

**THE EARLY CHURCH,
ITS HISTORY AND
LITERATURE**

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The Early Church, Its History and Literature by James Orr

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JAMES ORR

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CHRISTIAN SYMBOLS FROM THE CATACOMBS (Key, p. viii.).

Photographed from casts of the originals, in the possession of the Rev. Archd. Paterson, B.D.)

THE EARLY CHURCH

ITS HISTORY AND LITERATURE

BY

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EXPLANATION OF FRONTISPIECE.

(For the Illustration and the Explanation the author is indebted to the Rev. Archd. Paterson, B.D.)

1. The Good Shepherd (John x. 11). In Early Christian Art, the G. S. is always represented as bearing the sheep on his shoulders (Luke xv. 5). "Apuleia Crisopolis who lived seven years, 3 months: The Parents placed this to (the memory of) their very dear daughter." Of very early date (first half of second century?).

2. The Anchor, symbol of hope (Heb. vi. 19), set within the name DOMNA.

3. The Anchor. The Fish or ΙΧΘΥΣ, i.e. Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, Θεοῦ Υἱός, Καρπός: Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour. "The faithful (i.e. baptised) child of faithful (i.e. baptised) parents, Zosimus, here I lie: having lived 2 years, 1 month, 25 days."

4. The Anchor: Dove (symbol of the Holy Spirit, Matt. iii. 16). URBICA, a design (like a ship) set within a circle (eternity?). Of very early date (first half of 2nd. cent.?): so, probably, the central design has no such highly developed symbolical intention.

5. Orante, i.e. a figure (female generally) in the attitude of prayer (1 Tim. ii. 8): on other side a shepherd holding a (?) mulctrum (milking pail) and leaning on a staff; a sheep, or goat (?) beside him. "Moses in his lifetime had this monument prepared for himself and his wife."

6. Anchor, Fish, Bread (Eucharistic Bread?). "Aegrilius Bottus Philadepotus, most sweet and dutiful (son). His parents erected this to his memory. He lived 9 years, 40 days." M.S. (?) memorize sacrum, i.e. "sacred to his memory". This monument is not a slab but an upright stele or pillar of square section.

7. Our Lord raising Lazarus. Our Lord is touching the head of Lazarus with the *virga potestatis*, or rod of power.

8. Sheep: Peacock (symbol of immortality?). "Aelia Victorina placed (this slab) to (the memory of) Aurelia Proba."

9. A Chirurgeon's outfit: forceps, etc. Part of a very long slab.

10. Dove perched on Olive Branch: Lamb: Anchor. In the 'stock' or transverse beam of the anchor it may be that we are to find a furtive representation of the Cross. "Faustinianus." Of very early date (first half of 2nd. century?).

11. A 'modius' or corn measure filled with wheat: (also a sheaf of wheat on either side): a figure standing by, holding, not the 'rod of power' as in nos. 7 and 13, but a roller, for pressing along the rim of the modius, and so giving just measure. "Maximinus, who lived 23 years: the friend of all." This, like no. 9 and in part no. 12, is a trade symbol, not a religious symbol. The amiable Maximinus was probably a corn merchant.

12. Chi-Rho (first two letters of ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ, Christ), commonly called "the Constantine monogram," with Alpha and Omega (Rev. i. 8): the whole set in a chaplet. The barrel denotes that SEVERUS was a vintner.

13. Raising of Lazarus (as in no. 7). Our Lord's head is encircled by a nimbus or halo. The inscription, in bad Latin, probably means, "Datus and Bonosa, the parents, placed this to the memory of their son Datus, who lived 20 years. In peace."

CHAPTER I.

THE JEWISH AND GENTILE PREPARATIONS.

THE history of the Church may be said in strictness to begin with the Day of Pentecost. The Day of Pentecost, however—the conception of the Church altogether—had its antecedents. The New Jerusalem did not come down from heaven quite as it is pictured in the Apocalypse, without manifold links of connection with the past. St. Paul has this in view when he says that it was in “the fulness of the time” that God sent forth His Son (Gal. iv. 4).

1. The Old Testament Preparation.—Manifestly, the Christian Church has a peculiar and genetic relation to the Old Testament. For the Old Testament community was also in its way a THEOCRACY—a Church (cf. Acts vii. 38; Heb. ii. 12). The word *ecclesia*, used in the New Testament to designate the Christian society, is that chiefly used in the LXX as the equivalent of the Hebrew word *qahal*, assembly or congregation.¹ Though bound up with national forms, that theocracy ever cherished in its bosom the consciousness of a UNIVERSALISTIC DESTINY. Older than the national form in its existence was the patriarchal—the covenants with the Fathers—and here already we have the clear enunciation of the idea that Israel was a people called with a view to the ultimate blessing of the race (Gen. xii. 3, xviii. 18, etc.). That idea

¹ On terms cf. Hort's *Christian Ecclesia*, Lect. I.