of Alexander, which is true. The four empires were Macedonia, Thracia, Egypt and Syria. He wrote "Macedonia was reduced to a province" and "the kings of Syria and Asia suffered in the same way; and, lastly, Egypt was seized upon by Augustus."[9] This seems to cover the conquest of the four successors of Alexander. The problem with his argument is he covers only the bronze part of the statue as being crushed and subdued by the Romans.

Prior to Rome arriving, the "Syrian" successor of Alexander was in the form of the Seleucid Empire that stretched from Syria east through Persia and into Afghanistan. However, the only part of that empire Rome conquered was Syria itself. The remainder of the empire—perhaps ninety percent of its land area and people—was conquered by the Persian (Parthian) Empire. The Persian Empire reasserted itself to hold these areas and was a thorn in the side of Rome for six centuries.

Calvin then moved on in his argument by stating, "When, therefore, the three monarchies were absorbed by the Romans, the language of the Prophet suits them well enough; for, as the sword diminishes, and destroys, and ruins all things, thus those three monarchies were bruised and broken up by the Roman empire."[10]

The three monarchies Calvin was referring to are the three empires in the statue prior to the iron, i.e. the gold/Babylon, silver/Persia, and bronze/Greece. Thus, Persia, the silver monarchy, is one of the "three monarchies" that he mentions from Daniel 2:40. What Calvin did here was to take the conquest of Syria, which was one of the Greek and bronze successors of Alexander's empire, and call it the conquest of Persia, the silver. Though Calvin provided rationale for his position, the logic is faulty and so he didn't address the problem of Persia directly. He counted the conquest of Syria as the conquest of Persia. It seems to me that perhaps Calvin bent history and the meaning of the verse to fit his own *assumption.*

By AD 1600 then, this assumption of Rome fulfilling Daniel 2:40 had two champions with powerful and influential voices: Jerome and Calvin.

In 1712, a century and a half after Calvin, Matthew Henry, a Presbyterian minister who wrote the exhaustive Bible commentary that bears his name, commented on Daniel 2:40. He wrote, "The Roman kingdom was strong as iron (*v.* 40), witness the prevalency of that kingdom against all that contended with it for many ages. That kingdom *broke in pieces* the Grecian empire and afterwards quite destroyed the nation of the Jews." [11]

Notice Henry did not say anything about how Rome had conquered Persia or broke it in pieces. He mentions the Jews and Greece by name, but assigns Persia by omission to those against whom Rome had "prevalency." History, of course, shows Rome did not prevail against Persia. Therefore, Henry's statement is not completely true. He made an assumption likely based on the position of earlier commentators, and the issue of Persia was again ignored. Henry only made a statement about the situation with Persia while giving no rationale. At this point the assumption was still growing in strength.

Forty years after Henry, John Gill, the great Baptist and Calvinist theologian in the 1750s commented on Daniel 2:40 and continued the assumption. He wrote of Rome, "... *forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things*; so this kingdom has subdued and conquered all others; not the Jews only, but the Persians, Egyptians, Syrians, Africans ..."[12] Yes, the Romans conquered the Jews and the Egyptians and the Syrians. But, those people are not included in the text of Daniel 2:40, and so are irrelevant and do not need to be mentioned. "All the others" in Daniel 2:40 refers to the other empires mentioned in Daniel 2, i.e. Babylon, Greece, and Persia. Again, the Persians were not conquered by Rome. The Persians do not belong in Gill's list.

Gill's position is also confirmed when he says, "as iron that breaketh, or 'even as iron breaketh *all these*', shall it break in pieces, and bruise; *all nations and kingdoms*" [13] (author emphasis). Here Gill incorrectly takes the term "all these" where "all these" refers to the "three monarchies" (as Calvin described them) of the statue, and equates the phrase to "*all* nations and kingdoms" to support

his position, which is incorrect. We see here another bending of the meaning of Daniel 2:40 to fit the assumption. The assumption known as Rome was now strong enough to say outright—albeit incorrectly—that "Rome subdued and conquered the Persians."

## ... That Grew Into "Common Knowledge" ...

With the arrival of the nineteenth century, the assumption had become *common knowledge*, and we see proof of this with the next commentary. At this point two influential voices (Jerome and Calvin) supported Rome in addition to two popular eighteenth century commentaries (Henry and Gill) following after them. The number of "votes" for Rome was growing.

One century after Gill, Albert Barnes, the Presbyterian theologian and pastor born in Rome, New York, in the 1860s addressed Daniel 2:40 with Rome being the iron leg empire. He wrote, "It is *scarcely necessary* to observe that this description is applicable to the Roman power. In nothing was it more remarkable than its 'strength;' for that irresistible power before which all other nations were perfectly weak"[14] (author emphasis). When Barnes wrote, "it is scarcely necessary to observe" that Rome fulfills Daniel 2:40, he expressed an assumption as if it had become common knowledge. Indeed, it had.

Edward Gibbon, the famed historian who in the 1770s authored *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, took the role of theologian when he wrote of Rome, " The arms of the republic, sometimes vanquished in battle, always victorious in war, advanced with rapid steps to the Euphrates, the Danube, the Rhine, and the ocean; and the *images of gold, or silver, or brass*, that might serve to represent the nations and their kings, were successively broken by the *iron* monarchy of Rome"[15] (author emphasis). Gibbon was a professed Christian, and so perhaps including this reference to Daniel is not surprising. However, there it is in a respected historical reference that "iron" Rome conquered and broke the "image" that was the "silver" Persia. Gibbon had included the assumption about

Daniel 2:40 referring to Rome. Now the assumption was common knowledge for it had found its way into a respected and formal history of Rome. Gibbon wrote this soon after Henry's and Gill's commentaries were available, so it is possible that Henry and Gill affected Gibbon.

So it was that Barnes took that same aforementioned quote from Gibbon's work regarding the silver kingdom to support his own position, but ignored what Gibbon wrote in a later chapter suitably titled "Troubles in Persia."[16] In that chapter Gibbon wrote,

> The conflict of Rome and Persia was prolonged from the death of Craesus [Crassus] to the reign of Heraclius. An experience of seven hundred years might convince the rival nations of the impossibility of maintaining their conquests beyond the fatal limits of the Tigris and Euphrates.[17]

Crassus was the first Roman general to cross the Euphrates with the goal of conquering Persia and was soundly defeated in 53 BC. Heraclius was the last Roman emperor to fight Persia and was victorious, having won a long war in AD 628. What did he conquer? He took back Syria from the Persians. So Gibbon wrote here that Rome did not conquer Persia, but earlier in the same volume wrote that iron Rome "broke" the "silver" that was Persia. We see here that Gibbon unwittingly contradicts himself in his book. Gibbon could have ended the whole notion of Rome being the iron empire. He knew Rome did not conquer Persia, but let the earlier commentaries influence him.

In addition to Barnes including only one side of the contradiction in Gibbon's work, Barnes also added to his commentary of Daniel 2:40, "The Roman, in addition to what it possessed in the West, actually occupied in the East substantially the same territory as the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, and the Macedonian ..."[18] This statement, however, is boldly untrue for Rome never conquered Persia itself, but only its outlying provinces like Syria and Mesopotamia. Rome never substantially occupied Persia. If Rome had, its eastern