

B. How Rome Came Our on Top

Of course we are speaking somewhat "tongue in cheek" and we do not mean on top of the world or the total religious system but rather the religious system of the west. and Rome really did come out on top of this until the time of the Reformation.

1. Brief Historical Note

Rome, as the center of western civilization due to conquests and resultant military supremacy, had the largest gathering of population in the western world and, in time, the largest concentration of Christians (and if you doubt that the Biblical reading is Romans 16). This was true in the Apostolic era and in the centuries to come so far as one place having a concentration was concerned. It also had a continuing history that outdated the newer Christian centers (although the civilizations in the eastern towns were more ancient) and particularly that of Byzantium.

From this central base the Roman church expanded and developed branch churches (as we would say) in many parts of the western empire and these held a nice filial relationship with the central base.

2. Political Survival

The city and the church survived the pagan wars that ended the western empire. After 476 it received the protection of the Arian Ostrogoths and then the protection of the Eastern Emperor. When this help was no longer available the city was able to provide for itself under the leadership of Gregory I, et al. But this gave Rome the reputation of the "eternal city" and as the city survived the church survived and shared in that light. I suppose we may say the two sustained one another.

This political survival became more effective as Rome recognized territorial rulers and received added territorial privileges. Soon the city of Rome had become a communion of "papal states" and this gave it a military presence as well as that of an economic and social dignity. Further developments on this line would make it a rival for