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THE PAPACY: THE GREAT APOSTASY, OR
ANTICHRIST.

THERE arose early in the Christian church a growing disposition to assume power, on the one hand, and, on the other, to give undue honor to men because of their position in society and in the church of God. Against this tendency our Lord warned His disciples, and we find by the writings of the apostles that this disposition, which is natural to man, began to show itself even in their day. Thus John speaks of Diotrephes, "Who loved to have the pre-eminence." The pastors of the church were early requested to act as umpires between disputants, or as judges of the affairs of the people. And while the church was devoid of worldly patronage and power, this practice was beneficial in its influence, and much unseemly and expensive litigation was thus prevented. The pastors were generally upright, and sought the good of the people, and the advancement of truth and justice. But when the Roman emperor came to show favor to the Christian church and to take part in its affairs, they enlarged the sphere of the pastor's labor in this department. Many civil as well as ecclesiastical cases were referred to the bishops; so that men of an apostolic spirit complained that their time was occupied chiefly in secular matters, and their attention diverted from the proper duties of their office. But in these circumstances the natural love of power gradually prevailed over the minds of most of those who held high office in the church. Power has