

**THE DIPTYCHS: A PRELECTION,
DELIVERED IN THE DIVINITY
SCHOOL, TRINITY COLLEGE,
DUBLIN, IN MICHAELMAS TERM,
1864**

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RICHARD GIBBINGS

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MICHAELMAS TERM, 1864**

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*The Rev. Professor Bright, D.D.,
from the author.*

THE DIPTYCHS:

A PRELECTION,

DELIVERED

IN THE DIVINITY SCHOOL, TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN,

IN MICHAELMAS TERM, 1864.

BY

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TO THE
VERY REV. CHARLES GRAVES, D.D., S.P.T.C.D.,
DEAN OF CLONFERT, AND PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY.

MY DEAR CHARLES,

By prefixing your name to the following pages, I give myself an opportunity of reminding you of your having said to me, on one occasion, that the Diptychs would be "a very good subject for a Lecture" in Ecclesiastical History.

Yours ever,

R. G.

TRIN. COLL. November 22, 1864.

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THE DIPTYCHS.

I DESIRE to address you to-day on the subject of the Diptychs. You may perhaps be already aware, that, although very many writers have either expressly mentioned, or incidentally alluded to, these Registers, it is not easy to meet with any accurate description of them. Cave, in his Dissertation concerning the Ecclesiastical Books of the Greeks, which is annexed to the second volume of his *Historia Literaria*, when he comes to *Δίπτυχα*, tells us, in words which do not discourage an inquirer;—"nota satis est et vox et res." He then proceeds to say, that the Diptychs were "duplices Tabulæ;" one of which contained the names of Patriarchs and eminent Bishops, who were yet alive; and that on the other were inscribed the names of those persons who had died in communion with the Church. Cave also refers to Durantus*, whose summary account of the Diptychs is that which is

* *De Ritibus Ecclesie Catholicae*, Lib. ii. Cap. xliii. p. 509. Romæ, 1591.

generally received as true;—that the Tablets in question were twofold; and that one of them comprised the names of the Living, and the other those of the Dead*.

Such a definition, however, is totally inadequate; and must give rise to numerous mistakes, and much confusion.

Bingham, to whom we may in this case naturally look for information, is not quite precise. Having observed†, that the early Christians “had certain Books, which they called their ‘Holy Books,’ and commonly their ‘Diptychs,’ from their being folded together, wherein the names of such persons [Bishops, or Saints, or Martyrs,] were written, that the Deacon might rehearse them, as occasion required, in the time of Divine Service,” he adds:—“Cardinal Bona and Schelstrate make *three* sorts of these Diptychs. One, wherein the names of Bishops only were written; and, more particularly, such Bishops as had been governors of that particular Church. A second, wherein the names of the Living were written; who

* Cf. Goar, Not. in *Euchologium*, p. 143. Lut. Paris. 1647. Rosweydi Onomasticon verb. in *Vitis Patrum* occur., p. 1017. Antwerp. 1615. Zaccariæ *Biblioth. Ritual.* Tom. i. p. 18. Romæ, 1776. Du Saussay, Appar. ad *Martyrolog. Gallican.* Tom. i. p. xix. Lut. Paris. 1637. Bates's *College Lectures on Christian Antiquities*, p. 323. Lond. 1845. Marshall's Translation of S. Cyprian's Works, Part ii. p. 33. Lond. 1717. Giessler's *Eccles. Hist.*, transl. by Davidson, Vol. ii. p. 30. Edinb. 1859.

† *Antiquities*, Book xv. Chap. iii. §. xviii.

were eminent and conspicuous, either for any office and dignity, or some benefaction and good work, whereby they had deserved well of the Church. In this rank were the Patriarchs, and Bishops of great sees, and the Bishop and Clergy of that particular Church; together with the Emperors, and Magistrates, and others most conspicuous among the people. The third was the Book containing the names of such as were Deceased in Catholic communion. The first and the last of these seem to be much the same."

It is evident, then, that Bingham perceived, that the Records of which he was speaking had not been classified with sufficient distinctness by the authors whom he has followed.

There cannot, at all events, be the slightest doubt as to the derivation of the word Diptychs. *Δις*, *bis*, and *πρὸς*, or *πρυχῆ*, *plica*, are very obviously its origin.

When we enter upon the consideration of this subject, it should, in the first place, be borne in mind, that Diptychs, regarded generally, were anciently of two kinds; Ecclesiastical or Sacred, and Civil or Profane. Respecting the latter there is scarcely any difficulty; but more than a little perplexity prevails relative to the Ecclesiastical Tables, with which mainly we are now concerned.

The Diptychs used by the Romans were called "Pugillares," (from *pugillus*, the diminutive of *pug-*