

## The Holy Roman Empire

As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.—Isaiah 55:9

**A**fter the apostles died, the church began to look to other leaders, giving them much more authority than they should have had. Because the early church was without the benefit of Bibles and education—the common people could not read—it was easy to make this mistake. Those in power (those who could read) were the bishops and other leaders who often taught different and contradictory doctrines not inspired by the holy spirit.

The Emperor Constantine called a council of all the “apostolic bishops” in A.D. 325. It was held in the city of Nicea in Turkey. The council was called by Constantine to try to keep his kingdom from disintegrating; it was a political move.

The bishops argued for months and finally the emperor decided which doctrines were “correct.” Apostolic succession and the trinity were two of the erroneous doctrines forced on the people. All who would not accept the new Nicene Creed were cast out.

Christianity spread throughout Europe and western Russia but without the Master’s spirit. The Holy Roman Empire was established: the pope and the emperor sat side by side on the throne. This is called a “marriage” of church and state. Bible Students consider such a union to be contrary to the teaching of the Bible.

This system received a hard blow when, in 1799, Napoleon refused to allow the pope to crown him; in fact, he took him cap-

tive to France. It was a humiliating experience for the pope. Since that time the authority of the Papacy has greatly declined.

As Christianity spread, many visited the land where Jesus lived and died. These journeys were made peaceably until the Moslem Turks captured Jesus' homeland and took over Jerusalem. They treated the Christians with great cruelty.

Christians came from all over Europe, traveling hundreds of miles, determined to fight the Turks and win back the Holy Land. But they forgot Jesus' teachings of love, and that how you worship is much more important than where you worship. Jesus warned men that if they fought with the sword, they would die by the sword. The Crusaders killed many innocent people in their frantic attempts to regain control of the Holy City.



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