

**FOUR LECTURES ON SOME
EPOCHS OF EARLY CHURCH
HISTORY, DELIVERED IN ELY
CATHEDRAL**

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Four lectures on some epochs of early church history, delivered in Ely cathedral by Charles Merivale

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CHARLES MERIVALE

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FOUR LECTURES
ON SOME EPOCHS OF
EARLY CHURCH HISTORY

DELIVERED IN ELY CATHEDRAL

BY
CHARLES MERIVALE, D.D.
DEAN OF ELY



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P R E F A C E.

THE SPECIAL OBJECT of these Lectures is sufficiently indicated in the Introduction to the first of them. I should not think it necessary to prefix any other notice to them, but that I feel it right to mention that in preparing the first and second I have put myself under some obligation to the ingenious essays of M. Bungener and M. Pressensé, published some years ago in a volume entitled 'Séances Historiques à Genève,' and in the third I have allowed myself to insert, with slight alterations, two or three paragraphs from a little work of my own on the 'General History of Rome.' The fall of Rome and the building of the Christian Church are so closely connected, that I found myself travelling for most part of my way on lines very nearly parallel with those with which I had been before familiar.

The delivery of these Lectures, which were composed with a view to a limited number of young

students, was actually attended, much beyond my expectation, by friends and neighbours of various ages, both male and female, and no doubt with a various amount of preparation for deriving instruction from them. I may say that I was much gratified at finding that they possessed some interest for a wider circle of hearers than I could have anticipated; but I am led, from many circumstances, to believe that the light which ecclesiastical and secular history mutually throw upon each other is becoming more and more keenly appreciated among us—

*Facies non una duabus,
Nec diversa tamen, qualem decet esse sororum.*

I plead this excuse for the publication of a little volume which makes no pretension to special research or originality of view.

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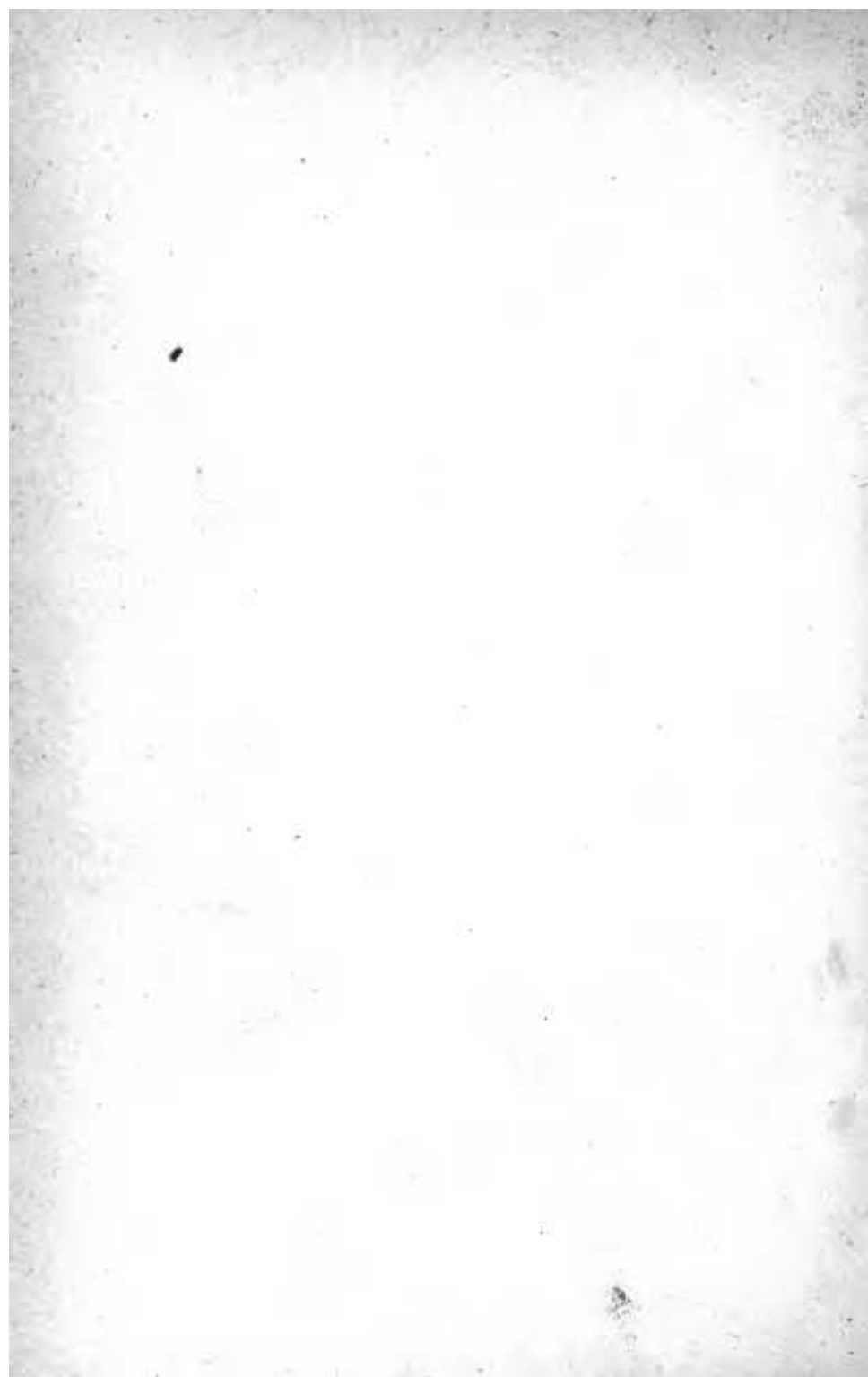
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EPOCHS
IN
EARLY CHURCH HISTORY.



LECTURE I.

ST. AMBROSE AND THE UNION OF THE CHRISTIAN
CHURCH WITH THE STATE.

My LORD BISHOP,—You have expressed a wish that some readings should from time to time be given in this place on subjects connected with theology, and especially with ecclesiastical history, at which the clergy in our neighbourhood and such of the laity as have some leisure to spare, and more particularly our Divinity students, together, possibly, with the upper classes of our grammar-scholars, should be invited to attend. Your Lordship has honoured me with a request that I should commence the series, which I willingly obey. Our limits will hardly allow me to make the preface which might be expected at the outset of my undertaking. I must content myself with saying that I shall address my remarks

principally to our students and learners, and ask the indulgence of others among my audience, to some of whom I shall doubtless only repeat over again events and ideas with which they have been long familiar, while it is just possible that there may be a few who will be hardly sufficiently advanced in scholarship to follow my remarks with critical intelligence.

I am to give you some account to-day of the political establishment of the Christian Church, and of its union with the secular Empire of Rome in the middle of the fourth century, taking the illustrious Ambrose Bishop of Milan as the central figure of the epoch. With an ample subject before me and limited space, I must ask you to excuse me if I review the antecedent period very briefly and introduce you to my subject with the least possible delay.

When the Emperor Constantine adopted the Gospel for his own personal belief, the faith of Jesus Christ did not thereupon become in any sense the religion of the Empire. By the Edict of Milan, in the year 313, Christianity first became legally tolerated. Before that period it had stood merely in the condition of the few creeds which, among the many which found favour in various provinces, had never received the sanction of the general law. The