simple in theory; but innumerable complications arose in working it out. The difficulty of serving two masters continually presented itself; and men drifted into the party of the Guelfs or into that of the Ghibellines, not only from the intelligible reason that they sided with the papal party on the one hand, or with the Imperialists on the other, but from multitudes of other reasons, arising out of local position and family or national history. To us, for instance, it seems strange to find the most strenuous supporters of the Papacy among the strongest republicans; but our surprise vanishes when we remember that the aristocratic party was headed by those great nobles who derived their chief authority from the Emperor, and were devoted to the support of his claims.

It would be out of place to sketch here, even in barest outline, the rise of the papal power, and therefore we must be contented merely to indicate those points which will render our narrative intelligible. The power of the Roman Bishop had grown up by slow degrees, and had derived its strength from a variety of elements. It would be a mistake to fasten upon any one cause as sufficient to account for the almost absolute dominion which the Bishop of Rome came to exercise over the Western Church.

It was not only his position in the metropolis of the world-empire,— although this went for much, — it was not simply the early fable that the Pope was the successor of Saint Peter, that gave him his authority. This was an effect quite as much as a cause of his predominance. The New Testament knows nothing of Saint Peter as the founder of the Church of Rome. When he is mentioned in this connection by Irenæus, it is only as associated on equal terms with Saint Paul.