

# Into Apostasy

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by Bill Crews

## 1. A Congregation Had Bishops Or Elders

Both terms were used to describe the same men; these men were “overseers” or “rulers”; they were shepherds of a local flock or congregation; each church had a plurality. (Acts 14:23 — elders appointed in every church; Acts 20:17, 28 — Paul sent for the elders of the church in Ephesus and then referred to them as overseers or bishops; 1 Peter 5:1-4 — elders were to shepherd the flock among them, exercise the oversight, and were reminded that they would answer to the Chief Shepherd — Christ; the qualifications for these men are given in 1 Timothy 3:1- 7 and Titus 1:5-9) This was the situation in the first century; this was God’s plan; this is the arrangement outlined in the New Testament. God warned against departing from this pattern and sadly foretold that men would do so (Acts 20:28-30). The following is what occurred in succeeding centuries, from the second to the seventh:

## 2. A Congregation Had Elders, But One Of Them Was Designated “The Presiding Elder”

He became a sort of chairman over the other elders.

## 3. A Congregation Had A Bishop And Elders

A separation was made in the use of the terms “bishop” and “elder”; a bishop was not an elder, and an elder was not a bishop. The “presiding elder” had become “the bishop,” and was over the other elders. **PRESBUTEROS** is the Greek term for elder, and **EPISKOPOS** is the Greek word for overseer. The word “bishop” was derived from a Latin word meaning “overseer.”

## 4. A Congregation Had A Bishop

Since the elders under the bishop were no longer considered overseers, they were dispensed with altogether.

## 5. Several Congregations Were Placed Under A Bishop

The power of each bishop was extended; the bishop of a sizable or city congregation became the bishop also over a number of smaller congregations within a designated area surrounding the larger congregation. Thus arose the “diocese” (“an ecclesiastical district under a bishop,” a far cry from the simple arrangement of the New Testament).

## 6. Some Bishops Became “Metropolitan Bishops”

These were primarily the bishops who ruled in the metropolises (large or great cities) of the Roman empire.

## 7. Five "Metropolitan Bishops," Who Ruled In The Five Greatest Cities Of The Roman Empire, Became Known As "Patriarchs"

The cities were Rome, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Alexandria and Antioch. Of the five, two were by far the more prominent — Rome and Constantinople, the old capital and the new capital of the Roman empire. More and more the church in its apostasy was being molded after the Roman empire.

## 8. The "Metropolitan Bishop" Of Rome Prevailed Over The "Metropolitan Bishop" Of Constantinople,

and in A. D. 606 Boniface III, at Rome, was designated by the emperor Phocas (who ruled from Constantinople) “Universal Bishop.” This was the first official “Pope” (papa or father) of an apostate church. Along with these changes came many new doctrines, designations and practices. In 1054 a great divisions resulted in two religious bodies: “the Holy Orthodox Apostolic Eastern ( or Oriental) Church” and “the Holy Catholic Apostolic and Roman Church” (the latter claims to be the original church established by Christ, but it bears no resemblance to that church; just read the New Testament).