius have ever alike seemed intuitive to them. Lifted thus to the supremacy of the west by royal favour and clerical subserviency,—twin elevatory powers at all stages of the rise of this terrible despotism,—the pontiff began to arrogate all the prerogatives which ecclesiastical law confers upon patriarchs, and to exercise them in an arbitrary and irresponsible manner. He obtruded his interference in the ordination of all bishops, even those of humblest rank; thus passing by, and virtually ignoring, the rights of metropolitans. He encouraged appeals to his see, in the well-founded hope of drawing into his own hands the management of all affairs. He convoked synods, but rather to display the magnificence and power of Peter's see, than to benefit by the counsel of his brethren in difficult cases. Usurping the legislative as well as the judicial functions of the Church, he dictated to his secretary whatever he believed, or pretended to believe, to be right and fitting in matters pertaining to the Church; and the decretal, to which all submitted, was equally authoritative with the canons of councils, and finally with the commandments of Holy Scripture. Thus did the occupant of the fisherman's chair craftily weave the intricate web of his tyrannical and blasphemous power over all the churches and clergy of the west.

Another well-marked stage in the rise of the ecclesiastical supremacy is A.D. 445. In that year came the memorable edict of Valentinian III. and Theodosius II., in which the Roman pontiff was styled the "Director of all Christendom,"[25] and the bishops and universal clergy were commanded to obey him as their ruler.[26] It is believed that the decree was issued on the application of Pope Leo. Amongst other advantages enjoyed by the pontiff was that of ready access to the Court, and thus he sometimes became the prompter of the imperial policy. The suggestions noted down by his secretary, submitted to the Emperor, and approved of by him, were ushered into the world with the customary forms and the full authority of an imperial edict. "Henceforth," that is, from the publication of the decree we have just noted, "the power of the Roman bishops," says Ranke, "advanced beneath the protection of the Emperor himself."[27] At about the distance of a century from the decree of Theodosius[28] came the celebrated letter of Justinian to the Pope, in which the Emperor still farther enlarged the prerogatives which previous edicts had conferred upon the Bishop of Rome.

These imperial recognitions of a rank which the councils of the Church had previously conferred, tended greatly, as may easily be conceived, to

consolidate and advance the arrogant assumptions of the Roman bishop. They gave solidity to his power, by investing him with a positive and legal jurisdiction. The code of Justinian, which had been published a few years before this time,[29] was now the law of western Europe. Its influence, too, was favourable to the growth of the ecclesiastical supremacy. Contemporarily with the publication of Justinian's code, was the rise of the Benedictine order.[30] In the course of a century the Benedictines had spread themselves over the west, preaching everywhere the doctrine of implicit submission to the see of Rome. Last of all came the edict of the Emperor Phocas, in A.D. 606, constituting Boniface III. Universal Bishop. This was the last in a series of edicts which had for their object to make the Bishop of Rome "Lord over God's heritage." In so infamous a cause no one was so worthy to perform the crowning act as the tyrannical and brutal Phocas.[31] It was the hand of a murderer which placed upon the brow of Boniface the mitre of a universal episcopate.

The ecclesiastical supremacy had now a *legal* existence, but it must become *real* also. So vast a power, extending over so many interests, and over such a multitude of persons, and covering so large a portion of the globe, no imperial fiat could create; it must grow. Planted by councils, buttressed by edicts, with a congenial element of vitality and increase in the thickening superstition of the times, it henceforward made rapid progress. It throve so well, in fact, and shot up into such portentous height, that before all was over, the authority that had evoked it would fain have bidden it away, but could not; like the necromancer who forgets his spell, and is unable to lay the spirit he has raised. The suckling in the cradle to which the State offered its breasts could never surely grow into the hydra that was to strangle the empire! Power, when once it has begun to grow, enlarges its volume like the rolling river, and accelerates its speed like the falling avalanche. On a sudden all things become favourable to it. At every turn, it finds, ready-made to its hand, helps to speed it onward. Its faults, be they ever so great, never lack apologists; and its excellencies, however small they be, always find willing and eloquent panegyrists. Its wealth converts enemies into friends; the timid grow courageous in its cause; and the indifferent and lukewarm find a hundred reasons for being active and zealous in its service. The cause of Rome was the rising cause, and therefore it enjoyed all these advantages, and many more besides. With a dexterity and skill which have never elsewhere been equalled, the Vatican could manufacture, out of materials the most heterogeneous and unpromising, props and defences of its ill-gotten supremacy. The incautious admission of an opponent, the exaggerated and high-flown language of a eulogist, were alike accepted by Rome as formal and measured acknowledgments of her right. The hyperbolical and sycophantish terms in which a prelate sued for protection, or a heretic implored forgiveness, were registered as documentary proofs of the prerogatives and powers of the Roman see. The sectary was encouraged or put down, just as it suited the policy of the pontiffs; and the shield of the vanquished heretic Rome hung up as a trophy of her prowess. Monarchs were incited to quarrel with one another: Rome stood by till the conflict was ended; and then, siding with the stronger party, she divided the spoils with the victor. The clergy even, who might naturally have been supposed to be averse to the rise of such a domination, were conciliated by being taught to

find their own dignity in that of the Roman see, and to share with the pontiff dominion over the laity. By these, and an hundred other arts, which triumphantly vindicate to the Roman pontiffs an unquestionable supremacy in knavery and hypocrisy, it came to pass, that in process of time, the one Bishop of Rome had absorbed all the bishops of the west. There was but one huge episcopate, with its head upon the Seven Hills; while its hundred limbs, like these of the giant Briareus of classic mythology, were stretched out over Europe, forming a monster of so anomalous and nondescript a character, that nowhere shall we find a figure adequately to depict it, save among the inspired hieroglyphics of the Apocalypse, where it is portrayed under the symbol of a beast, of lamb-like mien but dragon-ferocity.[32]

At last the empire of the west was dissolved. The seat which had been occupied so long by the master of the world was now empty. This had been noted beforehand in prophecy as the instant sign of the coming of Antichrist, that is, of his full revelation; for, as we have already seen, the Mystery of Iniquity was operative in the apostles' days. "He who now letteth will let," said Paul, alluding to the imperial power, which, so long as it existed, was an effectual obstruction to the papal supremacy,—"he who now letteth will let, till he be taken out of the way; and then shall that Wicked be revealed."[33] The overthrow of the empire contributed most materially towards the elevation of the Bishop of Rome; for, *first*, it took the Caesars out of the way. "A secret hand," says De Maistre, "chased the emperors from the Eternal City, to give it to the head of the Eternal Church."[34] *Second*, It compelled the bishops of Rome, now deprived of the imperial influence which had hitherto helped them so mightily in their struggles for pre-eminence, to fall back on another element, and that an element which constitutes the very essence of the Papacy, and on which is founded the whole complex fabric of the spiritual and temporal domination of the popes. The rank of Rome, as the seat of government and the metropolis of the world, had lifted her bishop to a proud preeminence above his peers. But Rome was the head of empire no longer: the prestige of her name, which in all ages has struck the imagination so powerfully, and through the imagination captivated the judgment, she still retained; for by no change could she become bereft of her immortal memories: but the subject nations no longer called her Mother and Ruler. With Rome would have fallen her bishop, had he not, as if by anticipation of the crisis, reserved till this hour the masterstroke of his policy. He now boldly cast himself upon an element of much greater strength than that of which the political convulsions of the times had deprived him, namely, that the Bishop of Rome is the successor of Peter, the prince of the Apostles, and, in virtue of being so, is Christ's Vicar on earth. In making this claim, the Roman pontiffs vaulted at once over the throne of kings to the seat of gods: Rome became once more the mistress of the world, and her popes the rulers of the earth.

The principle had been tacitly adopted by many of the clergy, and more especially by the bishops of Rome, before this time; but now it was formally and openly advanced, as the basis of a claim of authority over all churches and bishops, and ultimately of dominion over sovereigns. Of this we adduce the following testimonies. In the middle of the fifth century, we find the fundamental dogma of the Papacy, that the Church is founded on Peter, and

that the popes are his representatives, proclaimed by the papal legate in the midst of the Council of Chalcedon, and virtually sanctioned by the silence of the fathers who were sitting in judgment on the case of Dioscorus. “For these causes,” said the legate, “Leo, archbishop of Old Rome, doth by us and by the Synod, with the authority of St. Peter, who is the rock and foundation of the Church, and the ground of faith, depose him (Dioscorus) from his episcopal dignity.”[35] We find the fathers of the same council hailing with acclamation the voice of Leo as the voice of Peter. A shout followed the reading of the Pope’s letter:—“Peter speaks in Leo.”[36] As a farther proof that the Popes had now shifted their dignity from an *imperial* to a *pontifical* foundation, we may instance the case of Hilary, the successor of Leo, who accepted from the Terragonese bishop, as a title to which he had unquestionable right, the appellation “Vicar of Peter, to whom, since the resurrection of Christ, belonged the keys of the kingdom.”[37] In a spirit of equal arrogance, we find Pope Gelasius, bishop of Rome from A.D. 492 to 496, asserting that it became kings to learn their duty from bishops, but especially from the “*Vicar of the blessed Peter*.”[38] We find the same Pope asserting, in a Roman council, A.D. 495, that to the see of Rome belonged the primacy, in virtue of Christ’s own delegation; and that from the authority of the keys there was excepted none living, but only (mark how modest Rome then was!) the dead. The council in which these lofty claims were put forth concluded its session with a shout of acclamation to Gelasius, “In thee we behold Christ’s Vicar.”[39]

In the violent contention which raged between Symmachus and Laurentius, both of whom had been elected to the pontificate on the same day, we are furnished with another proof that at the beginning of the sixth century not only was this lofty prerogative claimed by the popes, but that it was generally acquiesced in by the clergy. We find the council convoked by Theodoric demurring to investigate the charges alleged against Pope Symmachus, on the grounds set forth by his apologist Ennodius, which were, “that the Pope, as God’s Vicar, was the judge of all, and could himself be judged by no one.”[40] “In this apology,” remarks Mosheim, “the reader will perceive that the foundations of that enormous power which the popes of Rome afterwards acquired were now laid.” Thus did the pontiffs, providing timeously against the changes and revolutions of the future, place the fabric of the primacy upon foundations that should be immoveable for all time. The primacy had been promulgated by synodical decrees, ratified by imperial edicts; but the pontiffs perceived that what synods and emperors had given, synods and emperors might take away. The enactments of both, therefore, were discarded, and the *Divine right* was put in their room, as the only basis of power which neither lapse of years nor change of circumstances could overthrow. Rome was henceforward indestructible.

- “Dum domus Aeneae capitoli immobile saxum
  Accolet, imperiumque Romanus pater habebit.”[41]

Thus was accomplished in the destinies of the Papacy a change of so vast a character, that the imagination can with difficulty realize it. Quickened with a new life, Rome returned from her grave to exercise universal dominion a second time. The element of power which was lost when the empire fell was

at best of an extraneous kind: it was influence reflected from without upon Rome,—foreign in its character and earthly in its source. But the element on which she now cast herself was of a nature analogous to the Papacy, and so, incorporating with it, that element became its life. It made Rome self-existent and invincible,—invincible to every principle save one, and that principle was to remain in abeyance for a full thousand years. The day of Luther was yet afar off. It was this element that gave to Rome the superhuman power she wielded over the world. It was this which enabled her to plant or to pluck up its kingdoms, to bind monarchs to her chariot-wheel, to throw reason and intellect into chains, and to restore once more the dominion of the pagan night. In so subtle a device we can discover a deeper policy and a more consummate craft than that of man. It was Rome's invisible director that counselled so bold a step. This step was as successful as bold. It opened a new career to the ambition of Rome, and revealed to her, though yet at a great distance, and with many an intervening change and struggle, that seat of godlike power to which she was ultimately to attain, and towards which she now began, with slow and painful steps, to climb. Most marvellous and astonishing it truly was, that at a time when Rome was placed in most imminent jeopardy, and society itself was perishing around her, she should lay the foundations of her power, and by her prompt interposition save herself and the world from the dissolution to which both appeared to be tending. Her adherents in all ages have seen in this nothing less than a proof, alike incontrovertible and marvellous, of her Divinity. The Cardinal Baronius speaks the sentiments of all Roman Catholics when he breaks out in the following impassioned strain, in reference to a supposed grant of the kingdom of Hungary, by Stephen, to the Roman see:—"It fell out, by a wonderful providence of God, that at the very time when the Romish Church might appear ready to fall and perish, even then distant kings approach the apostolic see, which they acknowledge and venerate as the only temple of the universe,—the sanctuary of piety, the pillar of truth, the immoveable rock. Behold kings, not from the east, as of old they came to the cradle of Christ, but from the north: led by faith, they humbly approach the cottage of the fisher, the Church of Rome herself offering not only gifts out of their treasures, but bringing even kingdoms to her, and asking kingdoms from her."[42]

Thus have we traced the history of the Papacy, from its rise in primitive times, to its formal though but partial development in the sixth century. Aided by the various influences we have enumerated,—the prestige and rank of Rome,—the institution of the order, first of metropolitan, and next of patriarch,—the edicts of emperors,—the reference of disputed questions by other Churches to the Bishop of Rome,—and, most of all, the pretence that the occupant of the Roman see was the successor of Peter and the Vicar of Christ,—together with that crafty, astute, and persevering policy which enabled the Roman bishops to make the most of apparent concessions to them of preeminence and authority,—the pastors of Rome were now supreme over the great body of the clergy of the west; and thus the ecclesiastical supremacy was attained. They were now in a fair way, too, of becoming the superiors of kings, for there was no usurpation of prerogative, no exercise of dominion, temporal or spiritual, which the claim now put forth by the Roman bishop to be Christ's Vicar would not cover. We are now to follow the several steps by

which the Papacy gradually rose to the height of power in which we find it shortly before the breaking out of the Reformation.

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[1] Paul’s 1st Epistle to the Romans was written about A.D. 58, which was five years before his first visit to Rome. It is probable that the gospel was first carried to that city by a disciple. [Back]

[2] Calamy, in his Life of Baxter, tells us that the main difficulty which he (Baxter) had to contend with in the town of Kidderminster, was not the Popery, but the Paganism of its inhabitants. So long do tradition and customs retain their hold. [Back]

[3] Eusebius, Eccl. Hist. book v. chap. xxiii. p. 92. London: 1650. We find the monk Barlaam declaring that bishops and presbyters were originally the same, and that the difference of rank amongst bishops was of human, not divine institution. “Caeterum ab institutione omnes pares esse debuerunt, tam potestate quam auctoritate. Ea institutio quae episcopos fecit non divina sed humana. Nam divino instituto iidem cum presbyteris facti.”-Barlaami Tractatus, p. 297. [Back]

[4] Gibbon, vol. ii. p. 331. Edin. 1832. Mosheim, cent. i. part ii. chap. ii. sec. 8. [Back]

[5] Can. xxviii., Harduini Collectio Conciliorum, tom. ii. p. 613; Parisiis, 1715. The words of the canon are remarkable, and we shall here quote them: –Êáé ãáñ ôþ èñïíù ôçò ðñåóâõôåñáò ‘Ñùìçò, äéá ôï âôéëåõåéí ôçí ðïëéí å÷åéíç, üé ðáôåñåò åé÷ïôùò áðïäåäù÷áóé ôá ðñåóâåéá. We find another testimony to the same fact in the Tractate of the Monk Barlaam, prefixed to Salmasius De Primatu Papae: -“Sed longe supra caeteris Metropoles emicuit urbium toto orbe maximarum eminentia, quae et suis episcopis tribuerunt eandem supra caeteros totius ecclesiae Episcopos ýðéñ÷çí.” (Barlaami Tractatus, p. 278; Lugd. Batav. anno 1645.) [Back]

[6] Gibbon, vol. ii. chap. ii.: Mosheim, cent. ii. chap. ii. [Back]

[7] Gibbon, vol. ii. pp. 337, 338. [Back]

[8] Ibid. vol. iii. pp. 30-50. [Back]

[9] So much so, that the Council of Chalcedon decreed that hereafter arrangements in the State, made by royal authority, should be followed by corresponding alterations in the Church. (Concl. Chalced. can. xvii., Harduin. vol. ii. p. 607.) [Back]

[10] Socrates, Eccles. Hist. book v. chap. viii.; Lond. 1649. Salmasius De Primatu Papae, cap. iv. p. 48 : -“Aliud genus patriarchum cognitum in ecclesia non fuit usque ad Concilium Constantinopolitanum.” [Back]

[11] “Junior Roma.” (Concl. Constan. can. iii., Harduin. vol. i. p. 809.) [Back]

[12] A.D. 451. “Sanctissimo Novae Romae throno aequalia privilegia tribuerunt.” (Concl. Chalced. can. xxviii., Harduin. vol. ii. p. 614.) [Back]

[13] Salmasius has compendiously enumerated the successive stages of the Pontiff’s rise. “Per hos gradus ventum est ab infimo usque ad supremum sacerdotalis potentiae fastigium. Ex primo presbytero factus est episcopus, ex primo episcopo metropolitanus, ex primo metropolitano patriarcha, ex prima denique patriarcha episcopus ille qui nunc dicitur *Papa*.” (De Primatu Papae, cap. v. p. 61.) [Back]

[14] Concl. Antioch. can. ix., Harduini Collectio Conciliorum, tom. i. p. 596. “Per singulas regiones episcopos convenit nosse, metropolitanum episcopum solicitudinem totius provinciae gerere.”. . . . . Nisi ea tantum quae ad suam dioecesim pertinent possessionesque subjectas. Unusquisque enim episcopus habeat suae parochiae potestatem, ut regat juxta reverentiam singulis competentem et providentiam gerat omnis possessionis, que sub ejus est potestate, ita ut presbyteros et diaconos ordinet, et singula suo judicio comprehendat. Amplius autem nihil agerere tenet praeter antistitem rnetropolitanum, nec metropolitanus sine caeterorum gerat consilio sacerdotum.” [Back]

[15] The germ of the distinction is contained in Constantine’s address to the bishops: -“Ye are bishops within the Church, and I am a bishop without the Church.” (Euseb. De Vita Constantini, lib. iv. cap. xxiv.) The impression on the author’s mind, by perusing the edicts and actions of Constantine, as narrated by Eusebius, is, that he was the Cromwell of his age; inferior, no doubt, in his views on both religion and toleration to the great puritan, but still, like him, greatly in advance of the majority both of the clergy and laity of his day. The mischiefs that followed were mainly owing to the bishops and emperors that succeeded him. [Back]

[16] Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. v. p. 136. [Back]

[17] Eusebius, Hist. Eccles. lib. vii. cap. i. [Back]

[18] Socrates, Hist. Eccles. lib. iv. cap. xxiii. xxiv. [Back]

[19] Mosheim, cent. iv. chap. ii. [Back]

[20] Taylor’s Ancient Christianity, p. 443. [Back]

[21] See the Edict in Harduin. vol. i. p. 842, 843. [Back]

[22] Britain does not owe its conversion to the Pope. In truth, the churches of Britain are more ancient than the Papal Church. In A D. 190, Tertullian speaks of “divers peoples of Gaul, and those parts of Britain which were inaccessible by the Romans, having been subdued by Christ.” In Diocletian’s persecution Britain had its martyrs. In 313 it sent bishops to the Council of Arles. In A.D. 431 Palladius was sent from Rome “to the Scots believing on Christ.” The first professors of Christianity in Britain were the Culdees, the most probable origin of whom is, that they were refugees from the pagan persecutions. They settled in Scotland, beyond the limits of the Roman empire, and thence propagated Christianity among the Celts of Ireland and the

Saxons of England. The object of Augustine and his brigade of forty monks which Gregory the Great sent into England in the seventh century, was not to plant Christianity, but to drive it back into those remote and inaccessible parts of Scotland where it had first found refuge, and to replace it with the Papacy. (See Du Pin, Hist. Eccles. vol. i. p. 575; Dublin, 1723: Elliot's Horae Apocalypticae, vol. iii. p. 138: Jameson's History of the Culdees, pp. 7, 8: Hetherington's History of the Church of Scotland, chap. i.) [Back]

[23] "Suburbicaria loca." Sixth Canon of Nicene Council, as quoted by Rufinus. (See Du Pin, Eccles. Hist. vol. i. p. 600: Salmasius De Primatu Papae, cap. iii. p. 37, et cap. vii. pp. 103,104.) [Back]

[24] Tractatus Barlaami, p. 284. [Back]

[25] "Rector totius Ecclesiae." (D'Aubigné's History, vol. i. p. 42.) [Back]

[26] Sir J. Newton on Daniel, p. 120. [Back]

[27] Ranke's History of the Popes, book i. chap. i. sec. i.; Bohn's edition, 1847. [Back]

[28] Dated March 533. [Back]

[29] Dated A.D. 529. [Back]

[30] Their founder was Benedict of Nursia. His first monastery was on Mount Cassino, in Italy. The forty monks that invaded England in the seventh century were Benedictines. (Mosheim, cent. vi. part ii. p. 2-6.) [Back]

[31] The authorities on which this rests are, Paul Diaconus and Anastasius. The words of the latter, in his Ecclesiastical History on A.D. 606, are, - "Hic (Bonifacius) obtinuit apud Phocam principem ut sedes apostolica beati Petri Apostoli caput esse omnium ecclesiarum; quia ecclesia Constantinopolitana primam se omnium ecclesiarum scribebat." "Phocas was the real founder of this fabric of fraud, though no monument proclaims it save a column in the Forum; but patriarchs, like bishops, often forget their maker." (Gavazzi, Oration vii.) [Back]

[32] Revelations, xiii. 11. [Back]

[33] 2 Thessalonians, ii. 7, 8. [Back]

[34] Du Pape, liv. ii. c. vi. p. 180; Lyon. 1845. [Back]

[35] Du Pin, Hist. Eccles. vol. i. p. 672. [Back]

[36] Harduin. vol. ii. p. 306. "Haec apostolorum fides. Anathema ei qui ita non credit. Petrus per Leonem ita locutus est. [Back]

[37] See the Bishop's letter to Pope Hilary, Harduin. vol. ii. p. 787. [Back]

[38] Harduin. vol. ii. p. 886: "A pontificibus, et praecipue a beati Petri Vicario." [Back]

[39] “Sancta Romana eccelesia nullis synodicis constitutis caeteris ecclesiis praelata est, sed evangelica voce Domini nostri primatum obtinuit, *Tu es* Petrus,” &c. When the council was about to break up, “Omnes episcopi et presbyteri surgentes in synodo, acclamaverunt, ‘Vicarium Christi te videmus.” (Harduin. vol. ii. p. 494-498.) [Back]

[40] Mosheim, cent. vi. part ii. chap. ii. “Vice Dei judicare pontificem, a nullo mortalium in jus vocari posse docuit.” Adopted by the Roman Synod, under Symmachus, A.D. 503. (Harduin, vol. ii. p. 983.) [Back]

[41] Virgilius, Aeneid, lib. ix. [Back]

[42] Baronius, anno 1000. [Back]

Continued in Chapter III. Rise and Progress of the Temporal Sovereignty.

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