

History of the Papacy Chapter III. Rise and Progress of the Temporal Sovereignty.



Continued from [Chapter II. Rise and Progress of Ecclesiastical Supremacy.](#)

Over the abyss in which the Roman empire of the west had been engulfed there now floated the portentous form of the Papacy. If the idolatrous nations, in their victorious march from the Upper Danube to southern Europe, had not brought the gods of their ancestors along with them, they were not on that account the less pagan. Their conversion to Christianity was merely nominal. Ignorant of its doctrines, destitute of its spirit, and captivated by its splendid ceremonial, they were scarcely conscious of any change, when they transferred to the saints of the Roman Church the worship they had been accustomed to pay to their Scandinavian deities. The process by which these nations, from being pagan, became Christian, may be adequately likened to the contrivance by which the statue of Jupiter at Rome was converted from the representative of the prince of pagan deities to the representative of the prince of Christian apostles, namely, by the substitution of the two keys for the thunderbolt. After the same manner the newly arrived nations were taught to wear the outward badges of the Christian faith, but at heart they were as much pagan as before. Most of the new tribes became professors of the Arian faith. In this heresy were involved the barbarians which occupied Italy, Africa, Spain, and Gaul; and the Popes were obliged to exercise the utmost circumspection and management, in order to surmount the perils and profit by the advantages presented by the new order of things. The convulsions, combinations, and heresies of the times, formed a maze so intricate and dangerous, that no power less wary and sagacious than the papal could have threaded its way with safety through it. The bark of Peter was now navigating a sea full of rocks and maelstroms, and had to shape its course,

“Harder beset,
And more endangered, than when Argo passed
Through Bosphorus, betwixt the justling rocks,
Or when Ulysses on the larboard shunn’d

Charybdis, and by the other Whirlpool steer'd."

PARADISE LOST.

In A.D. 496, an event took place destined to exercise a momentous influence on the fate of the Papacy and of Europe. In that year Clovis, king of the Franks, in fulfilment of a vow made on the field of Tolbiac, where he was victorious over the Allemanni, was baptized at Rheims. "On the memorable day," observes Gibbon, "when Clovis descended from the baptismal font, he alone in the Christian world deserved the name and prerogatives of a catholic king."[\[1\]](#) Rome hailed the auspicious event as a token of a long series of similar triumphs; and she rewarded the devotion of Clovis by bestowing upon him the title, -which he has transmitted downward through 1400 years to his successors the kings of France, -of *Eldest Son of the Church*. During the course of the sixth century, others of the barbarian kings, -the Burgundians of southern Gaul and Savoy, the Bavarians, the Visigoths of Spain, the Suevi of Portugal, and the Anglo-Saxons of Britain, -presented themselves before the apostolic throne as its spiritual vassals. Thus, the dominion which their swords had taken away, their superstition restored to Rome. The various nations who were now masters of the western empire found in the Papacy, and nowhere else, to use Muller's words, "a point of union."[\[2\]](#) The sagacious measures of pope Gregory the Great contributed at this juncture material assistance to the rising Papacy. The barbarian kings being now submissive to the Roman faith, Gregory exerted himself, with a large measure of success, to establish it as a law throughout their kingdoms, that the metropolitan should receive the sanction of the pontiff. For this end it now became the practice to send from Rome a pallium[\[3\]](#) to the metropolitan, in token of investiture; and without the pall he could not lawfully enter on the exercise of his functions. The zeal of Boniface, the apostle of Germany a century later, completed what Pope Gregory had commenced. This man, a Briton by birth, travelled throughout Germany and Gaul, preaching profound submission to Peter and his representative the Roman bishop; and he succeeded in inducing the German and Frank bishops to take the vow he himself had taken of implicit obedience to the Roman see. Henceforward, without the pallium no metropolitan entered upon the duties of his office.[\[4\]](#) How much this tended to consolidate the spiritual supremacy, and to pave the way for the temporal usurpations of the popes, it is not difficult to perceive.

In the seventh century, we find a prevalent disposition among the princes of the west to submit themselves implicitly, in all matters that pertained to religion, to the Roman see. In their pagan state they had been accustomed to undertake no affair of consequence without the advice and consent of their priests, by whom they were held in the most degrading vassalage; and after their conversion they transferred this implicit obedience to the Roman clergy, who most willingly accepted the implied superiority and power, and used every means to improve and extend their influence. "It was the sturdy shoulders of these children of the idolatrous north," remarks Dr. D'Aubigné, "that succeeded in placing on the supreme throne of Christendom a pastor of the banks of the Tiber."[\[5\]](#) The people venerated the clergy, and the clergy

were bound to implicit obedience to the pontiff. By this time, too, the *unity of the Church*, not in the Scriptural, but Romish sense, -not as consisting in one baptism, one faith, one hope; but as consisting in one outward body governed by a visible head, the Roman pontiff, -had established itself in the minds of men. The term POPE or FATHER, originally a divine, and next an imperial title, formerly given to all bishops, now came to be restricted to the Bishop of Rome, [6] according to the saying afterwards employed by Gregory VII., that there was but one pope in the world. The overthrow of the Ostrogoths and Vandals about this time, by the arms of Belisarius, contributed also to the expansion of the Papacy. The former had established themselves in Italy, and the latter in Sardinia and Corsica; and their near presence enabled them to overawe the popedom; but their extirpation by the victorious general of Justinian rid the Pope of these formidable neighbours, and tended to the authority as well as the security of the Roman see.

But it was in the eighth century that the most considerable addition was made to the temporal power of the popes. A singular combination of dangers at that period threatened the very existence of the Papacy. The iconoclast disputes, then raging with extreme violence, had engendered a deep and lasting variance between the Roman see and the emperors of the east. The Arian kings of Lombardy, intent on the conquest of all Italy, were brandishing their swords before the very gates of Rome; while in the west, the Saracens, who had overrun Africa and conquered Spain, were arrived at the passes of the Pyrenees, and threatened to enter Italy and plant the crescent on the Seven Hills. Pressed on all sides, the Pope turned his eyes to France. He wrote to the mayor of the palace, and so framed the terms of his letter, that Peter, with all the saints, supplicated the Gallic soldier to hasten to the rescue of *his* chosen city, and of that church where his bones reposed. The succour was not more earnestly craved than it was cordially and promptly granted. The bold Pepin had just seated himself on the throne of the pusillanimous Childeric, [7] and needed the papal confirmation of his usurped dignity. Bargaining for this, he girded on the sword, crossed the Alps, defeated the Lombards, and, wresting from them the cities they had taken from the Greek emperor, he laid the keys of the conquered towns upon the altar of St. Peter. This was in the year 755; and by this act was laid the foundation of the temporal power of the popes. [8]

The gifts thus bestowed by Pepin were confirmed by his yet more distinguished son Charlemagne. The Lombards had again become troublesome to the Pope; in fact, they were besieging him in his city of Rome. The pontiff again supplicated the aid of France; and Charlemagne, in answer to his prayer, entered Italy at the head of his army. Defeating the Lombards, he visited the Pope in his capital; and so profound was his deference for the see of Rome, that he kissed the steps of St. Peter as he ascended, and, at the interview that followed, ratified and enlarged the donations of his father Pepin to the Church. [9] A second time Charlemagne appeared in the Eternal City. [10] The factions that now reigned in Rome threatened to put an end, by their violence, to the authority of the pontiff; and the third time did France interpose to save the Papacy from apparent destruction. Charlemagne, says Machiavelli, decreed, "that his Holiness, being God's Vicar, could not be subject to the judgment of man." [11] Charlemagne was now master of nearly all

the Romano-Germanic nations of the west; and, as a recompense for these repeated succours, the Pope (Leo III.), on Christmas eve, A.D. 800, placed upon the head of the French king the crown of the western empire.^[12] In this act the pontiff displayed his power not less than his gratitude. As one who had crowns and kingdoms at his disposal, we behold him selecting the son of Pepin, and placing upon his brow the imperial diadem.. In this light at least have the partisans of Rome regarded the act. They have "generally maintained," says Mosheim, "that Leo. III., by a *divine right*, vested in him as Bishop of Rome, transported the western empire from the Greeks to the Franks."^[13] "Whereas formerly," says Machiavelli, in his History of Florence, "the popes were confirmed by the emperors, the emperor now, in his election, was to be beholden to the pope; by which means the power and dignity of the empire declined, and the Church began to advance, and by these steps to usurp upon the authority of temporal princes."^[14] One thing at least is clear, that great advantages accrued to both parties from this proceeding. It added new lustre to the dignity of Charlemagne, and gave the title to him who already possessed the power; while, on the other hand, it greatly enlarged the temporal possessions of the Church, and secured a powerful friend and protector to the Pope in the person of the Emperor. Thus the perils which had threatened to destroy the Papacy tended ultimately to consolidate it; and thus did Rome, skilled to profit alike by the weakness and the strength of monarchs, steadily pursue that profound scheme of policy, the object of which was to chain kings, priests, and people, to the pontifical chair. Henceforward the Pope takes his place among the monarchs of the earth. First the Vandals and Ostrogoths, and now the Lombards, had fallen before him. Their territories were given to the Church, and formed the patrimony of St. Peter; and the haughty pastor by whom these powers had been supplanted, unaware that prophecy had pointed very significantly to the fact, and marked it as a noted stage in the rise of Antichrist,^[15] now appeared in the glories of the triple crown.

While the Papacy was laboriously building up its external defences, conciliating princes, contracting alliances with powerful monarchs, and intriguing to acquire in its own right temporal sovereignty, let us mark the growth of that superstition in which lay the life and strength of the Popedom. These two,-the inward principle and the outward development,-we find ever advancing *pari passu*. By the time the barbarians arrived in southern Europe, Christianity had been grossly corrupted. It lacked, as a consequence, the power to dispel the ignorance or to purify the morals of those whom the convulsions of the times brought into contact with it. As they issued from their native forests, so were they received within the pale of the Church,-uninstructed, unreformed, unchristianized. The only change the Christianity of the age exacted had respect to the names of those divinities in whose honour the invading nations continued to celebrate the same rites, slightly modified, which they had been accustomed to pay to their Druidical and Scandinavian idols. It follows that the term Christendom is simply a geographical expression. The nations that inhabit western Europe have not till this hour been evangelized, if we except the partial enlightenment of the Reformation. The barbarism of the times had extinguished the light of philosophy and of letters. No polite study, no elegant art, no useful science, helped to tame the fierceness, refine the manners, or expand the

intellect, of these nations. The clergy, wallowing in wealth, and abandoning themselves to dissolute pleasures, were grossly and shamefully ignorant, and unable to compose the homilies which they recited in the presence of the people. The genius of Charlemagne saw and bewailed these evils; but neither his power nor his munificence, -and both were largely employed, -could avail to reform these gross abuses. [16] The singular infelicity of the times rendered all his attempts at reformation abortive. If we except a few individuals, belonging chiefly to Ireland and Britain, where the enlightened and beneficent patronage of Alfred the Great maintained a better order of things, no illustrious names illumined the darkness of that barbarous night. Till partially restored by the Saracens in the tenth century, learning and science were unknown in the west. [17] The state of matters as regards religion was even more deplorable. We have already seen the height to which superstition had risen in the fourth century. We will search in vain, amid the ignorance, the follies, the vices, of the eighth and ninth centuries, for the early purity of the gospel, the simple grandeur of its worship, or the attractive virtues of its first confessors. A general dissolution of manners characterized the age: the corruption had infected all classes, not excepting even the clergy, who, instead of being examples of virtue, were notorious for their impieties and vices. In the same proportion in which they declined in piety and learning, did they increase in riches and influence. A notion now began to be propagated, that crimes might be expiated by donations to the Church at the moment of death. This proved a fertile source of wealth to the clergy. Rich legacies and ample donations of lands and houses flowed in upon the churches and monasteries, the gifts of men who hoped by these generous deeds, performed at the expense of their heirs, to obliterate the sins of a lifetime, and purchase salvation for their souls. [18] By and by, bequests on a yet larger scale began to be made. It was at this time customary for princes to distribute munificent gifts among their followers, partly as the reward of past services, and partly with a view to secure their support in future. The great credit which the clergy enjoyed with the people made it a matter of the last importance to secure their influence. Whole provinces, with their cities, castles, and fortresses, were not unfrequently bestowed upon them; and over the domains so bestowed they were permitted to exercise sovereign jurisdiction. Raised thus to the rank of temporal princes, they vied with dukes and sovereigns in the splendour of their court and the number of their retinue. They raised armies, imposed taxes, waged bloody wars, and by their ceaseless intrigues and boundless ambition plunged Europe into interminable broils and conflicts. Those men who were bound by their sacred calling to preach to the world the vanity of human grandeur, furnished in their own persons the most scandalous examples of worldly pride and ambition. To fulfil their sublime mission as ministers of Christ, -to instruct the ignorant, reclaim the wandering, succour the distressed, and console the dying, -formed no part of their care. These duties were forsaken for the more tempting paths of pleasure and wealth, the intrigues of courts, and the tumults of camps. A crafty priesthood, moreover, made it an inviolable rule, that property gifted to the Church should be regarded as the property of God, and be held for ever inalienable. Henceforward to touch it was sacrilege; and whoever adventured on so bold an act was destined to experience the full measure of the Church's vengeance. The natural law which limits the growth of bodies corporate was set aside by this kind of spiritual entail; and the

wealth of the Church, and, by consequence, her power, grew to be enormous. [\[19\]](#)

The evils of the time were LEGION; but all flowed from one colossal error: the cardinal truth of Christianity, that *salvation is of grace*, was completely obscured. By the most plausible pretexts and the most subtle devices was man led away from God, and taught to centre all his hopes in himself. Faith was overthrown, and works were put in its room. The sacrifice of Christ was neglected, and man became his own saviour. We trace the operation of this grand error in the superstitious and burdensome rites in which all holiness now began to be placed. Sanctification was no longer sought in a pure heart and a mind enlightened by divine truth, but in certain external rites, which were seldom either important or dignified. To nourish the passions and mortify the body was now the grand secret of holiness. Pilgrimages were undertaken, and their merits were regulated by the length and the perils of the way, and the renown of the shrine visited. Penances were imposed, fasts were enjoined; and in proportion to the severity of the suffering and the rigour of the abstinence, was the efficacy of the act to atone for sin, and recommend to the favour of God. [\[20\]](#) A mind debased by ignorance, and not unfrequently by vice, and a body emaciated by flagellations and fastings, was a sure sign of eminent sanctity. Piety no longer consisted in love to God and obedience to his will, but in the observance of the most frivolous ceremonies, to which there attached an extraordinary value and a mysterious influence. To endow a convent or erect a cathedral was among the most illustrious deeds which one could perform. To possess a finger or a toe of a saint was a rare privilege; and the owner of so inestimable a treasure derived therefrom unspeakably more benefit than could possibly accrue from the possession of any moral or spiritual excellence, however exalted. Relics so precious were sought for with a perseverance and a zeal that set all difficulties at defiance; and what was so eagerly sought was in most cases happily found. The caves of Egypt, the sands of Libya, and the deserts of Syria, were ransacked. The bones of dead men, and, if history may be credited, of the lower animals, were exhumed, were hawked over Christendom, and purchased at a high rate. They were worn as amulets, or enshrined in cabinets of silver and gold; and, being placed in cathedrals, were exhibited at stated times to the devout. To abandon society, with the obligations it imposes and the duties it exacts, and to consume life in the midst of filth, indolence, and vice, was accounted an effort of uncommon holiness. To shirk the plough and the loom, and mount the wallet of the beggar, - to abscond from the ranks of honest industry, and fleece the labouring classes in predatory bands or as single sorners, - was to be heroically self-denied and virtuous. Such holy men were rather unpleasantly common; for the west, as formerly the east, now began to swarm with monks and hermits. Such of the pagan sophists as lived to witness the rise of this superstition, no less amazed than indignant, pointed the keen shafts of their powerful satire against that filthy race, which had renounced the beautiful mythology of Greece and the martial gods of Rome, to fall prostrate before the bones and mouldering relics of the dead. [\[21\]](#)

So wretched did man's condition become, so soon as he turned away from God, and sought salvation in himself. In the same hour in which he forsook the

light he lost his liberty. When he surrendered his faith he parted with his peace. From that moment his life became barren of all good, because he strove to produce by an effort of his will, what God had ordained to spring only from love. Hope, too, forsook the breast, in which she found no solid footing, and a "doubtful faith," the result partly of scepticism and partly of indifference, took her place. The overmastering force of evil desires began now to be felt; and man found his own strength but a feeble substitute for the grace of God. Having taken upon himself the burden of his own salvation, he laboured, in a round of mortifying and painful acts, to accomplish a task utterly beyond his power. His success was far indeed from being in proportion to his efforts. But in this lay one of the deep artifices of Popery. That system employed the defilement of guilt, the slavery of fear, the thrall of sensuality, to complete its conquest over man. Having put out his eyes, Popery led man away to grind in her prison-house. The perfection of error is the perfection of slavery; and man surrendered himself without a struggle to the dominion of this tyrant. It was not till Truth came at the Reformation, that his prison-doors were opened, and that the bondman was loosed and led forth.

But the master corruption of the age was image-worship. Blinded by error, and grown carnal in their imaginations, men saw not the true glory of the sanctuary, and sought to beautify it with the fictitious splendour of statues and pictures. The promise, "Lo, I am with you," was forgotten; and when the worshipper ceased to realize the presence of a spiritual Being, the hearer of his prayer, he strove to stimulate his flagging devotion by corporeal representations. The churches, already polluted with relics, began now to be disgraced with images. Pictures of the saints and the martyrs covered the walls, while the vestibules and niches were occupied with statues of Christ and the apostles. These were first introduced under pretext of doing honour to those whom they represented; but the feeling, by a natural and unavoidable process, rapidly degenerated into worship. This was a master-stroke of the enemy. In no other way could he so effectually have withdrawn the contemplation of man from the region of the spiritual, and defaced, and ultimately destroyed in his mind, all true conceptions of the invisible Jehovah. It trained man, even in his devotions, to think only of what he saw; and from thinking only of what he sees, the step is an easy one to believe only in what he sees. It brought man from the heavens, and chained him to the earth. The rise of image-worship was the return of the ancient idolatry. The body ecclesiastic had ceased to be Christian, and had become pagan. The Church, planted by the labours of the apostles, and watered by the blood of martyrs, had disappeared; and an idolatrous and polytheistic institute had been substituted in its room. There was not less cause than formerly for the lament, "I planted thee a noble vine; how then art thou become the degenerate plant of a strange vine?"

We enter at greater length on the subject of image-worship, because it forms an important branch of the idolatry of Rome, and because it is intimately connected with the rise of the temporal sovereignty. It was in the east that this superstition first arose, but it was in the west that it found its most zealous patrons and champions; and none discovered greater ardour in this evil cause than the popes of Rome. Its rise was as early as its progress was

gradual. "The first notice," says Gibbon, "of the use of pictures is in the censure of the Council of Illiberis, three hundred years after the Christian era." [22] "The first introduction of a symbolic worship," continues the historian, "was in the veneration of the cross and of relics. . . . But a memorial more interesting than the skull or the sandals of a departed worthy, is a faithful copy of his person and features, delineated by the arts of painting or sculpture. . . . By a slow though inevitable progression, the honours of the original were transferred to the copy; the devout Christian prayed before the image of a saint, and the pagan rites of genuflexion, luminaries, and incense, again stole into the Catholic Church. . . . The use, and even the worship, of images was firmly established before the end of the sixth century." [23] >From this time the idolatry rapidly increased. Writing of the seventh century, we find Gibbon stating that "the throne of the Almighty was darkened by a cloud of martyrs, and saints, and angels." [24] In this Gibbon is confirmed by the testimony of Mosheim, who states that "in this age, (*i. e.* the seventh century), they who were called Christians worshipped the wooden cross, the images of saints, and bones of men, they know not whom."

A century later, the famous dispute between the eastern emperors and the western popes had broken out. The Christians of the east, alarmed by the magnitude of the abuse, and stung by the reproaches of the Jews, and the railleries-all the more severe that they were merited-of the Mussulmans, who now reigned at Damascus, strove to effect a partial reformation. Their wishes were powerfully seconded by the Emperor Leo, III., who proscribed by edict the worship of images, and ordered the churches to be cleansed. These proceedings roused the ire of the reigning pontiff, Gregory II. The eloquence of the monks was evoked, and the thunders of excommunication were hurled against the imperial iconoclast; and Leo was pronounced an apostate, because he worshipped as the apostles and primitive Christians had worshipped, and because he sought to lead back his people to the same scriptural model. When it was found that the spiritual artillery had failed to take effect, earthly weapons were employed. Italy was excited to revolt, and a contest was commenced, which was continued for a hundred and twenty years. The Italians were absolved by the pontiff from their allegiance to the Emperor, and the revenue of Italy ceased to be sent to Constantinople. To chastise these rebellious proceedings, Leo despatched his fleet to the coast of Italy; but the Italians, inspired by fanaticism and rebellion, made a desperate resistance, and after a vast loss of life, and the ravage of several of the fairest provinces of the empire, the expedition was forced to return without having accomplished its object. The quarrel was taken up by successive emperors on the one side and successive popes on the other, and prosecuted with unabated violence and various success. Councils were convoked to give judgment in the matter. The Council of Constantinople, A.D. 754, [25] summoned by Constantine Copronymus, condemned the worship, and also the use, of images. The Council of Nice, in Bithynia, A.D. 786, known as the second Nicene Council, convoked by the fair but flagitious Irene, the widow and murderess of Leo IV., reversed the sentence of the Council of Constantinople, and restored the worship of images. [26] Leo V. condemned these idols to a second exile, but they were recalled by the Empress Theodora, A.D. 842, [27] never more to be expelled from the east, till they and their worshippers were

extirpated together in the fourteenth century by the sword of the Turks. Rome and Italy yielded in this matter the most profound submission to the Popes, who showed themselves throughout the zealous and truculent defenders of image-worship. The churches of France, Germany, England, and Spain, held a middle course. They condemned the adoration of images, but they adopted the perilous course of tolerating them in their churches as "the memorials of faith and history."[\[28\]](#) Of these sentiments was Charlemagne, who endeavoured, but in vain, to stem the torrent of superstition. The unanimous decree of the Council which he assembled at Frankfort, A.D. 794, could not counteract the influence arising from the example and authority of the pontiff. Charlemagne found that the power which had enabled him to become master of all the western nations, was not sufficient to enable him to cope successfully with the rising superstition of the age. The cause of image-worship continued silently to progress, and it speedily attained in the west, as it had already done in the east, a universal triumph.

Though the quarrel, as regards the main point in dispute, had the same issue, both in the east and in the west, it led nevertheless to a final separation between the two churches. It directly contributed, as we have already said, to lay the foundation of the Pope's temporal sovereignty. In the heat of the conflict, the Italian provinces were torn from the emperor, and their government was virtually assumed by the pontiffs. "In that schism," says Gibbon, "the Romans had tasted of freedom, and the popes of sovereignty."[\[29\]](#) "Rome raised her throne," to use D'Aubigné's words, "between two revolts." On the one side Italy threw off the yoke of the eastern emperors; on the other, France discarded her ancient dynasty, and both revolts were zealously encouraged and formally sanctioned by the popes. It is difficult to say which of the two, -the Greek schism or the Gallic usurpation, -contributed most to elevate the Papacy to temporal sovereignty.

Such is the real origin of the Pope's power. According to his own claim, it is of heaven; but history refuses to let the claim pass current, and points unequivocally to a different quarter as the source of his prerogative. Of the two branches of his power, -the sacerdotal and the regal, -it is hard to determine which is the most disreputable and infamous in its beginnings. His mitre he had from the murderer Phocas; his crown from the usurper Pepin. A spotless and noble lineage forsooth! The pontifical trunk has one stem rooted rankly in blood, and the other foully grafted on rebellion. As a priest, the Pope is qualified to minister in the ensanguined temples of Moloch; as a sovereign, his title is indisputable to act the satrap under the arch-rebel and "anarch old." No one can glance a moment at the contour of his character, as seen in history, without feeling that the hideous likeness on which he gazes is that of the Antichrist. Every line of his visage, every passage of his history, is full of antagonism, is the very counterpart of that of the Saviour. "All these things will I give thee," said the tempter to Christ in the wilderness, "if thou wilt fall down and worship me." "Get thee hence, Satan," was the reply. The fiend returned after three hundred years, and, leading the pontiff to the summit of the Roman hill, showed him "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." "All these," said he, "will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." No second denial awaited the tempter: instantly the knee was bent, and the pontiff raised his head

crowned with the tiara. Twice has Christianity been crowned in bitter derision and mockery of her character. Once with a crown of thorns by the blasphemers of Caiaphas' hall; and now again with the tiara, in the person of the pontiff. Never did she demean herself with such divine dignity as when the thorns girt her brow; but, ah! the burning shame of the tiara.

It is further worthy of notice, that at the same time, and to a great degree by the same acts, did the bishops of Rome establish the worship of images, and consolidate their own jurisdiction as temporal sovereigns. These two form analogous stages in the career of the Papacy. They manifest an equal decline and advance, -a decline in the spiritual, and an advance in the secular element. By the first, Rome perfected the corruption of her worship; by the second, she perfected the corruption of her government. There was a meetness, therefore, in the two being attained at the same period. These two constitute the leading branches of the Romish apostacy, -idolatry and tyranny. These are the two arms of the apostacy, -SUPERSTITION and the SWORD: both arms were now grown; and thus Rome was equipped for her terrible mission. Her inglorious task was to bow down the world in ignominious thralldom, and her two-edged sword made it equally easy to enslave the mind and to tyrannize over the body. Her idolatry was to display itself in yet grosser forms, and her political power was to be vastly enlarged by new accessions of dominion and influence; but the world had now a fair specimen of the leading principles and organization of the Roman Catholic Church. Rome was to be a temple of idols, not a sanctuary of truth; a hierarchy, not a brotherhood. Were we called upon to fix on a period when Rome completed her transition from Christianity to Paganism, we would fix on this era. Henceforward she did not deserve to be regarded in any sense as a Church. She was not simply a corrupt Church; she was a pagan institute. The symbols of the Apocalypse had now found their verification in the corruptions of Europe: the temple had been measured; the outer court and the city had been given over to the Gentiles; and the Church was restricted to the select company which ministered at the altar within.

Into this sad condition had the Roman Church now come. She had begun in the spirit and been made perfect in the flesh. The spiritual she had renounced, as containing neither truth, nor beauty, nor power. An impassable gulph now divided her from the form not less than from the spirit of the early Church. She stood before the world as the legitimate successor of those systems of error and idolatry which in former ages had burdened the earth and affronted heaven. Her members kneeled before idols, and her head wore an earthly crown. She "had left heaven and its spheres of light, to mingle in the vulgar interests of citizens and princes." [30] An hundred and twenty years (the period of the iconoclast disputes) had God striven with the men of the western Church, as he strove with the antediluvians in the days of Noah, when the ark was a-building; but his waiting had been in vain; and henceforward Rome was to pursue her career without let or hinderance. The spirit had ceased to strive with her. The Gothic scourge, sent to turn her from those dumb idols, had failed to induce repentance or reformation. Righteously, therefore, was she given over to the dominion of grosser delusions, to the commission of more aggravated crimes, and to the infliction, at last, of an unspeakably tremendous doom.

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- [1] Gibbon 's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. vi. p. 320: also Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. i. chap. i.; Lond. 1841. [\[Back\]](#)
- [2] Universal History, vol. i. p. 412. [\[Back\]](#)
- [3] The pall is formed of the fleece of certain lambs selected for that purpose, and is manufactured by the nuns of St. Agnes. [\[Back\]](#)
- [4] Ranke's History of the Popes, vol. i. pp. 11, 12. [\[Back\]](#)
- [5] History of the Reformation, vol. i. p. 43. [\[Back\]](#)
- [6] Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. vii, p. 39. [\[Back\]](#)
- [7] Pope Zachary had probably given his express sanction beforehand to the usurpation of Pepin. (Du Pin, vol. ii. pp. 33-39: Mosheim, cent. vii. part ii. p. 2-7: Bower's History of the Popes, vol. iii. p. 332; Lond. 1754.) [\[Back\]](#)
- [8] Mosheim, cent. viii. part ii. chap. ii. sec. vii. viii.: Ranke's History of the Popes, vol. i. p. 14: Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. i. p. 7. [\[Back\]](#)
- [9] Ranke's History of the Popes, vol. i. p. 14. [\[Back\]](#)
- [10] First so called by Ammianus Marcellinus, the well-known Historian and soldier. [\[Back\]](#)
- [11] Works of Nicolo Machiavelli, p. 8; Lond. ed. 1679. [\[Back\]](#)
- [12] Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. ix. pp. 159-176: Du Pin, Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 49. [\[Back\]](#)
- [13] Mosheim, cent. viii. part ii. chap. ii. sec. x. [\[Back\]](#)
- [14] Works of Nicolo Machiavelli, p. 8. [\[Back\]](#)
- [15] Daniel, vii, 8, 20-24. [\[Back\]](#)
- [16] See the summary of his *Capitularies*, or Ecclesiastical Laws, in Du Pin, Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 43. [\[Back\]](#)
- [17] Mosheim, cent. vii. part i. chap. i. sec. ii. iii. The reader will find a fair specimen of the literature and intellect of the age in Du Pin's short notice of Joannes Moschus, a presbyter of the seventh century, and author of the "Spiritual Meadow." Joannes Moschus having visited the monasteries of the east, returned to Rome, where he published in one book what he had learned of "the life, actions, sentences, and miracles of the monks of divers countries." (See Du Pin, Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 11.) [\[Back\]](#)
- [18] D'Aubigné's History of the Reformation, vol. i. p. 61: Mosheim, cent. vii. part ii. chap. ii.-iv. [\[Back\]](#)

[19] Mosheim, cent. viii. part ii, chap, ii. sec. iv.-vi. [\[Back\]](#)

[20] D'Aubigné's History of the Reformation, vol. i. pp. 59-60. [\[Back\]](#)

[21] Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. v. pp. 124-130. "Many of the eminent fathers, both for learning and devotion, made rhetorical panegyrics of the Christians deceased, wherein, by apostrophes and prosopopeias, they seemed to invoke souls departed." Thus St. Jerome, in his epitaph of Paula, saith, "Farewell, O Paula; and by thy prayers help the decrepit age of him that honours thee." And so Nazianzen, in his invectives against Julian, saith, "Hear, O, thou soul of great Constantine." (Du Pin's Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 45.) [\[Back\]](#)

[22] Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. ix. pp. 117, 118. [\[Back\]](#)

[23] Ibid. vol. ix. p. 119. [\[Back\]](#)

[24] Ibid. vol. ix. p. 262. [\[Back\]](#)

[25] Du Pin, Eccles. Hist. vol. ii., Councils of the Church, p. 32. The cause of images was supported then, as now, by a goodly array of miracles. One woman was smitten with "a pain in the back, for speaking with little respect of the relics of St. Anastasius;" while another woman., possessed with a devil, was cured by reverently touching Anastasius' image at Rome. (See Du Pin, ut supra.) [\[Back\]](#)

[26] See Second Council of Nice, Du Pin, vol. ii. p. 32. [\[Back\]](#)

[27] Du Pin, Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 43. [\[Back\]](#)

[28] Mosheim, cent. viii. part ii. chap. iii. sec. xiv.: Gibbon, vol. ix. p. 171. Anastasius, an abbot of the monastery of St. Euthemius, in Palestine, and who flourished about A.D. 740, observes, in a work on the Christian religion, a copy of which is found in Greek in the Vatican Library, -"When Christians honour images, they do not adore the wood, but their respect refers to Christ and his saints; and that they are so far from adoring images, that when they are grown old and spoiled, they burn them to make new ones." (Du Pin, Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 35.) [\[Back\]](#)

[29] Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. ix. p. 172. [\[Back\]](#)

[30] D'Aubigné, vol. i. p. 71. [\[Back\]](#)

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