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THE CATACOMBS OF ROME.

THE

CATACOMBS OF ROME,

AND

Their Testimony Relative to Primitive Christianity.

BY THE REV.

W. H. WITHROW, M.A.

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS.

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PREFACE.

THE present work, it is hoped, will supply a want long felt in the literature of the Catacombs. That literature, it is true, is very voluminous; but it is for the most part locked up in rare and costly folios in foreign languages, and inaccessible to the general reader. Recent discoveries have refuted some of the theories and corrected many of the statements of previous books in English on this subject; and the present volume is the only one in which the latest results of exploration are fully given, and interpreted from a Protestant point of view.

The writer has endeavored to illustrate the subject by frequent pagan sepulchral inscriptions, and by citations from the writings of the Fathers, which often throw much light on the condition of early Christian society. The value of the work is greatly enhanced, it is thought, by the addition of many hundreds of early Christian inscriptions carefully translated, a very large proportion of which have never before appeared in English. Those only who have given some attention to epigraphical studies can conceive the difficulty of this part of the work. The defacements of time, and frequently the original imperfection of the inscriptions and the ignorance of their writers, demand the utmost carefulness to avoid errors of interpretation. The writer has been fortunate in being assisted by the veteran scholarship of the Rev. Dr. McCaul, well known in both Europe and America as one of the highest living authorities in epigraphical science, under whose critical revision most of the translations have passed. Through the enterprise of the publishers this work is more copiously illustrated, from original and other sources, than any other work on the subject in the language; thus giving more correct and vivid impressions of the unfamiliar scenes and objects delineated than is possible by any mere verbal description. References are given, in the foot-notes, to the principal authorities quoted, but specific acknowledgment should here be made of the author's indebtedness to the Cavaliere De Rossi's *Roma Sotterranea* and *Inscriptiones Christianæ*, by far the most important works on this fascinating but difficult subject.

Believing that the testimony of the Catacombs exhibits, more strikingly than any other evidence, the immense contrast between primitive Christianity and modern Romanism, the author thinks no apology necessary for the somewhat polemical character of portions of this book which illustrate that fact. He trusts that it will be found a contribution of some value to the historical defense of the truth against the corruptions and innovations of Popish error.

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BOOK FIRST.

STRUCTURE AND HISTORY OF THE CATACOMBS.

CHAPTER I.

STRUCTURE OF THE CATACOMBS.

"AMONG the cultivated grounds not far from the city of Rome," says the Christian poet Prudentius, "lies a deep crypt, with dark recesses. A descending path, with winding steps, leads through the dim turnings, and the daylight, entering by the mouth of the cavern, somewhat illumines the first part of the way. But the darkness grows deeper as we advance, till we meet with openings, cut in the roof of the passages, admitting light from above. On all sides spreads the densely-woven labyrinth of paths, branching into caverned chapels and sepulchral halls; and throughout the subterranean maze, through frequent openings, penetrates the light."[1]

[Pg 12]

Fig. 1.—Entrance to the Catacomb of St. Priscilla.

This description of the Catacombs in the fourth century is equally applicable to their general appearance in the nineteenth. Their main features are unchanged, although time and decay have greatly impaired their structure and defaced their beauty. These Christian cemeteries are situated chiefly near the great roads leading from the city, and, for the most part, within a circle of three miles from the walls. From this circumstance they have been compared to the "encampment of a Christian host besieging Pagan Rome, and driving inward its mines and trenches with an assurance of final victory." The openings of the Catacombs are [Pg 13] scattered over the Campagna, whose mournful desolation surrounds the city; often among the mouldering mausolea that rise, like stranded wrecks, above the rolling sea of verdure of the tomb-abounding plain.[2] On every side are tombs—tombs above and tombs below—the graves of contending races, the sepulchres of vanished generations: "*Piena di sepoltura è la Campagna*."[3]

How marvelous that beneath the remains of a proud pagan civilization exist the early monuments of that power before which the myths of paganism faded away as the spectres of darkness before the rising sun, and by which the religion and institutions of Rome were entirely changed.[4] Beneath the ruined palaces and temples, the crumbling tombs and dismantled villas, of the august mistress of the world, we find the most interesting relics of early Christianity on the face of the earth. In traversing these tangled labyrinths we are brought face to face with the primitive ages; we are present at the worship of the infant Church; we observe its rites; we study its institutions; we witness the deep emotions of the first believers as they commit their dead, often their martyred dead, to their last long [Pg 14] resting-place; we decipher the touching record of their sorrow, of the holy hopes by which they were sustained, of "their faith triumphant o'er their fears," and of their assurance of the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting. We read in the testimony of the Catacombs the confession of faith of the early Christians, sometimes accompanied by the records of their persecution, the symbols of their martyrdom, and even the very instruments of their torture. For in these halls of silence and gloom slumbers the dust of many of the martyrs and confessors, who sealed their testimony with their blood during the sanguinary ages of persecution; of many of the early bishops and pastors of the Church, who shepherded the flock of Christ amid the dangers of those troublous times; of many who heard the words of life from teachers who lived in or near the apostolic age, perhaps from the lips of the apostles themselves. Indeed, if we would accept ancient tradition, we would even believe that the bodies of St. Peter and St. Paul were laid to rest in those hallowed crypts—a true *terra sancta*, inferior in sacred interest only to that rock-hewn sepulchre consecrated evermore by the body of Our Lord. These reflections will lend to the study of the Catacombs an interest of the highest and intensest character.

It is impossible to discover with exactness the extent of this vast necropolis on account of the number and intricacy of its tangled passages. That extent has been greatly exaggerated, however, by the monkish *ciceroni*, who guide visitors through these subterranean labyrinths. [5] There are some forty-two of these cemeteries in all now known, many of which are only [Pg 15] partially accessible. Signor Michele De Rossi, from an accurate survey of the Catacomb of Callixtus, computes the entire length of all the passages to be eight hundred and seventy-six thousand *mètres*, or five hundred and eighty-seven geographical miles, equal to the entire length of Italy, from Ætna's fires to the Alpine snows.

The entrance to the abandoned Catacomb is sometimes a low-browed aperture like a fox's burrow, almost concealed by long and tangled grass, and overshadowed by the melancholy cypress or gray-leaved ilex. Sometimes an ancient arch can be discerned, as at the Catacomb of St. Priscilla,[6] or the remains of the chamber for the celebration of the festivals of the martyrs, as at the entrance of the Cemetery of St. Domitilla. In a few instances it is through the crypts of an ancient basilica, as at St. Sebastian, and sometimes a little shrine or oratory covers the descent, as at St. Agnes,[7] St. Helena,[8] and St. Cyriaca. In all cases there is a stairway, often long and steep, crumbling with time and worn with the feet of pious generations. The following illustration shows the entrance to the Catacomb of St. Prætextatus on the Appian Way, trodden in the primitive ages by the early martyrs and confessors, or perhaps by the armed soldiery of the oppressors, hunting to earth the persecuted flock of Christ. Here, too, in mediæval times, the martial clang of the armed [Pg 16] knight may have awaked unwonted echoes among the hollow arches, or the gliding footstep of the sandaled monk scarce disturbed the silence as he passed. In later times pilgrims from every land have visited, with pious reverence or idle curiosity, this early shrine of the Christian faith.

Fig. 2.—Entrance to St. Prætextatus.

The Catacombs are excavated in the volcanic rock which abounds in the neighborhood of Rome. It is a granulated, grayish *breccia*, or *tufa*, as it is called, of a coarse, loose texture, easily cut with a knife, and bearing still the marks of the mattocks with which it was dug. In the firmer volcanic rock of Naples the excavations are larger and loftier than those of Rome; but the latter, although they have less of apparent majesty, have more of funereal mystery. The Catacombs consist essentially of two parts—corridors and chambers, or *cubicula*. The corridors are [Pg 17] long, narrow and intricate passages, forming a complete underground net-work. They are for the most part straight, and intersect each other at approximate right angles. The accompanying map of part of the Catacomb of Callixtus will indicate the general plan of these subterranean galleries.

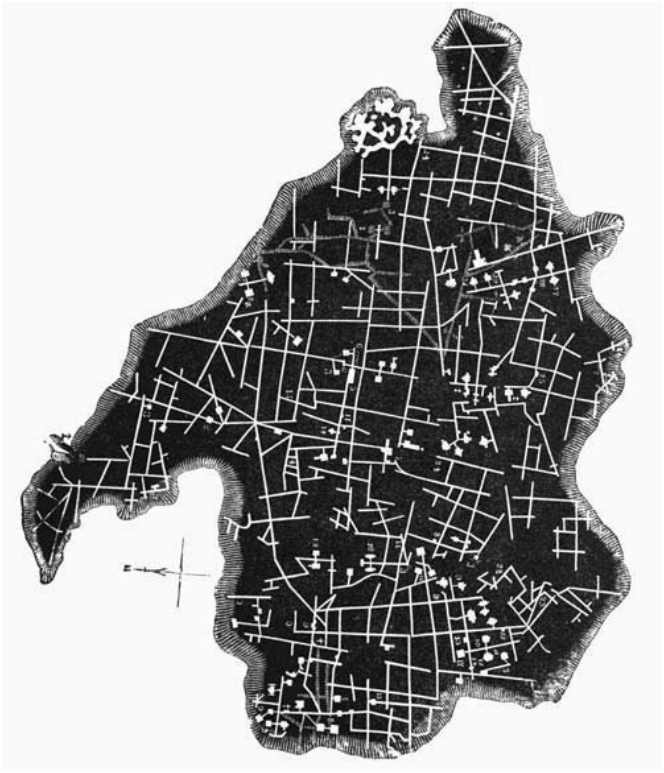

Fig. 3.—Part of Catacomb of Callixtus.

Fig. 4.—Gallery with Tombs.

The main corridors vary from three to five feet in width, but the lateral passages are much narrower, often affording room for but one person to pass. They will average about eight [Pg 18] feet in height, though in some places as low as five or six, and in others, under peculiar circumstances, reaching to twelve or fifteen feet. The ceiling is generally vaulted, though sometimes flat; and the floor, though for the most part level, has occasionally a slight incline, or even a few steps, caused by the junction of areas of different levels, as hereafter explained. The walls are generally of the naked *tufa*, though sometimes plastered; and where they have given way are occasionally strengthened with masonry. At the corners of these passages there are frequently niches, in which lamps were placed, without which, [Pg 19] indeed, the Catacombs must have been an impenetrable labyrinth. Cardinal Wiseman recounts a touching legend of a young girl who was employed as a guide to the places of worship in the Catacombs because, on account of her blindness, their sombre avenues were as familiar to her accustomed feet as the streets of Rome to others.

Both sides of the corridors are thickly lined with *loculi* or graves, which have somewhat the appearance of berths in a ship, or of the shelves in a grocer’s shop; but the contents are the

bones and ashes of the dead, and for labels we have their epitaphs. Figure 4 will illustrate the general character of these galleries and *loculi*.

The following engraving, after a sketch by Maitland, shows a gallery wider and more rudely excavated. On the right hand is seen a passage blocked up with stones, as was frequently done, to prevent accident. The daylight is seen pouring in at the further end of the gallery, as described by Prudentius,[9] and rendering visible the rifled graves.

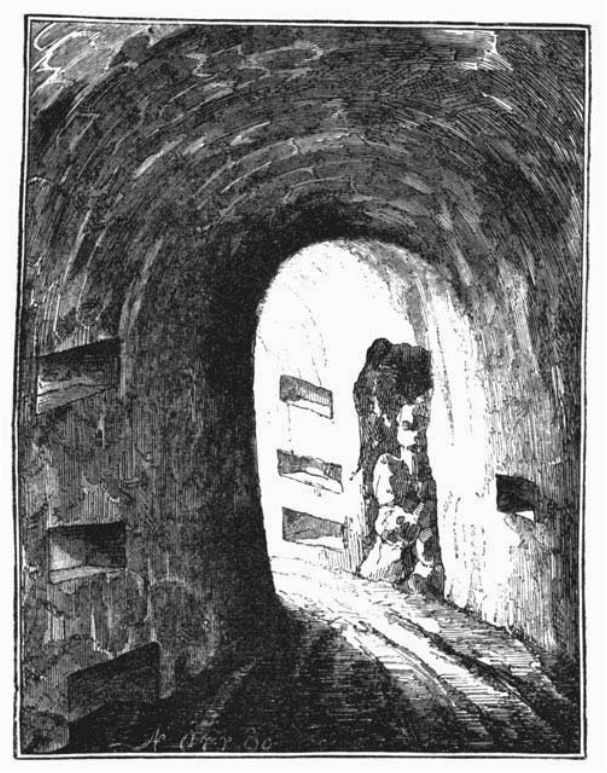

Fig. 5.—Interior of Corridor.

It is evident that the principle followed in the formation of these galleries and *loculi* was the securing of the greatest amount of space for graves with the least excavation. Hence the passages are made as narrow as possible. The graves are also as close together as the friable nature of the *tufa* will permit, and are made to suit the shape of the body, narrow at the feet, broader at the shoulders, and often with a semi-circular excavation for the head, so as to avoid any superfluous removal of *tufa*. Sometimes the *loculi* were made large enough to hold two, three, or even four bodies, which were often placed with the head of one toward [Pg 20] the feet of the other, in order to economize space. These were called *bisomi*, *trisomi*, and *quadrisomi*, respectively. The graves were apparently made as required, probably with the corpse lying beside them, as some unexcavated spaces have been observed traced in outline with chalk or paint upon the walls. Almost every inch of available space is occupied, and sometimes, though rarely, graves are dug in the floor. The *loculi* are of all sizes, from that of [Pg 21] the infant of an hour to that of an adult man. But here, as in every place of burial, the vast preponderance of children's graves is striking. How many blighted buds there are for every full-blown flower or ripened fruit!

Sometimes the *loculi* were excavated with mathematical precision. An example occurs in the Cemetery of St. Cyriaca, where at one end of a gallery is a tier of eight small graves for infants, then eight, somewhat larger, for children from about seven to twelve, then seven more, apparently for adult females, and lastly, a tier of six for full-grown men, occupying the entire height of the wall. Generally, however, a less regular arrangement was observed, and the graves of the young and old were intermixed, without any definite order.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to compute the number of graves in these vast cemeteries. Some seventy thousand have been counted, but they are a mere fraction of the whole, as only a small part of this great necropolis has been explored. From lengthened observation Father Marchi estimates the average number of graves to be ten, five on each side, for every seven feet of gallery. Upon this basis he computed the entire number in the Catacombs to be seven millions! The more accurate estimate of their extent made by Sig. Michele De Rossi would allow room for nearly four millions of graves, or, more exactly, about three million eight hundred and thirty-one thousand.[10] This seems almost incredible; but we know that [Pg 22] for at least three hundred years, or for ten generations, the entire Christian population of Rome was buried here. And that population, as we shall see, was, even at an early period, of considerable size. In the time of persecution, too, the Christians were hurried to the tomb in crowds. In this silent city of the dead we are surrounded by a "mighty cloud of witnesses," "a multitude which no man can number," whose names, unrecorded on earth, are written in the Book of Life. For every one who walks the streets of Rome to-day are hundreds of its former inhabitants calmly sleeping in this vast encampment of death around its walls—"each

in his narrow cell forever laid."[11] Till the archangel awake them they slumber. "It is scarcely known," says Prudentius, "how full Rome is of buried saints—how richly her soil abounds in holy sepulchres."

These graves were once all hermetically sealed by slabs of marble, or tiles of *terra cotta*. The former were generally of one piece, which fitted into a groove or mortice cut in the rock at the grave's mouth, and were securely cemented to their places, as, indeed, was absolutely necessary, from the open character of the galleries in which the graves were placed. Sometimes fragments of heathen tombstones or altars were used for this purpose. The tiles were generally smaller, two or three being required for an adult grave. They were arranged in panels, and were cemented with plaster, on which a name or symbol was often rudely scratched with a trowel while soft, as in the following illustration. Most of these slabs and [Pg 23] tiles have disappeared, and many of the graves have long been rifled of their contents. In others may still be seen the mouldering skeleton of what was once man in his strength, woman in her beauty, or a child in its innocence and glee. The annexed engraving exhibits two graves, one of which is partially open, exposing the skeleton which has reposed on its rocky bed for probably over fifteen centuries.

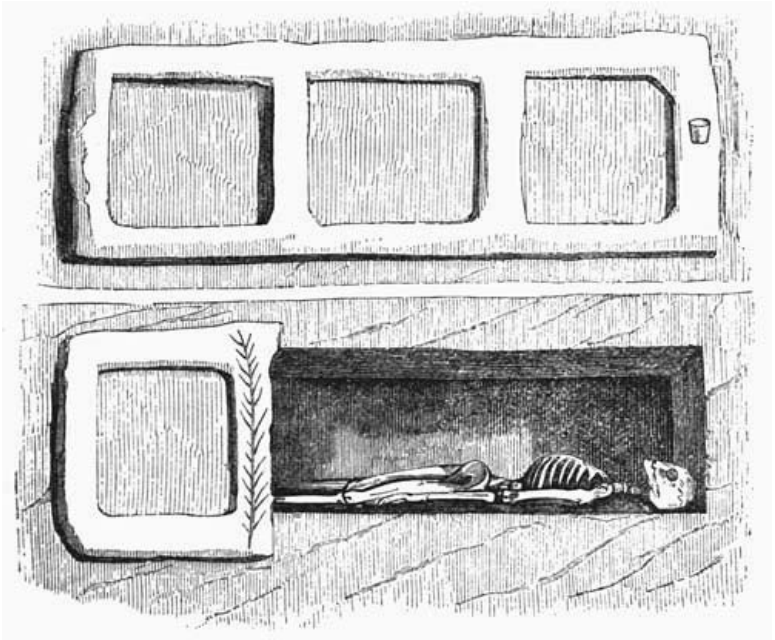

Fig. 6.—Loculi—Open and Closed.

If these bones be touched they will generally crumble into a white, flaky powder. D'Agincourt copied a tomb (Fig. 7) in which this "dry dust of death" still retained the outline of a human skeleton. Verily, "*Pulvis et umbra sumus.*" Sometimes, however, possibly from some constitutional peculiarity, the bones remain quite firm notwithstanding the lapse of so many centuries. De Rossi states that he has assisted at the removal of a body from the [Pg 24] Catacombs to a church two miles distant without the displacement of a single bone.[12] The age of the deceased and the nature of the ground also affect the condition in which the remains are found. Of the bodies of children nothing but dust remains. Where the *pozzolana* is damp, the bones are often well preserved; and where water has infiltrated, a partial petrifaction sometimes occurs.[13] Campana describes the opening of a hermetically sealed sarcophagus, which revealed the undisturbed body clad in funeral robes, and wearing the ornaments of life; but while he gazed it suddenly dissolved to dust before his eyes. Sometimes the sarcophagus was placed behind a perforated slab of marble, as shown in the following example, given by Maitland. The lower part of the slab is broken.

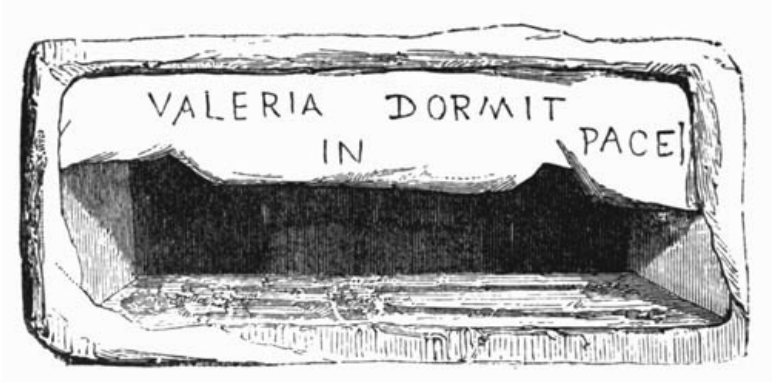

Fig. 7.—Valeria Sleeps in Peace.

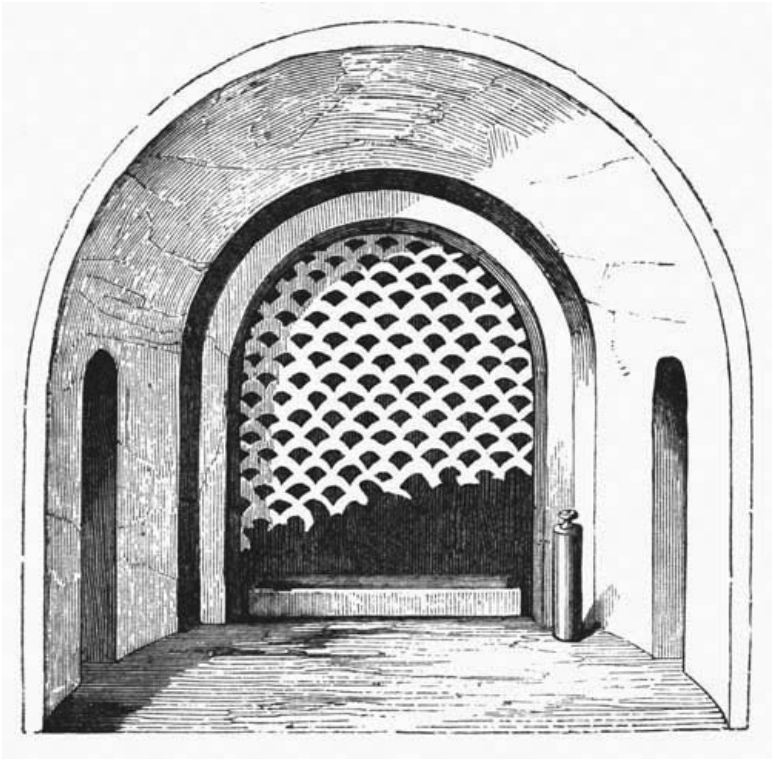

Fig. 8.—Arcosolium with Perforated Slab.

The other essential constituent of the Catacombs, besides the galleries already described, consists of the *cubicula*.[14] These are chambers excavated in the *tufa* on either side of the [Pg 25] galleries, with which they communicate by doors, as seen in Fig. 4. These often bear the character of family vaults, and are lined with graves, like the corridors without. They are generally square or rectangular, but sometimes octagonal or circular. They were probably used as mortuary chapels, for the celebration of funeral service, and for the administration of the eucharist near the tombs of the martyrs on the anniversaries of their death. They were too small to be used for regular worship, except perhaps in time of persecution. They are often not more than eight or ten feet square. Even the so-called "Papal Crypt," a [Pg 26] chamber of peculiar sanctity, is only eleven by fourteen feet; and that of St. Cecilia adjoining it, one of a large size, is less than twenty feet square. Even the largest would not accommodate more than a few dozen persons. These chambers are generally facing one another on opposite sides of a gallery, as in the annexed plan of two *cubicula* in the Catacomb of Callixtus.

It is thought that in the celebration of worship one of these chambers was designed for men and the other for women. Sometimes separate passages to the chapels and distinct entrances to the Catacombs seem intended to facilitate this separation of the sexes. Sometimes three, or even as many as five, *cubicula*, as in one example in the Catacomb of St. Agnes, were placed on the same [Pg 27] axial line, and formed one continuous *suite* of chambers. The accompanying section of what is known as "The Chapel of Two Halls," in the Catacomb of St. Prætextatus, illustrates this: A is the main gallery, D a large *cubiculum* known as "The Women's Hall," to the right, and to the left B, a hexagonal vaulted room with a smaller chamber, C, opening from it. The length of the entire range from G to F, according to the accurate measurement of M. Perret, is twenty-three and a half *mètres*, or nearly seventy-seven feet. The larger engraving (Fig. 11) gives a perspective view looking toward the left of the hexagonal chamber, (D. Fig. 10,) and the smaller one, C, opening from it. By means of these connected chambers the Christians were enabled in times of persecution to assemble for worship in these "dens and caves of the earth," surrounded by the slumbering bodies of the holy dead.

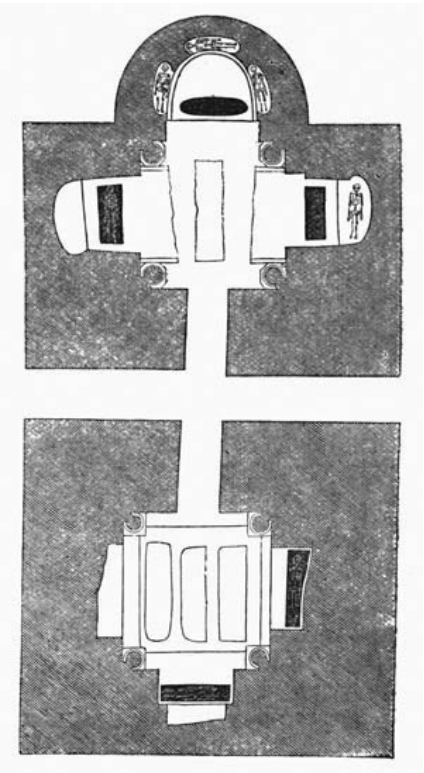

Fig. 9.—Plan of Double Chamber.

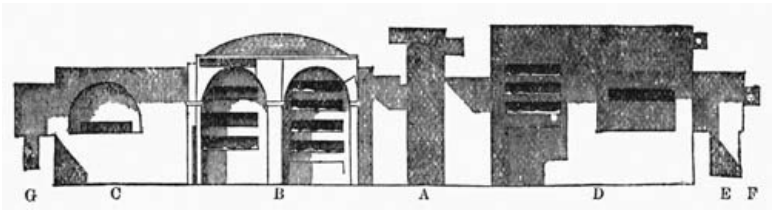

Fig. 10.—Section of Gallery and Cubicula.

[Pg 28]

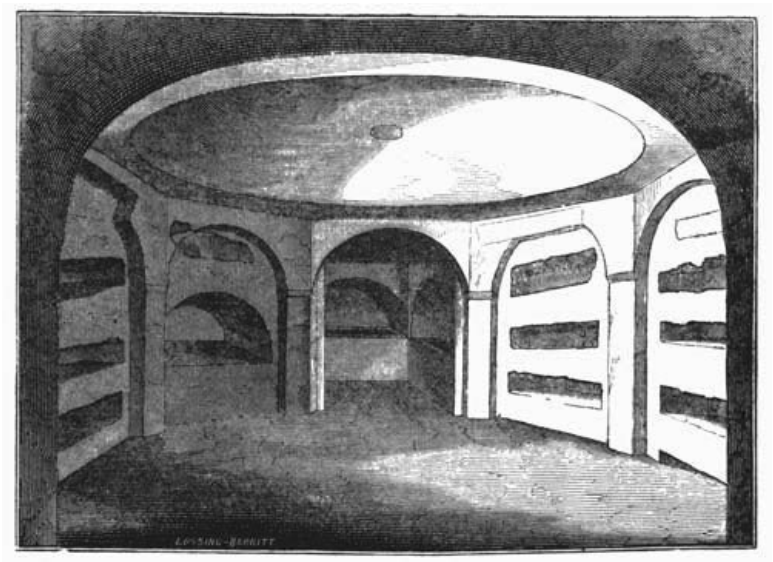

Fig 11.—Perspective of Lower Chamber in Fig. 9.

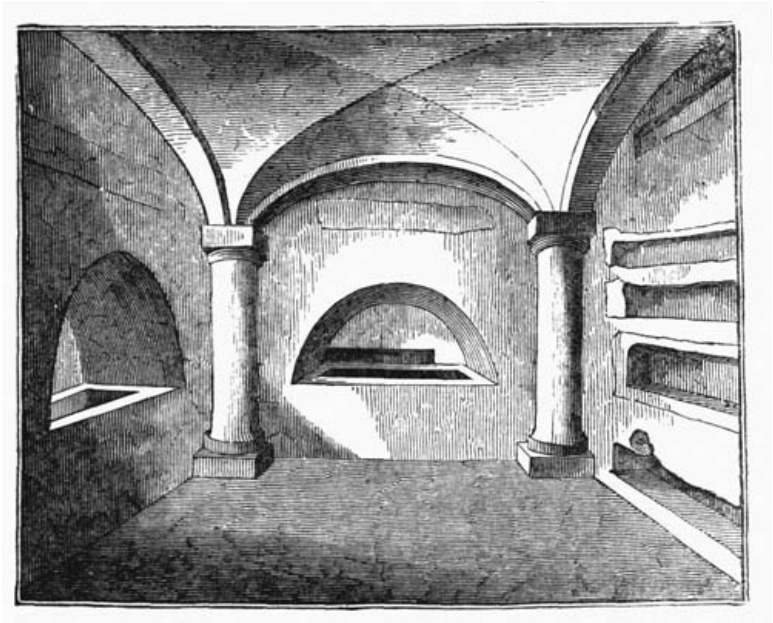

Fig. 12.—Vaulted Chamber with Columns.

The *cubicula* had vaulted roofs, and were sometimes plastered or cased with marble and paved with tiles, or, though rarely, with mosaic. These, however, were generally additions of later date than the original construction, as were also the semi-detached columns in the angles, with stucco capitals and bases, as indicated in Fig. 9, and shown more clearly in the following engraving, which is a perspective view of the lower chamber in Fig. 9. The walls and ceiling were often covered with fresco paintings, frequently of elegant design, to be hereafter described.[15] Sometimes, as in some examples in the Catacomb of St. Agnes, *tufa* or marble seats are ranged around the chamber, and chairs are hewn out of the solid rock.[16] These chambers were used probably for the instruction of catechumens. Occasionally the *cubiculum* terminates in a semicircular recess, as in the upper chamber in Fig. 9. These probably gave rise to the *apse* in early Christian architecture, of which a good example is found in the Church of St. Clement, one of the most ancient Christian edifices in Rome. Niches and shelves for lamps, an absolute necessity in the perpetual darkness that there reigns, frequently occur, such as may be seen in Italian houses to-day. Without the least authority, some Roman Catholic writers have described these as closets for priestly vestments and shelves for pictures.

[Pg 29]

[Pg 30]

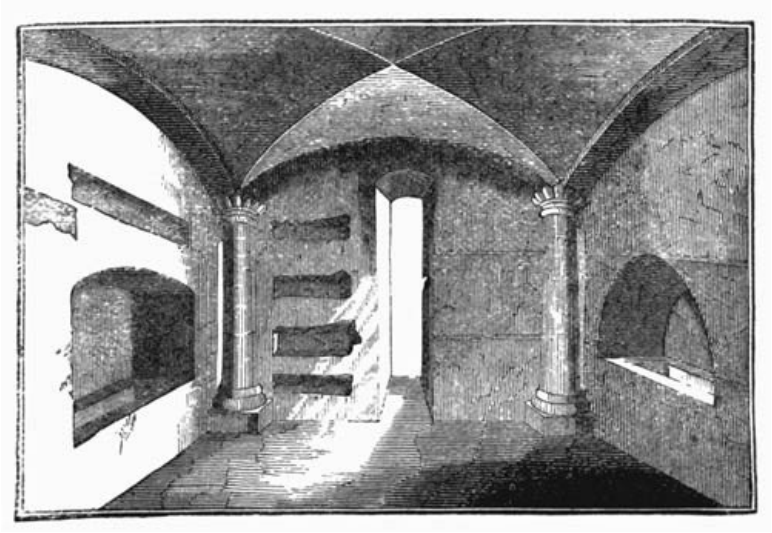

Fig. 13.—Cubiculum with Arcosolia.

A peculiar form of grave common in these chambers, as well as in the galleries, is that known as the *arcosolium*, or arched tomb. It consists of a recess in the wall, having a grave, often double or triple, excavated in the *tufa*, or built with masonry, like a solid sarcophagus, and closed with a marble slab. These are seen in the plan, Fig. 9, in the section, Fig. 10, at G and E in Fig. 15, and in perspective in Figs. 11 and 12. Sometimes the recess is rectangular instead of arched, and is then called by De Rossi *sepolcro a mensa*, or table tomb. Sometimes the arch was segmental, especially when constructed of masonry.[17] An example of both sorts is seen in the accompanying engraving of a *cubiculum* in the Catacomb of St. Prætextatus. The narrow door into the corridor is also seen, and the stucco capitals and bases of the columns. In course of time these *arcosolia* were used as altars for the [Pg 31] celebration of the eucharist, and eventually grave abuses arose from the superstitious veneration paid to the relics of the martyr or confessor interred therein. Frequently, also, the back of this arched recess was pierced with graves of a later date, often directly through a painting,[18] in order to obtain a resting place near the bodies of the saints.

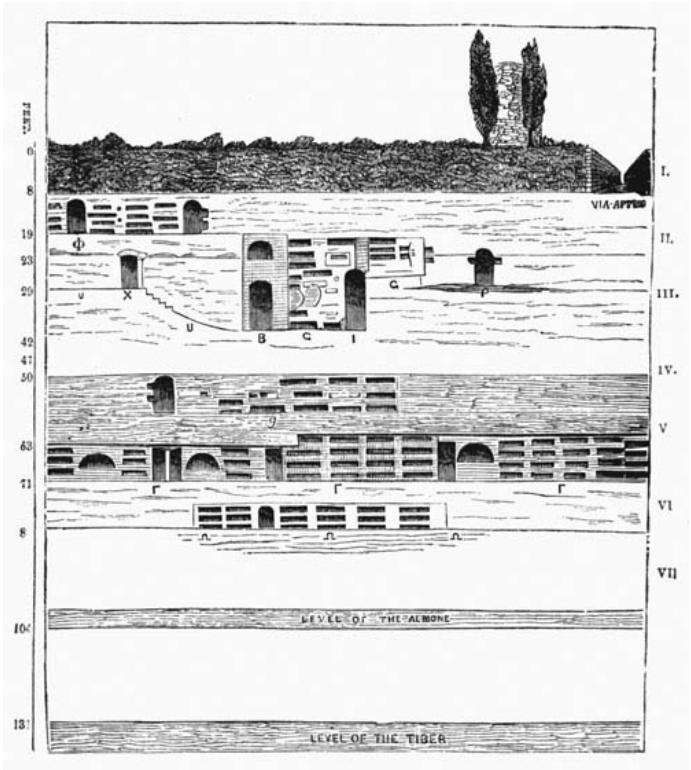

Fig. 14.—Section of the Catacomb of Callixtus.

Hitherto only one level of the Catacombs has been described, but frequently “beneath this depth there is a lower deep,” or even three or four tiers of galleries, excavated as the upper ones became filled with graves. Thus there are sometimes as many as five stories, or *piani*, as they are called, one beneath the other. These are carefully maintained horizontal, to avoid breaking through the floor of the one above or the roof of the one below, the danger of which would be very great if the strict level were departed from. For the same reason the different *piani* were generally separated by a thick stratum of solid *tufa*. The relative position of these levels is shown by the following engraving, reduced from De Rossi. It represents a section of the Crypt of St. Lucina, a part of the Cemetery of Callixtus. The dark

colored stratum, marked I in the margin, is entirely made up of the *débris* of ancient monuments, buildings, and other materials accumulated in the course of ages in this place to the depth of eight feet. It has completely buried the ancient roads, except where excavated, as shown in the engraving. The next stratum, II, is of solid grayish *tufa*. In this the first level or *piano*, φ, is excavated. It is not more than twenty feet below the surface, and in many places only half that depth. Consequently its area is comparatively limited, because if extended it would have run out into the open air, from the sloping of the ground in which it [Pg 32] is dug. The next stratum, III, is softer and more easily worked, and therefore is that in which are found the most important and extensive *piani* of galleries. The cross sections P and X, and the longitudinal section υ, will show how the lower surface of the more solid stratum above was made the ceiling of these galleries, in order to lessen the danger of its falling. At B will be observed the employment of masonry to strengthen the crumbling walls of the [Pg 33] friable *tufa*. The descent of a few steps, some of which have been worn away, will also be noticed at U. At IV a more rocky stratum is found, called *tufa lithoide*, below which the ancient fossors[19] had to go to find suitable material for the excavation of the third *piano*. This was found in stratum V, in which are two *piani* at different levels. The lower one is not vertically beneath that here represented above it, but at some little distance. It is here shown, to exhibit at one view a section of all the stories of this Catacomb. The upper *piano*, *g*, consists of low and narrow galleries, but the lower one, marked Γ Γ Γ, seventy-one feet beneath the surface of the ground, is of great extent. Several of the *loculi*, it will be perceived, are built of masonry, in consequence of the crumbling nature of the soil. The three large *arcosolia* will also be observed. The floor of this *piano* rests on a somewhat firmer stratum, in which is still another level of galleries, Ω Ω Ω, ten feet lower down. This lower level is generally subject to inundation by water, in consequence of the periodical rising of the adjacent Almone, the level of which is shown at a depth of one hundred and four feet, and that of the Tiber at one hundred and thirty-one feet, below the surface.

To secure immunity from dampness, which would accelerate decomposition and corrupt the atmosphere, the Catacombs were generally excavated in high ground in the undulating hills around the city, never crossing the intervening depressions or valleys. There is, therefore, no connection between the different cemeteries except where they happen to be contiguous, nor, as has been asserted, with the churches of Rome. Where a Catacomb has been [Pg 34] excavated in low ground, as in the exceptional case of that of Castulo on the Via Labicana, the water has rendered it completely inaccessible.

Access to these different *piani* is gained by stairways, which are sometimes covered with tile or marble, or built with masonry, or by shafts. The awful silence and almost palpable darkness of these deepest dungeons is absolutely appalling. They are fitly described by the epithet applied by Dante to the realms of eternal gloom: *loco d'ogni luce muto*—a spot mute of all light. Here death reigns supreme. Not even so much as a lizard or a bat has penetrated these obscure recesses. Nought but skulls and skeletons, dust and ashes, are on every side. The air is impure and deadly, and difficult to breathe. "The cursed dew of the dungeon's damp" distills from the walls, and a sense of oppression, like the patriarch's "horror of great darkness," broods over the scene.

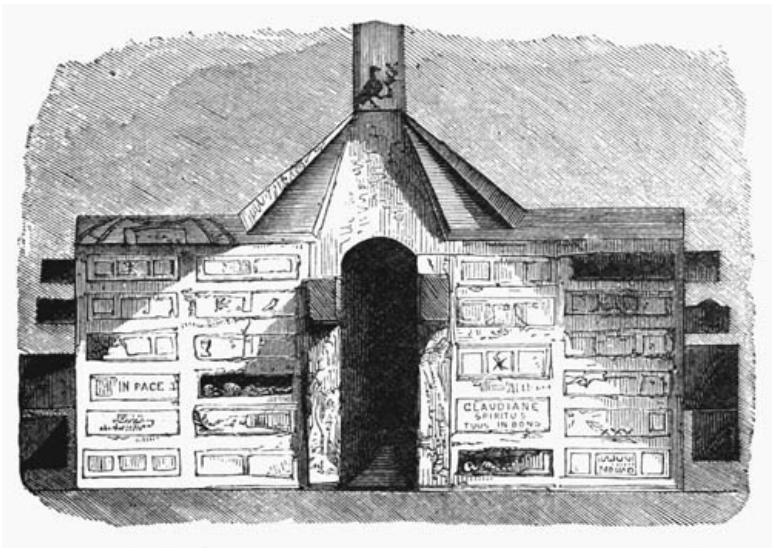

Fig. 15.—Section of Cubicula with Luminare.

The Catacombs were ventilated and partially lighted by numerous openings variously called *spiragli*, or breathing-holes, and *luminari*, or light-holes. They were also probably used for the removal of the excavated material from those parts remote from the entrance. They were even more necessary for the admission of air than of light. Were it not for these the number of burning lamps, the multitude of dead bodies, no matter how carefully the *loculi* were cemented, and the opening of *bisomi*, or double graves, for interments, would create an insupportable atmosphere. They were generally in the line of junction between two *cubicula*, a branch of the *luminare* entering each chamber, as shown in the accompanying section of a portion of the Catacomb of Sts. Marcellinus and Peter. Sometimes, indeed, four,

or even more, *cubicula* were ventilated and partially lighted by the same shaft. De Rossi mentions one *luminare* in the recently discovered Cemetery of St. Balbina, which is not square but hexagonal, or nearly so, and which divides into eight branches, illumining as many separate chambers or galleries. Sometimes a funnel-shaped *luminare* reaches to the lowest *piano*; but from the faint rays that feebly struggle to those gloomy depths there comes "no light, but rather darkness visible." In the upper levels, however, some *cubicula* are well lighted by large openings. The brilliant Italian sunshine to-day lights up the pictured figures on the wall as it must have illumined with its strong Rembrandt light the fair brow of the Christian maiden, the silvery hair of the venerable pastor, or the calm face of the holy dead waiting for interment in those early centuries so long ago. These *luminari* are often two feet square at the top, and wider as they descend; sometimes they are cylindrical in shape, as in the Catacomb of St. Helena.[20] The external openings, often concealed by grass and weeds, are very numerous throughout the Campagna near the city, and are often dangerous to the unwary rider. In almost every vineyard between the Pincian and Salarian roads they may be found, and through them an entrance into the Catacombs may frequently be effected. After the persecution had ceased, and there was no longer need for concealment, their number was increased, and they were made of a larger size, and frequently lined with masonry, or plastered and frescoed. In the Catacombs of St. Agnes and of Callixtus are several in a very good state of preservation.

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We have already seen the contemporary account of the Catacombs by Prudentius, in the fourth century. Jerome also describes their appearance at the same period in words which are almost equally applicable to-day. "When I was a boy, being educated at Rome," he says, "I used every Sunday, in company with others of my own age and tastes, to visit the sepulchres of the apostles and martyrs, and to go into the crypts dug in the heart of the earth. The walls on either side are lined with bodies of the dead, and so intense is the darkness as to seemingly fulfill the words of the prophet, 'They go down alive to Hades.' Here and there is light let in to mitigate the gloom. As we advance the words of the poet are brought to mind: 'Horror on all sides; the very silence fills the soul with dread.'"[21]

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It must not be supposed that the features above described are always perfectly exhibited. They are often obscured and obliterated by the lapse of time, and by earthquakes, inundations, and other destructive agencies of nature. The stairways are often broken and interrupted, and the corridors blocked up by the falling in of the roof, where it has been carried too near the surface, or by the crumbling of the walls, and sometimes apparently by design during the age of persecution. The rains of a thousand winters have washed tons of earth down the *luminari*, destroyed the symmetry of the openings, and completely filled the galleries with *débris*. The natural dampness of the situation, and the smoke of the lamps of the early worshipers, or the torches of more recent visitors, and sometimes incrustations of nitre, have impaired or destroyed the beauty of many of the paintings. The hand of the spoiler has in many cases completed the work of devastation. The rifled graves and broken tablets show where piety or superstition has removed the relics of the dead, or where idle curiosity has wantonly mutilated their monuments.

The present extent of the Catacombs is the result, not of primary intention, but of the contact of separate areas of comparatively limited original size, and the inosculation, as it were, of their distinct galleries. This is apparent from the fact that this contact and junction sometimes take place between areas of different levels, causing a break in their horizontal continuity, like the "faults" or dislocations common in geological strata. Sometimes, too, this junction between two adjacent areas takes place through a tier of graves, and evidently formed no part of the original design. These separate areas were originally, as we shall see in the following chapter, private burial places in the vineyards of wealthy Christian converts, and were early made available for the interment of the poorer members of the infant Church. In accordance with a common Roman usage the ground thus set apart for the purpose of sepulture was placed under the protection of the law, and was accurately defined, to secure it from trespass or violation. While the protection of the law was enjoyed, the excavations were strictly confined within the limits of these areas, and lower *piani* were dug rather than transgress the boundary. But when that protection was withdrawn the galleries were horizontally extended, often for the purpose of facilitating escape, and connections were made with adjacent areas, till the whole became an intricate labyrinth of passages and chambers. These areas are still further distinguished by certain peculiarities in the inscriptions, *cubicula*, and paintings, and were greatly modified by subsequent constructions.

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It has till recently been thought that the Catacombs were originally excavations made by the Romans for the extraction of sand and other building material, and afterward adopted by the Christians as places of refuge, and eventually of sepulture and worship. This opinion was founded on a few misunderstood classical allusions and statements in ancient ecclesiastial writers, and on a misinterpretation of certain accidental features of the Catacombs themselves. It was held, nevertheless, by such eminent authorities as Baronius, Severano, Aringhi, Bottari, D'Agincourt, and Raoul-Rochette. Padre Marchi first rejected this theory of construction, and the brothers De Rossi have completely refuted it. An examination of the material in which these sand pits and stone quarries and the Catacombs were respectively excavated, as well as of their structural differences, will show their entirely distinct character.

The surface of the Campagna, especially of that part occupied by the Catacombs, is almost exclusively of volcanic origin. The most ancient and lowest stratum of this igneous formation is a compact conglomerate known as *tufa lithoide*. It was extensively quarried for building, and the massive blocks of the Cloaca Maxima and the ancient wall of Romulus attest the durability of its character. Upon this rest stratified beds of volcanic ashes, pumice, and scoria, often consolidated with water, but of a substance much less firm than that of the *tufa lithoide*, and called *tufa granolare*. In insulated beds, rarely of considerable extent, in this latter formation, occurs another material, known as *pozzolana*. It consists of volcanic ashes deposited on dry land, and still existing in an unconsolidated condition. This is the material of the celebrated Roman cement, which holds together to this day the massy structures of ancient Rome. It was conveyed for building purposes as far as Constantinople, and the pier on the Tiber from which it was shipped is still called the Porto di Pozzolana. It is in these latter deposits exclusively that the *arenaria*, or sand pits, are found. The *tufa granolare* is too firm, and contains too large a proportion of earth, to use as sand, and is yet too friable for building purposes. Yet it is in this material, entirely worthless for any economic use, that the Catacombs are almost exclusively excavated; while the *tufa lithoide* and the *pozzolana* are both carefully avoided where possible, the one as too hard and the other as too soft for purposes of Christian sepulture. Sometimes, indeed, as at the cemeteries of St. Pontianus and St. Valentinus, for special reasons, Catacombs were excavated in less suitable material; but still the substance removed—a shelly marl—was economically useless, and the galleries had to be supported by solid masonry. The *tufa granolare*, on the contrary, was admirably adapted for the construction of these subterranean cemeteries. It could be easily dug with a mattock, yet was firm enough to be hollowed into *loculi* and chambers; and its porous character made the chambers dry and wholesome for purposes of assembly, which was of the utmost importance in view of the vast number of bodies interred in these recesses.

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The differences of structure between the quarries or *arenaria* and the Catacombs are no less striking. To this day, the vast grottoes from which the material for the building of the Coliseum was hewn, most probably by the Jewish prisoners of Titus, may still be seen on the Cœlian hill. It is said that in those gloomy vaults were kept the fierce Numidian lions and leopards whose conflicts with the Christian martyrs furnished the savage pastime of the Roman amphitheatre. But nothing can less resemble the narrow and winding passages of the Catacombs than those tremendous caverns.

Nor is there any greater resemblance in the excavations of the *arenaria*. These are large and lofty vaults, from sixteen to twenty feet wide, the arch of which often springs directly from the floor, so as to give the largest amount of sand with the least labour of excavation. The object was to remove as much material as possible; hence there was often only enough left to support the roof. The spacious passages of the *arenaria* run in curved lines, avoiding sharp angles, so as to allow the free passage of the carts which carried away the excavated sand. In the Catacombs, on the contrary, as little material as possible was removed; hence the galleries are generally not more than three, or sometimes only two, feet wide, and run for the most part in straight lines, often crossing each other at quite acute angles, so that only very narrow carts can be used in cleaning out the accumulated *débris* of centuries—a very tedious process, which greatly increases the cost of exploration. The walls, moreover, are always vertical, and the roof sometimes quite flat, or only slightly arched. The wide difference in the principle of construction is obvious. The great object in the Catacombs has been to obtain the maximum of wall-surface, for the interment of the dead in the *loculi* with which the galleries are lined throughout, with the minimum of excavation. The structural difference will at once be seen by comparing the irregular windings of the small *arenarium* represented in the upper part of Figs. 3 and 26 with the straight and symmetrical galleries of the adjacent Catacomb. Connected with the Catacomb of St. Agnes is an extensive *arenarium*, whose spacious, grotto-like appearance is very different from that of the narrow sepulchral galleries beneath. In the floor of this *arenarium* is a square shaft leading to the Catacomb, in which Dr. Northcote conjectures there was formerly a windlass for removing the excavated material. There are also footholes, for climbing the sides of the shaft, cut in the solid *tufa*, perhaps as a means of escape in the time of persecution. This *arenarium*, which was probably worked out and abandoned long before its connection with the Catacomb, may have been employed as a masked entrance to its crypts, when the more public one could not be safely used. Its spacious vaults may also have been a receptacle for the broken *tufa* removed from the galleries beneath.

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Many of these *arenaria* may be observed excavated in the hill-sides near Rome; but except when incidentally forming part of a Catacomb, they have never been found to contain a single grave. Indeed, in consequence of the utter unfitness of the *pozzolana* for the purposes of Christian sepulture, the intrusion of a deposit of that material into the area of a Catacomb prevented the extension or necessitated the diversion of its galleries. Moreover, where the attempt has been made to convert an *arenarium* into a Christian cemetery, the changes which have been made show conclusively its original unfitness for the latter purpose. The accompanying section of a gallery in the Catacomb of St. Hermes will exhibit the structural additions necessary to adopt an *arenarium* for Christian sepulture. The sides of the semi-eliptical vault had to be built up with brick-work, leaving only a narrow passage in the middle. The *loculi* were spaces left in the masonry, in which the mouldering skeletons may still be seen. The openings were closed with slabs in the usual manner, as shown in the elevation, (Fig. 17,) except at the top, where they cover the grave obliquely, like the roof of a house. The vault is often

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Fig. 16.—Gallery in St. Hermes.

arched with brick-work, and at the intersection of the galleries has sometimes to be supported by a solid pier of masonry. In part of an ancient *arenarium* converted into a cemetery in the Catacomb of St. Priscilla similar constructions may be seen. The long walls and numerous pillars of brick-work concealing and sustaining the *tufa*, and the irregular windings of the passages, show at once the vast difference between the *arenarium* and the Catacomb, and the immense labour and expense required to convert the former into the latter.

[Pg 43]

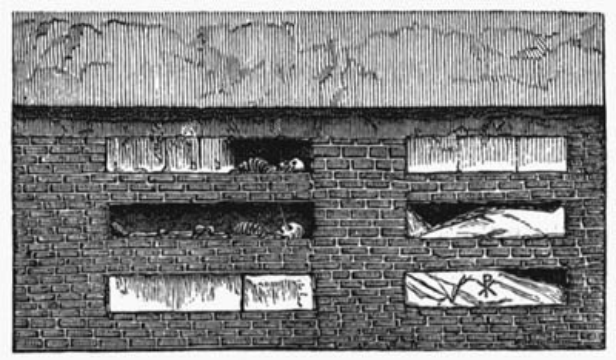

Fig. 17.—Part of Wall of Gallery in St. Hermes.

It has been urged in objection to this theory, that the difficulty of secretly disposing of at least a hundred millions of cubic feet of refuse material taken from the Catacombs must have been exceedingly great, unless it could be removed under cover of employment for some economic purpose. It will be shown, however, that secrecy was not always necessary, as has been assumed, but that, on the contrary, the Christian right of sepulture was for a long time legally recognized by the Pagan Emperors; and that the Catacombs continued to be publicly used for a considerable time after the establishment of Christianity on the throne of the Cæsars. During the exacerbations of persecution there is evidence that the excavated material was deposited in the galeries already filled with graves, or, as we have seen, in the spacious vaults of adjacent *arenaria*. If the Catacombs were merely excavations for sand or stone, as has been asserted, we ought to find many of their narrow galleries destitute of tombs, and many of the *arenaria* containing them; whereas every yard of the former is occupied with graves, and not a single grave is found in the latter, nor do they contain a single example of a mural painting or inscription. The conclusion is irresistible that the Catacombs proper were created exclusively for the purpose of Christian burial, and in no case were of Pagan construction.

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The erroneous theory here combated has arisen, as we have said, chiefly from certain classical allusions to the *arenaria*, and from passages in the ancient ecclesiastical records describing the burial places of the martyrs, as *in cryptis arenariis*, *in arenario*, or *ad arenas*. Some of these localities, however, have been identified beyond question, and found to consist merely of a sandy kind of rock, and not at all of the true *pozzolana*. In others a vein of *pozzolana* does actually occur in the Catacombs, or they are connected with ancient *arenaria*, as at St. Agnes and at Calixtus. In the other instances the localities are either yet unrecognized, or the expression merely implies that the cemetery was *near* the sand pits —*juxta arenarium*, or *in loco qui dicitur ad Arenas*.

The mere technical description of the Catacombs, however, gives no idea of the thrilling interest felt in traversing their long-drawn corridors and vaulted halls. As the pilgrim to this shrine of the primitive faith visits these chambers of silence and gloom, accompanied by a serge-clad, sandaled monk,[22] he seems like the Tuscan poet wandering through the realms of darkness with his shadowy guide.

> “Ora sen’ va per un segreto calle
> Tra l’ muro della terra.”[23]

His footsteps echo strangely down the distant passages and hollow vaults, dying gradually away in the solemn stillness of this valley of the shadow of death. The graves yawn weirdly as he passes, torch in hand. The flame struggles feebly with the thickening darkness, vaguely revealing the unfleshed skeletons on either side, till its redness fades to sickly white, like that *fioco lume*,[24] that pale light, by which Dante saw the crowding ghosts upon the shores of Acheron. Deep mysterious shadows crouch around, and the dim perspective, lined with the sepuchral niches of the silent community of the dead, stretch on in an

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apparently unending vista. The very air seems oppressive and stifling, and laden with the dry dust of death. The vast extent and population of this great necropolis overwhelm the imagination, and bring to mind Petrarch's melancholy line—

"Piena di morti tutta la campagna."[25]

Almost appalling in its awe and solemnity is the sudden transition from the busy city of the living to the silent city of the dead; from the golden glory of the Italian sunlight to the funereal gloom of these sombre vaults. The sacred influence of the place subdues the soul to tender emotions. The fading pictures on the walls and the pious epitaphs of the departed breathe on every side an atmosphere of faith and hope, and awaken a sense of spiritual kinship that overleaps the intervening centuries. We speak with bated breath and in whispered tones, and thought is busy with the past. It is impossible not to feel strangely moved while gazing on the crumbling relics of mortality committed ages ago, with pious care and many tears, to their last, long rest.

"It seems as if we had the sleepers known."[26]

We see the mother, the while her heart is wrung with anguish, laying on its stony bed—rude [Pg 46]
couch for such a tender thing—the little form that she had cherished in her warm embrace. We behold the persecuted flock following, it may be, the mangled remains of the faithful pastor and valiant martyr for the truth, which at the risk of their lives they have stealthily gathered at dead of night. With holy hymns,[27] broken by their sobs, they commit his mutilated body to the grave, where after life's long toil he sleepeth well. We hear the Christian chant, the funeral plaint, the pleading tones of prayer, and the words of holy consolation and of lofty hope with which the dead in Christ are laid to rest. A moment, and—the spell is broken, the past has vanished, and stern reality becomes again a presence. Ruin and desolation and decay are all around.

The exploration of these worse than Dædalian labyrinths is not unattended with danger. That intrepid investigator, Bosio, was several times well nigh lost in their mysterious depths. That disaster really happened to M. Roberts, a young French artist, whose adventure has been wrought into an exciting scene in Hans Andersen's tale, "The Improvisatore," and forms an episode in the Abbé de Lille's poem, "*L'Imagination*." Inspired by the enthusiasm of his profession, he attempted to explore one of the Catacombs, with nothing but a torch and a thread for a guide. As he wandered on through gallery and chamber, he became so absorbed in his study that, unawares, the thread slipped from his hand. On discovering his loss he tried, but in vain, to recover the clew. Presently his torch went out, and he was left in utter darkness, imprisoned in a living grave, surrounded by the relics of mortality. The silence was oppressive. He shouted, but the hollow echoes mocked his voice. Weary with fruitless [Pg 47]
efforts to escape his dread imprisonment he threw himself in despair upon the earth, when, lo, something familiar touched his hand. Could he believe it? it was indeed the long lost clew by which alone he could obtain deliverance from this awful labyrinth. Carefully following the precious thread he reached at last the open air,

> And never Tiber, rippling through the meads,
> Made music half so sweet among its reeds;
> And never had the earth such rich perfume,
> As when from him it chased the odor of the tomb.[28]

Still more terrible in its wildness is an incident narrated by MacFarlane.[29] In the year 1798, after the return to Rome of the Republican army under Berthier, a party of French officers, atheistic disciples of Voltaire and Rousseau, and hardened by the orgies of the Revolution, visited the Catacombs. They caroused in the sepulchral crypts, and sang their bacchanalian songs among the Christian dead. They rifled the graves and committed sacrilege at the tombs of the saints. One of the number, a reckless young cavalry officer, "who feared not God nor devil, for he believed in neither," resolved to explore the remoter galleries. He was speedily lost, and was abandoned by his companions. His excited imagination heightened the natural horrors of the scene. The grim and ghastly skeletons seemed an army of accusing spectres. Down the long corridors the wind mysteriously whispered, rising in inarticulate moanings and woeful sighs, as of souls in pain. The tones of the neighbouring convent bell, echoing through the stony vaults, sounded loud and awful as the knell of doom. [Pg 48]
Groping blindly in the dark, he touched nothing but rocky walls or mouldering bones, that sent a thrill of horror through his frame. Though but a thin roof separated him from the bright sunshine and free air, he seemed condemned to living burial. His philosophical skepticism failed him in this hour of peril. He could no longer scoff at death as "*un sommeil éternel*." The palimpsest of memory recalled with intensest vividness the Christian teachings of his childhood. His soul became filled and penetrated with a solemn awe. His physical powers gave way beneath the intensity of his emotion. He was rescued the next day, but was long ill. He rose from his bed an altered man. His life was thenceforth serious and devout. When killed in battle in Calabria seven years after, a copy of the Gospels was found next to his heart.

Even as late as 1837 a party of students with their professor, numbering in all some sixteen, or, as some say, nearly thirty, entered the Catacombs on a holiday excursion, to investigate their antiquities, but became entangled amid their intricacies. Diligent search was made, but no trace of them was ever found. In some silent crypt or darksome corridor they were slowly overtaken by the same torturing fate as that of Ugolino and his sons in the Hunger Tower of

Pisa.[30] The passage by which they entered has been walled up, but the mystery of their fate will never be dispelled till the secrets of the grave shall be revealed.

[1] Haud procul extremo culta ad pomœria vallo,
Mersa latebrosis crypta patet foveis...—*Peristephanon*, iv.

The origin of the word Catacombs is exceedingly obscure. Father Marchi derives it from κατὰ, down, and τύμβος, a tomb; or from κατὰ and κοιμάω, to sleep. Mommsen thinks it comes from κατὰ and *cumbo*, part of *decumbo*, to lie down. According to Schneider (*Lex. Græk.*) it is derived from κατὰ and κύμβη, a boat or canoe, from the resemblance of a sarcophagus to that object. The more probable derivation seems to the present writer to be from κατὰ and κύμβος, a hollow, as if descriptive of a subterranean excavation. The name was first given in the sixth century to a limited area beneath the Church of St. Sebastian: "*Locus qui dicitur catacumbas.*"—S. Greg., *Opp.*, tom. ii, ep. 30. It was afterward generically applied to all subterranean places of sepulture. The earliest writers who mention those of Rome call them *cryptæ*, or crypts, or *cæmeteria*—whence our word cemetery, literally, sleeping places, from κοιμάω, to slumber. Similar excavations have been found in Syria, Asia Minor, Cyprus, Crete, the Ægean Isles, Greece, Sicily, Naples, Malta, and France.

[2] These great roads for miles are lined with the sepulchral monuments of Rome's mighty dead, majestic even in decay. But only the wealthy could be entombed in those stately mausolea, or be wrapped in those "marble cerements." For the mass of the population *columbaria* were provided, in whose narrow niches, like the compartments of a dove-cote—whence the name—the *terra cotta* urns containing their ashes were placed, sometimes to the number of six thousand in a single *columbarium*. They also contain sometimes the urns of the great.

[3] Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*.

[4] Aringhi, in the elegant Latin ode prefixed to his great work, exclaims, "*Sub Roma Romam quærito*"—Beneath Rome I seek the true Rome.

[5] Even so accurate and philosophical a writer as the late Professor Silliman reports on their authority that the Catacombs extend twenty miles, to the port of Ostia, in one direction, and to Albano, twelve miles, in another. *Visit to Europe*, vol. i, p. 329. This is impossible, as will be shown, on account of the undulation of the ground, and the limited area of the volcanic *tufa* in which alone they can be excavated. The number of distinct Catacombs has also been magnified to sixty; and Father Marchi estimated the aggregate length of passages to be nine hundred miles.

[6] Fig. 1.

[7] Fig. 30.

[8] Fig. 29.

[9] Primas namque fores summo tenus intrat hiatu
Illustratque dies limina vestibuli.—*Peristephanon*, ii.

[10] In the single crypt of St. Lucina, one hundred feet by one hundred and eighty, De Rossi counted over seven hundred *loculi*, and estimated that nearly twice as many were destroyed, giving a total of two thousand graves in this area. The same space, with our mode of interment, would not accommodate over half the number, even though placed as close together as possible, without any room for passages.

[11] Compare Bryant's *Thanatopsis*:

"All that tread
The globe are but a handful to the tribes
That slumber in its bosom."

[12] *Rom. Sott.*, ii, 127.

[13] D'Agincourt, *Histoire de l'art par les Monumens*, i, 20.

[14] Literally, little sleeping chambers, from *cubo*, I lie down. The same name was also given to the cells for meditation and prayer attached to the Church of Nola. Paulin., ep. 12, *ad Sever.*

[15] Book II.

[16] See Fig. 130 and context, where the entire subject is discussed.

[17] See in the Cemetery of St. Helena, Fig. 29.

[18] As in Fig. 12, and more strikingly in Fig. 76.

[19] An organized body of diggers, by whom the Catacombs were excavated. See Book III, chap. iv.

[20] See Fig. 29.

[21] "Dum essem Romæ puer, et liberalibus studiis erudirer, solebam cum cæteris ejusdem ætatis et propositi, diebus Dominicis sepulchra apostolorum et martyrum circuire, crebròque cryptas ingredi, quæ in terrarum profunda defossæ, ex utraque parte ingredientium per parietes corpora sepultorum, ... 'Horror ubique animos, simul ipsa silentia terrent.'"—Hieron. in *Ezech.*, Cap. xl.

[22] Unfortunately for Protestant visitors most of the Catacombs are open for inspection only on Sunday, when the work of exploration is suspended.

[23] "And now through narrow, gloomy paths we go,
'Tween walls of earth and tombs."—*Inferno.*

[24] "Com'io discerno per lo fioco lume."—*Inferno.*

[25] “Full of the dead this far extending field.”

[26] *Childe Harold*, iv, 104.

[27] Hymnos et psalmos decantans.—Hieron., *Vit. Pauli*.

[28] From “*L’Imagination*,” by Abbé de Lille, MacFarlane’s translation.

[29] *Catacombs of Rome.* London, 1852. P. 94, *et seq.*

[30] *Inferno*, Canto xxxiii, vv. 21-75.

CHAPTER II.

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THE ORIGIN AND EARLY HISTORY OF THE CATACOMBS.

It is highly probable that the first Roman Catacombs were excavated by the Jews.[31] Many Hebrew captives graced the triumph of Pompey after his Syrian conquests, B. C. 62. The Jewish population increased by further voluntary accessions. They soon swarmed in that Trans-Tiberine region which formed the ancient Ghetto of Rome. They made many proselytes from paganism to the worship of the true God, and thus, to use the language of Seneca, "The conquered gave laws to their conquerors."[32]

All the national customs and prejudices of the Jews were opposed to the Roman practice of burning the dead, which Tacitus asserts they never observed;[33] and they clung with tenacity to their hereditary mode of sepulture. Wherever they have dwelt they have left traces of subterranean burial. The hills of Judea are honeycombed with sepulchral caves and [Pg 50] galleries. Similar excavations have been found in the Jewish settlements of Asia Minor, the Ægean Isles, Sicily, and Southern Italy.[34] So also in Rome they sought to be separated in death, as in life, from the Gentiles among whom they dwelt. They had their Catacombs apart, in which not a single Christian or pagan inscription has been found. Bosio describes one such Catacomb, which he discovered on Monte Verde, which was much more ancient than the Christian Catacomb of St. Pontianus in the same vicinity. It was of very rude construction, and contained not a single Christian monument, but numerous slabs bearing the seven-branched Jewish candlestick, and one inscription on which the word CYNAΓΩΓ—Synagogue—was legible.[35] It was situated near that Trans-Tiberine quarter of the city inhabited at the period of the Christian era by the numerous Jewish population of Rome. It cannot now, however, be identified, having been obliterated or concealed by the changes of the last two centuries. Maitland gives the following Jewish inscription from a MS. collection in Rome. The figure to the left may be a horn for replenishing the lamp with oil. The letters at the right are probably intended for the Hebrew word שָׁלוֹם, *Shalom*, or Peace, so common in its classical equivalent upon Christian tombs. The palm branch is a Pagan as well as Jewish and Christian symbol of victory. The central figure is a rude representation of the seven- [Pg 51] branched candlestick which appears also in bass-relief on the Arch of Titus at Rome.

"Here lies Faustina. In Peace."

Fig. 18.—Slab from Jewish Catacomb.

In the year 1859 another Jewish Catacomb was discovered in the Vigna Randanini, on the Appian Way, about two miles from Rome. It has been minutely described by Padre Garrucci.[36] In this the graves and sarcophagi are sunk in the floor as well as in the walls. They are closed with terra cotta or marble slabs, and are otherwise similar to those of the Christian Catacombs. It contains several vaulted chambers, one of which has some very remarkable paintings of the seven-branched candlestick on the roof and walls. The same figure is frequently scratched on the mortar with which the graves are closed. The dove and olive branch and the palm are also frequently repeated. Although nearly two hundred inscriptions have been discovered, not one of either pagan or Christian character has been met with.

The names are sometimes strikingly Jewish in form, and where the epitaphs refer to the station of the deceased it is always to officers of the synagogue, as ΑΡΚΟΝΤΕC, rulers, [Pg 52] ΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΕΙC, scribes. The following examples are from the Kircherian Museum:

ΩΔE KEITE CAΛΩ[MH] ΘYΓATHP ΓAΔIA ΠATPOC CYNAΓΩΓHC AIBPEΩN EBIΩCEN MA EN EIPHNH KOIMHCIC AYTHC. Here lies Salome, daughter of Gadia, Father of the Synagogue of the Hebrews. She lived forty-one years. Her sleep is in peace. ENΘAΔE KEITE KYNTIANOC ΓEPOYCIAPXHC CYNAΓΩΓHC THC AYΓYCTHCIΩN. Here lies Quintianus, Gerousiarch (that is, Chief Elder) of the Synagogue of the Augustenses. ENΘAΔE KEITAI NEIKOΔHMOC HO APXΩN CIBOYPHCIΩN KAI ΠACI ΦEIΛHTOC AITΩN Λ HMEP MB ΘAPI ABΛABI NEΩTEPE OYΔEIC AΘANATOC. Here lies Nicodemus, ruler of the Severenses, and beloved of all; (aged) thirty years, forty-two days. Be of good cheer, O inoffensive young man! no one is exempt from death.

This inscription will recall another “ruler of the Synagogue” of the same name. Many of the sleepers in this Jewish Cemetery were evidently, from their names,[37] Greek or Latin proselytes. Sometimes, indeed, this is expressly asserted, as in the following:

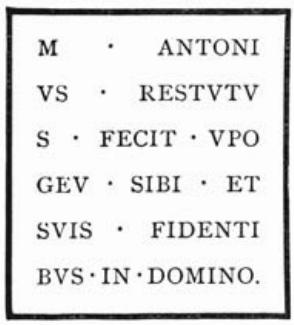
> MANNACIVS SORORI CRYSIDI DVLCISSIME PROSELYTE.—Mannacius to his sweetest sister Chrysis, a proselyte.

It may be assumed that this Catacomb was exclusively Jewish, and we know, from the testimony of Juvenal[38] and others, that numbers of the Jews inhabited the adjacent part of Rome, about the Porta Capena and the valley of Egeria. It is not, however, certain whether it is the original type, or a later imitation, of the Christian cemetery. But the Jewish population must have had extra-mural places of sepulture before the Christian era; and it is probable that the early Jewish converts to Christianity may have merely continued a mode of burial [Pg 53] already in vogue, substituting the emblems of their newly adopted faith for those which they had forsaken; or, rather—for we find that they frequently retained certain Jewish symbols, as the dove, olive branch, and palm—supplementing them with the emblems of Christianity. De Rossi has expressed the opinion that the earliest mode of Christian burial was in sarcophagi, as in the Jewish cemetery above described.

The date of the planting of Christianity in Rome is uncertain. Probably some of the “strangers of Rome” who witnessed the miracle of the Pentecost, or, perhaps, the Gentile converts of the “Italian band” of Cornelius, brought the new evangel to their native city.[39] But certain it is that as early as A. D. 58 the faith of the Roman Church was “spoken of [Pg 54] throughout the whole world.” “Christianity,” says Tertullian, “grew up under the shadow of the Jewish religion, to which it was regarded as akin, and about the lawfulness of which there was no question;”[40] and it doubtless adopted the burial usages of Judaism.

But even without the example of the Jews the Roman Christians would naturally revolt from the pagan custom of burning the dead, with its accompanying idolatrous usages,[41] and would prefer burial, after the manner of their Lord. They showed a tender care for the remains of the dead, under a vivid impression of the communion of saints and the resurrection of the body. They seemed to regard the sepulchre as “God’s cabinet or shrine, where he pleases to lay up the precious relics of his dear saints until the jubilee of glory.”[42] Even the Jews designated the grave as *Beth-ha-haim*, the “house of the living,” rather than the house of the dead. It is probable, therefore, that the origin of the Christian Catacombs dates from the death of the first Roman believer in Christ.

Many of the Catacombs were probably begun as private sepulchres for single families; [Pg 55] indeed, some such tombs have been discovered in the vicinity of Rome, which never extended beyond a single chamber. They were excavated in the gardens or vineyards of the wealthy converts to Christianity, in imitation of that rock-hewn sepulchre consecrated by the body of Christ. The following inscription, which may still be seen in the most ancient part of the Catacombs of Sts. Nereus and Achilles, seem to refer to such a family tomb. Another inscription, found in the Catacomb of St. Nicomedes, restricts the use of the sepulchre to the original owner, and those of his dependents who belong to his religion—AT [AD] RELIGIONEM PERTINENTES MEAM.



M. Antonius Res[ti]tutus made [this] hypogeum for himself and his [relatives] who believe in the Lord. [43]

The names of many of the burial crypts commemorate these original owners. Among others those of Lucina, Priscilla, and Domitilla are considered to belong to the First Century, and the two former to the times of the Apostles. Some of these may have been originally designed, or afterwards opened, for the reception of the poor belonging to the Church; and thus the Catacombs would be indefinitely extended till they attained their present [Pg 56] dimensions. Tertullian expressly declares that the provision made for the poor included that for their burial—*egenis humandis*.[44]

There is reason to believe that, even from the very first, the Christian Church at Rome contained not a few who were of noble blood and of high rank. In one of the apostolic epistles Paul conveys the salutation of Pudens, a Roman Senator, of Linus, reputed the first Roman bishop, and of Claudia, daughter of a British king;[45] and we know that even in the Golden House of Nero, the scene of that colossal orgy whose record pollutes the pages of Suetonius and Tacitus, were disciples of the crucified Nazarene. In remarkable confirmation of this fact is the discovery in the recent explorations of the ruins of the Imperial Palace of several Christian memorials, including one of those lamps adorned with evangelical symbols, so common in the Catacombs. Much of the evidence on this subject has been lost by the zealous destruction of ecclesiastical records during the terrible Diocletian persecution; but from inscriptions in the Catacombs, and from the incidental allusions of early writers, we learn that persons of the highest position, and even [Pg 57] members of the Imperial family, were associated with the Christians in life and in death. Some of the noblest names of Rome occur in funeral epitaphs in some of the most ancient galleries of the Catacombs. There is evidence that even during the first century some who stood near the throne became converts to Christianity, and even died as martyrs for the faith.[46]

But doubtless the preservation and advancement of true religion was better secured amid the dark recesses of the Catacombs, during the fiery persecutions that befel the Church, than it would have been in the sunshine of imperial favour, in an age and court unparalleled for their corruptions. The sad decline of Christianity after the accession of Constantine makes it a matter of congratulation that in the earlier ages it was kept pure by the wholesome breezes of adversity.

The new religion, notwithstanding all the efforts that were made for its suppression, rapidly spread, even in the high places of the earth. “We are but of yesterday,” writes Tertullian at the close of the second century, “yet we fill every city, town, and island of the empire. We abound in the very camps and castles, in the council chamber and the palace, in the senate and the forum; only your temples and theatres are left.”[47] [Pg 58]

It is evident from an examination of the earliest Catacombs that they were not the offspring of fear on the part of the Christians. There was no attempt at secrecy in their construction. They were, like the pagan tombs, situated on the high roads entering the city. Their entrances were frequently protected and adorned by elegant structures of masonry, such as that which is still visible at the Catacomb of St. Domitilla on the Via Ardeatina;[48] and their internal decorations and frescoes, which in the most ancient examples are of classic taste and beauty, were manifestly not executed by stealth and in haste, but in security and at leisure.

There was, in classic times, a sacred character attached to *all* places set apart for the purposes of sepulture. They enjoyed the especial protection of the law, and were invested with a sort of religious sanctity.[49] This protection was asserted in many successive edicts, and the heaviest penalties were inflicted on the violators of tombs, as guilty of sacrilege.[50] Reverence for the sepulchres of the dead was regarded by the ancient mind as a religious virtue; and the neglect of the ancestral tomb even involved disability for municipal office.[51]

Being situated along the public highway, these pagan tombs were liable to various pollutions, to which numerous inscriptions refer. Hence the frequent CAVE VIATOR —“Traveller, beware!”—so common in classic epitaphs. The SCRIPTOR PARCE HOC OPVS —“Writer, spare this work”—sometimes met with, is, as Kenrick well remarks,[52] not the address of an author to a critic, but of a relative of the deceased, entreating the wall-scribbler not to disfigure a tomb. Electioneering notices were sometimes written upon these wayside monuments—a practice which is deprecated in the following: CANDIDATVS FIAT HONORATVS ET TV FELIX SCRIPTOR SI HIC NON SCRIPSERIS—“May your candidate be honoured and yourself happy, O writer, if you write not on this tomb!” INSCRIPTOR, ROGO TE VT TRANSEAS MONVMENTVM—“Inscriber, I pray you pass by this monument.” [Pg 59]

As these sepulchral areas, often of considerable extent, were taken from the fields in the vicinity of a great city, where the land was very valuable for the purpose of tillage, they were in continual danger of invasion from the cupidity of the heirs or of adjacent land-owners, but for this legal protection. On many of the *cippi*, or funereal monuments, which line the public roads in the vicinity of Rome, the extent of these areas is set forth. Some of them are quite small, as is indicated in the following inscription: TERRENVM SACRATVM LONGVM P[EDES] · X · LAT · P[EDES] · X · FODERE NOLI · NE SACRILEGIVM COMMITTAS[52a]—“A consecrated plot of earth, ten feet long and ten feet broad. Do not dig here, lest you commit sacrilege.”

More generally the size of the area is expressed, as in the following: IN FRONTE P[EDES] · IX IN AGRO P[EDES] · X; that is, “Frontage on the road, nine feet; depth in the field, ten feet.” This area, small as it is, was designed for several families. The limited space occupied by the cinerary urns rendered this quite possible. Frequently, however, the size was much larger. An area one hundred and twenty-five feet square would be of very moderate extent. Horace mentions one one thousand feet by three hundred,[53] and sometimes they greatly exceed this, as one on the Via Labicana, five hundred by eighteen hundred feet, or over twenty English acres. There were also frequently *exhedræ*, or seats by the wayside, for passers-by, who were sometimes exhorted to pause and read the inscription, or to pour a libation for the dead, as in the following: SISTE VIATOR TV QVI VIA FLAMINIA TRANSIS, RESTA AC RELEGE —“Stop, traveller, who passest by on the Flaminian Way; pause and read, and read again!” MISCE BIBE DA MIHI—“Mix, drink, and give to me.” VIATORES SALVETE ET VALETE —“Travellers, hail and farewell.” [Pg 60]

These burial plots were incapable of alienation or transfer from the families for whom they were originally set apart; who are sometimes enumerated in the inscription, or more generally expressed by the formulæ, SIBI SVISQVE FECIT, SIBI ET POSTERIS SVIS, or with the addition, LIBERTIS LIBERTABVSQVE POSTERISQVE, that is, “He made this for himself and his family,” or “for himself and his descendants;” also “for his freedmen and freedwomen and their descendants.” Sometimes this limitation is plainly asserted to be, VT NE VNQVAM DE NOMINE FAMILIAE NOSTRAE HOC MONVMENTVM EXEAT—“That this monument may not go out of the name of our family.” The cupidity of the inheritor of the estate is especially guarded against by the ever-recurring formula, H · M · H · N · S ·, that is, *Hoc monumentum hæredem non sequitur*—“This monument descends not to the heir.” Sometimes within a stately mausoleum reposed in solitary magnificence the dust of a single individual, who in sullen exclusiveness declares in his epitaph that he has no associate even in the grave, or that he made his tomb for himself alone—IN HOC MONVMENTO SOCIVM HABEO NVLLVM, or, HOC SOLO SIBI FECIT. [Pg 61]

The violation of the monument is earnestly deprecated in numerous inscriptions in some such terms as these: ROGO PER DEOS SVPEROS INFEROSQVE NE VELITIS OSSA MEA VIOLARE—"I beseech you, by the supernal and infernal gods, that you do not violate my bones." Sometimes this petition is accompanied by an imprecation of divine vengeance if it should be neglected, as, QVI VIOLAVERIT DEOS SENTIAT IRATOS—"May he feel the wrath of the gods[54] who shall have violated [this tomb.]" Another invokes the fearful curse, QVISQVIS HOC SVSTVLERIT AVT LAESERIT VLTIMVS SVORVM MORIATVR[55]—"Whoever shall take away or injure this [tomb] let him die the last of his race."

From a distrust of posterity many erected their monuments during their life-time, and wrote their own epitaphs, leaving only a space for the age. This is sometimes expressed by the words, SIBI VIVVS FECIT, or, SE VIVO, SE VIVIS, or even by such solecisms as ME VIVVS, or SE VIVVS. The following records the strange fact of the erection of a funereal monument by one living person to another: SEMIRAMIAE LICINIAE QVAM LOCO FILIAE DILIGO OB MERITA EIVS VIVVS VIVAE FECI—"To Semiramia Licinia, whom I love in place of my daughter: on account of her merits, alive, I made this to her alive." [Pg 62]

These classic usages have been thus detailed because traces of their influence may be observed in many practices adopted by the primitive Christians, and because they furnish an explanation of those remarkable immunities and privileges which the Catacombs so long enjoyed. These latter were constructed in separate and limited areas, in like manner as the pagan sepulchres. De Rossi has given a map of the Catacomb of Callixtus, in which these areas are accurately defined. They vary in size and shape, that of the crypt of St. Lucina being one hundred feet *in fronte* and one hundred and eighty *in agro*, that of St. Cecilia two hundred and fifty feet *in fronte* and one hundred *in agro*, and others still larger. By the very tenor of the law these areas enjoyed the same protection as those of the pagan sepulchres, of which protection it required a special edict to deprive them. Even when Christianity fell under the ban of persecution that freedom of sepulture was not at first interfered with. Having wreaked his cruel rage upon the living body, the pagan magistrate at least did not deny right of burial to the martyr's mutilated remains. A beneficent Roman law declared that the bodies even of those who died by the hand of the public executioner might be given up to any who asked for them.[56] So that even the sentence of outlawry against the Christians did not affect the bodies of the dead. Indeed, we know from ecclesiastical history that frequently the faithful received the remains of the martyrs and gave them Christian burial. It was not till the third century, when the pagan opposition to Christianity became intense and bitter, that the persecutors waged war upon the dead. Although both Diocletian and Maximian confirmed the decree just cited, it often happened that, in order that the Christians might not have even the melancholy consolation of gathering up the martyrs' bones, and honouring the remains of their fallen heroes, those sacred relics were denied the rites of sepulture which were freely accorded to the body of the vilest malefactor. [Pg 63]

These areas, Christian as well as pagan, were under the guardianship of the Roman *Pontifices*, who, although pagans, were actually confirmed in their authority by the Christian Emperor Constans. In consequence of this protection the Christians were enabled to conduct their worship and celebrate their *agapæ* in the oratories or other buildings erected over the Catacombs, the ruins of which are still to be seen at the Catacombs of St. Domitilla and Sts. Nereus and Achilles, and which to the popular apprehension would seem to correspond to the pagan structures for the celebration of funeral banquets. Even when oppressed and persecuted above ground, they found a sanctuary beneath its surface, and were permitted by the ignorance or indifference of their foes to worship God among the holy dead. So long as their sepulchral areas were uninvaded the Christians scrupulously abstained from extending their excavations beyond their respective limits, digging lower *piani* instead, when insatiate death demanded room for still more graves. But when the ruthless persecutor pursued them even beneath the earth, they felt at liberty to transcend those limits and burrow in any direction for safety or escape.

The Christian inscriptions often strongly deprecate the violation of the graves to which they are attached, in like manner as we have seen in pagan epitaphs, and against this crime the Fathers intensely inveigh. Sometimes the petition assumes a most solemn character, as this: [ADIVRO] VOS PER C[H]RISTVM, NE MIHI AB ALIQVO VIOLENTIAM [*sic*] FIAT ET NE SEPVLCRVM MEVM VIOLETVR—"[I conjure] you by Christ that no violence be offered me by any one, and that my sepulchre may not be violated." Still more awful in its adjuration is the following: CONIVRO VOS PER TREMENDVM DIEM IVDICII VT HANC SEPVLTVRAM NVLLI VIOLENT[57]—"I conjure you by the dreadful day of judgment that no one violate this sepulchre." [Pg 64]

Sometimes a most terrible imprecation is expressed, as in the following:

MALE · PEREAT · INSEPVLTVS
IACEAT · NON · RESVRGAT
CVM · IVDA · PARTEM · HABEAT
SI · QVIS · SEPVLCHRVM · HVNC · VIOLAVERIT—

If any one shall violate this sepulchre,
Let him perish miserably and remain unburied;
Let him lie down and not rise again,
Let him have his portion with Judas.[58]

....[EMI]GRAVIT AD XPM

....SEPVLCRVM VIOLARE
....SIT ALIENVS A REGNO DEI.

... Has departed to Christ. [If any one dare] to violate this sepulchre, let him ... and be far from the kingdom of God.[59]

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It is probable that this dread of the violation of the grave arose, in part at least, from the fear that the dispersion of the remains might impede the resurrection of the body; and also from that natural aversion to the disturbance of the slumbering dust, so passionately expressed on the tombstone of England's greatest dramatist.[60]

We sometimes find also the announcement upon Christian as well as upon pagan tombs, that they have been prepared while the tenants were yet alive, as in the following: LOCVS BASILIONIS SE BIBO FECIT—"The place of Basilio, he made it when alive;" SABINI BISOMVM SE BIBVM FECIT SIBI IN CEMETERIVM BALBINAE IN CRYPTA NOBA [*sic*]—"The bisomus of Sabinus, he made it for himself during his life-time, in the cemetery of Balbina, in the new crypt." As Sabinus could only occupy one half of this, the other half was probably intended for his wife. Observe in the following the beautiful euphemism for the grave. It is calmly chosen as the last long home, as the "house appointed for all living." (Fig. 19.[61])

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But there was another and still more remarkable resemblance between the funeral usages of the pagans and Christians than any yet mentioned, and one which greatly contributed to the freedom of action and security of the latter. There is abundant monumental and other evidence of the existence in Rome, in the time of the later Republic and of the Empire, of certain funeral confraternities—*collegia*, as they were called—much like the modern burial clubs. A remarkable inscription of the time of Hadrian, A. D. 103, found at Lavigna, nineteen miles from Rome, on the Appian Way, gives an insight into their constitution and objects. With much legal tautology it sets forth the privilege of this *collegium* of the worshippers of Diana and the new divinity Antinous appointed by a decree of the Roman Senate and people, to assemble, convene, and have an association for the burial of the dead.[62] The members of this confraternity were to pay for that purpose a hundred *sesterces* at entrance, besides an *amphora* of good wine, and five *ases* a month thereafter,[63] all of which was forfeited by the non-payment of the monthly dues. Three hundred *sesterces* were expended on the funeral, fifty of which were to be distributed at the cremation of the body. If a member died at a distance from Rome three of the confraternity were sent to fetch the body. Even if they failed to obtain it the funeral rites were duly paid to an effigy of the deceased. There was also provision made for the members dining together on anniversary and other occasions according to rules duly prescribed by the *collegium*.

Fig. 19.—Epitaph from Lapidarian Gallery.[61]

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The names of very many of these *collegia* have been preserved, each of which consisted of the members of a similar profession or handicraft. Thus we have the *Collegium Medicorum*, the association of the physicians; *Aurificum*, of the gold-workers; *Tignariorum*, of the carpenters; *Dendrophororum*, of the wood-fellers; *Pellionariorum*, of the furriers; *Nautarum*, of the sailors; *Pabulariorum*, of the forage merchants; *Aurigariorum*, of the charioteers; and *Utriculariorum*, of the bargemen.[64]

They were frequently also connected by the bond of nationality or of common religious observance, as *Collegium Germanorum*, the association of the Germans; *Pastophororum*, of the priests of Isis; *Serapidis et Isidis*, of Serapis and Isis; *Æsculapii et Hygeiæ*, of Æsculapius and Hygeia.[65] Sometimes they were *Cultores Veneris*, *Jovis*, *Herculis*, worshippers of Venus, Jupiter, Hercules, or, as we have seen, of Diana and Antinous.

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These associations were often favoured with especial privileges, immunities, and rights, like those of incorporation, such as the holding of territorial property. De Rossi has shown, by ample citations, that the emperors, who were always opposed to associations among the citizens, made a special exemption in favour of these funeral clubs.[66]

By conformity to the constitution of these corporations the Christian church had peculiar facilities for the burial of its dead, and even for the celebration of religious worship. Indeed, it has been suggested, and is highly probable, that it was under the cover of these funeral associations that toleration was conceded, first to the sepulchres, then to the churches. Tertullian describes the practice of the Christian community in the second century as follows: "Every one offers a small contribution on a certain day of the month, or when he chooses, and as he is able, for no one is compelled; it is a voluntary offering. This is our common fund for piety; for it is not expended in feasting and drinking and in wanton excesses, but in feeding and *burying the poor*, in supporting orphans, aged persons, and such as are shipwrecked, or such as languish in mines, in exile, or in prison."[67] Thus the *Ecclesia Fratrum*, the "Congregation of the Brethren," who restored the funeral monument described on page fifty-six,[68] suggests the pagan college of the *Fratres Arvales*; and the

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Cultor Verbi, or worshipper of the Divine Word, in the same inscription, would seem to the heathen magistrate analogous to the *Cultores Jovis* or *Cultores Dianæ* of the pagan *collegia*. Indeed, it is difficult to decide from the names of some of these associations whether they were Christian or pagan. Thus we read of the *Collegium convictorum qui una epulo vesci solent*—"The fraternity of table-companions who are accustomed to feast together." De Rossi suggests that there may be here a covert reference to a Christian community, and probably to the celebration of the Agape or of the Eucharist.[69] Another is the *Collegium quod est in domo Sergiæ Paulinæ*—"The association which is in the house of Sergia Paulina." This possibly may have been a Christian community, like "the church which was in the house" of Priscilla and Aquila.[70]

That the primitive Christians availed themselves of the privileges granted to the funeral associations, is confirmed by a discovery made by De Rossi in the Cemetery of St. Domitilla in the year 1865, and already referred to. At the entrance was found a chamber, with stone seats like the *schola*, or place of meeting of the pagan tombs where the religious confraternity celebrated the funeral banquet of the deceased. Here the Christians celebrated instead the *Agape*, or Feast of Charity, and the *Natalitia*, or anniversary of the martyrs who were buried there, just as the pagan associations commemorated the anniversaries of their deceased patrons.

The ancient privileges of these *collegia* were confirmed by an edict of Septimius Severus about the year A. D. 200. It is a curious coincidence that precisely at this time Zephyrinus, bishop of Rome, appointed Callixtus to be "guardian of the cemetery," as well as head of the clergy.[71] In order to secure to the funeral association the protection of the law it was necessary that one of its members should be appointed agent or "syndic," by whom its business should be transacted, and in whose name its property should be held.[72] Thus Callixtus became the syndic of the public cemetery of the church, which still bears his name. De Rossi conjectures that this was the first cemetery set apart for the use of the whole Christian community. Hence it was taken under the care of the ecclesiastical authorities, and became, as we shall see hereafter, the burying-place of the Roman bishops, and the especial property of the church.[73]

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We will now trace briefly the history of those persecutions which glutted the Catacombs with victims, and at times drove the church for sanctuary to their deepest recesses. We have seen that Christianity grew up under the protection accorded to Judaism as one of the tolerated religions of Rome. But this toleration did not long continue. In Rome as well as elsewhere the new creed was doomed to a baptism of blood. The causes of this persecution are not far to seek. The Christian doctrine spread rapidly, and early excited the jealousy of the Roman authorities by its numerous converts from the national faith, many of whom were of exalted rank. These carefully refrained from the idolatrous adulation by which the servile mob were wont to express their loyalty to the imperial monster who aspired to be a god. Hence they were accused of disaffection, of treason.[74] They were the enemies of Cæsar, and of the Roman people.[75] They were supposed to exert a malign influence on the course of nature. If it did not rain the Christians were to blame.[76] "If the Tiber overflows its banks," says Tertullian, "or the Nile does not; if there be drought or earthquakes, famine or pestilence, the cry is raised, '*The Christians to the lions!*'"[77] If the pecking of the sacred chickens or the entrails of the sacrificial victims gave unfavourable omens, it was attributed to the counter spell of "the atheists." At Rome, as well as at Ephesus and Philippi, the selfish fears of the shrine and image makers, whose "craft was in danger," and the hostility of the priests and dependents on the idol-worship, inspired or intensified the opposition to Christianity, as did also the jealousy of the Jews, who regarded with especial hostility the believers in the lowly Nazarene, whom their fathers with wicked hands had crucified and slain.[78]

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The terrible conflagration which destroyed the greater part of the city during the reign of Nero was made the excuse for the first outburst of persecution against the Christian community. By public rumour this deed was attributed to Nero himself. "To put an end to to this report," says Tacitus, "he laid the guilt, and inflicted the most cruel punishment, upon these men, who, already branded with infamy, were called by the vulgar, Christians.... Their sufferings at their executions," he adds, "were aggravated by insult and mockery; for some were sewn up in the skins of wild beasts, and worried to death by dogs; some were crucified, and some, wrapped in garments of pitch, were burned as torches to illumine the night."[79]

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During this persecution St. Paul fell a victim, A. D. 64. He was beheaded "without the gate," on the Ostian Way, and weeping friends took up his bleeding corpse and laid it, according to tradition, in one of the most ancient crypts of an adjoining Catacomb, where Eusebius asserts that his tomb could be seen in his day.[80]

From this time Christianity was exposed to outbursts of heathen rage, and express decrees were published against it.[81] No longer sharing the protection of Judaism, it fell under the ban of the empire. At times the rage of persecution slumbered, and again it burst forth with inextinguishable fury. But, like the typical bush that "flourished unconsumed in fire," the Christian faith but grew and spread the more. Yet the sword ever impended over the church. Sometimes its stroke was for a time deferred, when the little flock took courage and rejoiced; but often it fell with crushing weight, smiting the shepherds and scattering the sheep. One of these periods of rest extended from the time of the Neronian persecution till near the end of the century, when Domitian, "a second Nero,"[82] stretched forth his hand

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again to vex the saints. During the short reign of the “justice-loving Nerva” the Christians again enjoyed repose, so that Lactantius even asserts that they were restored to all their former privileges.

To the first century De Rossi refers the construction of at least three or four of the Catacombs. These are, (1) the Cemetery of Priscilla, excavated, according to an ancient tradition, in the property of the Roman Senator Pudens, mentioned by St. Paul, and in which, it is said, were interred his daughters Pudentiana and Praxides; (2) the Catacomb of Domitilla, the grandniece of the Emperor Domitian, in which she herself was buried, together with her chamberlains Nereus and Achilles, who were beheaded for their steadfastness in the Christian faith; (3) the Crypt of Lucina, afterwards part of the Catacomb of Callixtus, in which some of the most ancient inscriptions have been found. De Rossi conjectures that this lady is the same as the Pomponia Græcina before mentioned, the wife of Plautius, the conqueror of Britain. (4) De Rossi is also of the opinion that he has discovered another, and the oldest of all the Catacombs, dating from the very times of the apostles themselves, in that known as the Fons Petri, or the Cemetery of the Font of Peter, in which tradition asserts that he himself baptized. The classical style of the architecture, frescoes, and graceful stucco wreaths and garlands, and the character of the inscriptions, all point to a very ancient period, before art had degenerated, and before long-continued persecution had banished Christianity into seclusion and poverty. [Pg 74]

The law of Trajan against secret assemblies, synchronous with the opening of the second century, gave a new occasion of persecuting the Church. With such severity was this done that, according to Pliny, the deserted temples became again frequented, and their neglected rites revived.[83]

The Emperor Hadrian is described by his contemporaries as diligently practising the Roman rites, and despising all foreign religions.[84] Although he restrained the tumultuous attacks of the populace upon the Christians, he nevertheless favoured their legal prosecution.[85]

The following epitaph given by Maitland commemorates a martyrdom of this reign. The last sentence seems to imply that it was erected in a time of actual persecution; but no dated example of the monogram which accompanies it appears before the time of Constantine. The inscription was probably written long after the death of Marius, or the monogram may have been added by a later hand: [Pg 75]

TEMPORE ADRIANI IMPERATORIS
MARIVS ADOLESCENS DVX MILITVM
QVI SATIS VIXIT DVM VITAM PRO CHO
CVM SANGVINE CON SVNSIT IN PACE
TANDEM QVIEVIT BENE MERENTES
CVM LACRIMIS ET METV POSVE RVNT
I. D. VI.

> In Christ. In the time of the Emperor Hadrian, Marius, a young military officer, who had lived long enough, when, with his blood, he gave up his life for Christ. At length he rested in peace. The well-deserving set up this with tears and in fear, on the 6th, Ides of December.

In this reign also suffered Alexander, bishop of Rome, whose tomb has been found on the Nomentan Way, together with Eventius and Theodulus, a presbyter and deacon.

Under the humane and equitable Antoninus Pius,[86] Christianity seems to have enjoyed a partial toleration, although the edict of Trajan was still unrevoked. Yet several outbreaks of popular fury against the Christians took place, and in the very first year of his reign Telesphorus, the bishop of the church at Rome, suffered martyrdom.[87]

One of the strangest phenomena in history is the persecution of the primitive church by the philosophical emperor Marcus Aurelius,[88] whose “Meditations” seem almost like the writings of an apostle in their praise of virtue, yearning for abstract perfection, and contempt of pomp and pleasure. Nevertheless, he was one of the most systematic and heartless of all the oppressors of the Christian faith—a faith so much loftier than even his high philosophy, and yet having so much akin. With the cool acerbity of a stoic, he resolved to exterminate the obnoxious doctrines. An active inquisition for the Christians was set on foot, and the odious system of domestic espionage, which even Trajan had forbidden, was encouraged. Shameless informers, greedy for gain, fed their rapacity on the confiscated spoils of the believers, whom they plundered, says Melito, by day and by night. Though gentle to other classes of offenders, and even to rebels, Aurelius exceeded in barbarity the most ruthless of his predecessors in the refinements of torture, by rack and scourge, by fire and stake, employed to enforce the recantation of the Christians; and every year of his long reign was polluted with innocent blood. [Pg 76]

From Gaul to Asia Minor raged the storm of persecution. The earthquakes, floods, and famine, the wars and pestilence, that wasted the empire, were visited upon the hapless Christians, who were immolated in hecatombs as the causes of these dire calamities. From the crowded amphitheatre of Smyrna ascended, as in a chariot of fire, the soul of the apostolic bishop Polycarp. The arrowy Rhone ran red with martyrs’ blood. The names of the

venerable Pothinus, of the youthful Blandina and Ponticus, and of the valiant Symphorianus, will be memories of thrilling power and pathos to the end of time. At Rome the persecution selected some of its noblest victims. Justin, the Christian philosopher, finding in the Gospels a loftier lore than in the teachings of Zeno or Aristotle, of Pythagoras or Plato, became the foremost of the goodly phalanx of apologists and defenders of the faith, and sealed his testimony with his blood. With six of his companions he was brought before the prefect for refusing obedience to the imperial decree. "We are Christians," they said, "and sacrifice not [Pg 77] to idols." They were forthwith scourged and beheaded, and devout men bore them to their burial, doubtless in these very Catacombs, where their undiscovered remains may yet lie. In this reign also suffered the seven sons of St. Felicitas—the tomb of one of whom De Rossi believes he has found—and St. Cecilia and her companions, to be hereafter mentioned.[89]

[Pg 78] The legend of the Thundering Legion, supported as it is by the medals and the column of Antoninus, commemorates, indeed, the deliverance of the Roman army by a timely shower; but the Emperor ascribed that deliverance not to the prayers of the Christians, but to his own appeal to the heathen gods,[90] and there is no evidence that he ever relaxed the severity of the persecution.

The ferocity of the brutal Commodus[91] was tempered by the influence of his concubine, [Pg 79] Marcia, and Christianity spread among the highest ranks; but persecution did not entirely cease. Apollonius, a senator of the empire, was put to death at Rome, and we read of numerous martyrdoms elsewhere. A Christian inscription commemorates an officer of Commodus, and Procurator of the Imperial household, who was "received to God"—RECEPTVS AD DEVM—A. D. 217.[92]

On the death of this emperor the persecution raged with such violence that, according to Clemens Alexandrinus, many martyrs were burned, crucified, and beheaded every day.[93] *Non licet esse vos*—"It is not lawful for you to exist"—was the stern edict of extermination pronounced against the saints.

Christianity had little favour to expect from a military despot like Septimius Severus, whose dying counsel to his successor expressed the principle of his government—"Be generous to the soldiers and trample on all besides."

The revived accusations against the new faith called forth the bold defence, or rather defiance, of Tertullian, one of the noblest monuments of the primitive ages. In this reign the sanctity of the Christian cemeteries was first violated, and that not at Rome but in Africa, where the persecution was most virulent. "The mob assails us with stones and flames with the frenzy of bacchanals," says Tertullian; "They do not even spare the Christian dead, but tear them from the rest of the tomb, from the asylum of death, cut them in pieces, and rend them asunder."[94]

[Pg 80] After the cessation of this persecution the Church enjoyed a period of unwonted rest. Although under the ignoble Heliogabalus the sensual Asiatic worship of Baal was introduced to Rome, and human sacrifice was even offered to this Eastern Moloch,[95] yet the religion of peace and purity shared the toleration accorded to the most obscene and cruel rites. The just and amiable Alexander Severus inaugurated a new era for Christianity,[96] to which he was favourably disposed, probably through the influence of his mother, Mammæa, who had enjoyed at Antioch the instruction of Origen.[97] He used frequently to quote with approval the Golden Rule of Our Lord, and caused it to be inscribed on his palace walls, and also ceded to the Christians a piece of public ground for the erection of a church.[98] But Alexander was only a religious eclectic, honouring what he thought best in the current [Pg 81] systems of belief. Of this reign is the epitaph of Urban, bishop of Rome, which has been found in the so-called "Papal Crypt," bearing his name and the initial letter of his title—OYPBANOC E....

The accession of the Thracian savage, Maximin, A. D. 235, was the signal for a fresh outburst of persecution. To have been favoured by Severus was sufficient to incur the hate of his murderer. His rage was especially directed against the chief pastors of the flock of Christ. Pontianus, the Roman bishop, was exiled to Sardinia, and there slain. Antherus, his successor in this dangerous dignity, for his zeal in preserving the records of the martyrs himself suffered martyrdom a few weeks after his accession, and was laid in that narrow chamber destined to receive so many of Rome's early bishops, where a slab bearing his name and title—ANTEPΩC · EΠI—has been found. In this reign also suffered the celebrated Hippolytus, bishop of Pontus, and author of the "Philosophoumena."

Under Gordian and Philip a respite was again granted to the persecuted church. The latter, indeed, is claimed by Eusebius as a Christian; but his character and conduct are inconsistent with such a supposition.

A violent reaction took place on the accession of Decius, whose name became an object of execration to mankind.[99] He resolved to entirely crush and extirpate Christianity, whose bishops and churches began to rival the pontiffs and temples of the gods of Rome. At his instigation a persecution of unprecedented virulence raged like an epidemic throughout the empire. The imperial edicts enforced conformity to the pagan ritual under penalty of the most horrible tortures. This unwonted severity produced the first great apostasy of the [Pg 82] primitive church; and many of the less stable converts procured exemption from martyrdom by sacrificing to the gods, burning incense on their altars, or purchasing certificates of

indulgence from the heathen magistrate.[100]

"Pale and trembling, and more like sacrificial victims than those about to sacrifice," says an eye-witness, "some approached the heathen shrines; but others, firm and blessed pillars of the Lord, witnessed a good confession unto death."[101] The bishops of the church, who, as the leaders of Christ's sacramental host, bore gallantly the battle's brunt, were naturally the earliest victims of the tyrant's rage. Accordingly, at the very outbreak of the Decian slaughter, the venerable Fabian, head of the Roman church, perished by decapitation; and the Catacombs were glutted with a host of unknown martyrs. In the very chamber in the Cemetery of Callixtus to which his mutilated corpse was borne, may still be seen the Bishop's epitaph—ΦΑΒΙΑΝΟC · ΕΠΙ—with the monogram of his martyrdom, the conjoined letters MTP, added probably by a later hand. The church seemed paralyzed with fear, and for [Pg 83] sixteen months no successor was elected. But, undismayed by the tragic fate of Fabian, Cornelius, allied with some of the noblest families of Rome, became the leader of the forlorn hope of Christianity against all the power of the empire. After a year's episcopate he was first banished and then beheaded under Gallus, a worthy successor in persecution of Decius. Through the archæological researches of De Rossi have been recovered, first his epitaph —CORNELIVS · MARTYR · EP—and then his tomb, with a Damasine inscription, in one of the most interesting crypts of the Catacombs. Lucius, his successor, in six months shared his fate, and was buried in the chamber consecrated by the dust of so many martyr-bishops, where his brief epitaph—ΛΟΥΚΙC—is still legible.

Valerian,[102] who revived in his own person the ancient office of Censor, was at first so favourable toward the Christians that his house, says Dionysius of Alexandria, was filled with pious persons, and was, indeed, a congregation[103] of the Lord. This favour was doubtless the result of the Censor's approval of Christian influence on public morals.[104] In the latter part of his reign, however, the Emperor passed under the dominion of the most abject superstition. Through the influence of Macrianus, a pagan bigot learned in the dark lore of Egypt, he became addicted to magic arts, and is said to have sought the auguries of the empire in the entrails of human victims.[105] The most relentless decrees were launched against the Christian church. The bishops, priests, and deacons were forthwith to be put to the sword; all others were to share the same fate, or to be punished by exile and fetters.[106] [Pg 84] The holding of assemblies, or even entering the Christian cemeteries, was strictly prohibited A. D. 257.[107] By this unwonted invasion of the immemorial sanctity of the sepulchre the Christians were forbidden even these last refuges from persecution.

Among the most illustrious victims of Valerian whose bodies lie in the lowly Catacombs, but whose names live for evermore, were Stephen I. and Sixtus II., bishops of the persecuted church, and a number of distinguished ecclesiastics, as well as many laymen of noble rank.[108]

Stephen, as the head of the Christian community, was especially obnoxious to heathen rage. According to the Acts of his martyrdom he sought concealment in these sepulchral crypts,[109] where he was secretly visited by the faithful, and where he administered the sacraments. He was traced by the Roman soldiers to his subterranean chapel, but, awed by the mysterious rites, they allowed him to conclude the service in which he was engaged. He was then beheaded, with several of his adherents,[110] and buried in the Catacomb.

Sixtus, the successor of Stephen, within a year received the martyr's crown. Like another [Pg 85] Daniel setting at defiance the emperor's decree, he was leading the devotions of the persecuted flock in the Catacomb of Prætextatus, probably because it was less known than the public cemetery of Callixtus, when he was apprehended by the fierce soldiery, who had tracked his footsteps thither. He was hurried away to summary judgment, brought back to the place of his offence, and there beheaded, sprinkling with his blood the walls of the chamber. With him were also executed four of his deacons,[111] the monuments of two of whom, Agapetus and Felicissimus, De Rossi discovered in the very Catacomb in which they suffered. Sixtus himself was buried in the "Bishops' Tomb" in the Callixtan Cemetery, where the following inscription, fragments of which have been found in the *débris*, was afterward set up by Damasus:

TEMPORE QVO GLADIVS SECVIT PIA VISCERA MATRIS
HIC POSITVS RECTOR COELESTIA IVSSA DOCEBAM
ADVENIVNT SVBITO RAPIVNT QVI FORTE SEDENTEM
MILITIBVS MISSIS POPVLI TVNC COLLA DEDERE
MOX SIBI COGNOVIT SENIOR QVIS TOLLERE VELLET
PALMAM SEQVE SVVMQVE CAPVT PRIOR OBTVLIT IPSE
IMPATIENS FERITAS POSSET NE LAEDERE QVEMQVAM
OSTENDIT CHRISTVS REDDIT QVI PRAEMIA VITAE
PASTORIS MERITVM NVMERVM GREGIS IPSE TVETVR

[Pg 86] At the time when the sword pierced the tender heart of the Mother [church,] I, the ruler buried here, was teaching the laws of heaven. Suddenly came [the enemy,] who seized me sitting as I was. Then the people presented their necks to the soldiers sent against me. Soon the old man saw who sought to bear away the palm, and was the first to offer himself and his own head, that impatient rage might injure no one else. Christ who bestows the rewards of life, manifests the merit of the pastor: he himself defends the flock.[112]

Thus seven bishops of the church at Rome fell in succession by the hand of the headsman,

five of them in the space of eight years—heroic athletes of Christ who, at the very seat of paganism, as in a mighty theatre of God, bore the brunt of persecution, and, conquering even in death, received the martyr's crown and palm.

The accession of Gallienus[113] restored peace to the church. His decree granting complete religious toleration, the restoration of confiscated ecclesiastical property, and permission to "recover what they called their cemeteries,"[114] won the gratitude of his Christian subjects. His character, however, by no means justified the epithet of "holy and pious emperor" bestowed by Dionysius of Alexandria.[115] This was the first formal recognition of Christianity as a *religio licita*, or legalized faith, and for forty years the church enjoyed comparative repose; at least such repose as was possible while twenty rival emperors—fantastic things "that likeness of a kingly crown had on"—struggled for the supremacy, and harried the land with their mutual devastations. During this period, Felix, the bishop of the Roman church, who, according to the *Liber Pontificalis*, was exceedingly diligent in honouring the martyrs of the Catacombs, became himself a conscript of that noble army, and was beheaded, in accordance with an imperial decree, as was also Agapetus, a Christian of noble rank.

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The mild and amiable Tacitus[116] ruled over a turbulent people only six months. His brother Florian retained the purple only half that time. Probus, "the just," whose name, says his epitaph, expressed his character,[117] fell by the hands of his own tumultuous legionaries. The sensual and abominable Carinus displayed the extravagancies of Heliogabalus, aggravated by the cruelty of Domitian. In his reign died Eutychianus, whose epitaph and title—ΕΥΤΥΧΙΑΝΟC ΕΠΙC—have been found in the "Papal Crypt" of Callixtus.[118]

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Christianity was destined to undergo a final ordeal before it should ascend the throne of the Cæsars. The church must pass once more through the purifying flames of persecution before it was fit to be entrusted with the reins of empire. The long peace and temporal prosperity had fostered pride and luxury, and relaxed the morals of the Christian community. Schisms and feuds destroyed the unity of the faith, and the bishops had begun to aspire to temporal power, and to assert an unwarranted authority. "Prelates inveighed against prelates," says Eusebius, "and people rose against people, assailing each other with words as with darts and spears."[119] The blasts of adversity were necessary to winnow the spurious and false away, and to leave the tried and true behind. From the fatal slumber of religious apathy into which the church was falling it was to be rudely awakened. Its former afflictions sank into insignificance compared with this great tribulation, which was pre-eminently called *The* Persecution by the historian of the times.[120]

The close of the third century witnessed the strange spectacle of the government of the Roman world by a group of men who had climbed to the giddy height of power from the lowest stations in life. Diocletian, originally a slave, or at least the son of a slave, reduced the haughty aristocracy of Rome to a condition of oriental servility. Maximian, a Pannonian peasant, betrayed the savageness of his nature by his bloodthirsty cruelty. Galerius, an Illyrian herdsman, but exhibited more conspicuously upon the throne of empire the native barbarity of his character. Constantius was of nobler birth than any of his colleagues, and he alone adorned his lofty station by dignity, justice, and clemency. The world groaned under the oppression of its cruel masters. So exhausting were their exactions that none remained to tax, says Lactantius,[121] but the beggars.

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The early years of the reign of Diocletian were characterized for the most part by principles of religious toleration. Indeed, his wife and daughter, the empresses Prisca and Valeria, favoured, if they did not adopt, the Christian faith, and some of the first officers of the imperial household belonged to the now powerful sect.[122] But even during this period the Christians were not free from danger. Caius, the Roman bishop, is said to have lived for eight years in the Catacombs on account of the persecution, and at last underwent martyrdom in the year A. D. 296.[123] Marcus and Marcelianus, two Roman Christians of noble rank, who have given their name to one of the Catacombs, suffered about this time. Others, especially in the army, where the ancient faith had firmest hold, and where, indeed, Eusebius says, the persecution began,[124] endured martyrdom as the valiant soldiers of Christ. The storm, of which these events were the precursors, at length burst with fury on the Christians in the year 303. A series of cruel edicts, written, says Eusebius, with a dagger's point,[125] were fulminated for the extirpation of the Christian name.[126] They were framed with malignant ingenuity, so as to leave no chance of escape save in open apostasy. All ecclesiastical property was confiscated. The churches were razed to the ground, and the sacred scriptures burned with fire.[127] All assemblies for worship were prohibited on pain of death. The clergy of every order were zealously sought out, and thrust into dungeons designed for the worst of felons.[128] The whole Christian community was outlawed, degraded from every secular office, deprived of the rights of citizenship, and exposed to the punishment of the vilest slaves. With intensifying violence edict followed edict, like successive strokes of thunder in a raging storm. A universal and relentless proscription of the Christian name took place. The truculent monster Galerius, of whom his Christian subjects said, that he never supped without human blood,[129] proposed that all who refused to sacrifice to the gods should be burned alive; and the fiendish ingenuity of the persecutors was exhausted in devising fresh tortures for their victims.

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In Italy, and especially at Rome, the work of destruction was eagerly carried on by Maximian, an implacable enemy of the Christians; and after his death by the abominable voluptuary Maxentius, in whom the twin passions of cruelty and lust struggled for the

mastery. These monsters of iniquity revelled in a carnival of blood, and glutted the [Pg 91]
Catacombs with victims, some of the most illustrious of whom will shortly be mentioned. On the retirement of Diocletian, satiated with slaughter and weary with the cares of state, to his retreat at Salonica, Galerius continued the persecution with increased zeal. It was the expiring effort of paganism, the death throes of its mortal agony. But the Christian religion, like the trodden grass that ranker grows, flourished still in spite of the oppression it endured. Like the rosemary and thyme, which the more they are bruised give out the richer perfume, it breathed forth the odours of sanctity which are fragrant in the world to-day. Though the frail and the fickle fell off in the blast of adversity, the staunch and true remained; and from the martyr's blood, more prolific than the fabled dragon's teeth, a new host of Christian heroes rose, contending for the martyr's starry and unwithering crown.

But the period of deliverance was at hand. Smitten by the power of that God whose titles and attributes he had usurped, the wretched Galerius, amid the agonies of a loathsome disease, implored the intercessions of the Christians whom he had so ruthlessly proscribed. With sublimest magnanimity the church exhibited the nobility of a Gospel revenge, and obeyed the injunction of its divine Master to pray for those who persecuted and despitefully used it. From the dying couch of the remorseful monarch came an abject apology for his cruel deeds; and, in late atonement for his crime, a decree of amplest recognition of Christianity, and restoration of the right to worship God. Like the trump of jubilee, the edict of deliverance pealed through the land. It penetrated the gloomy dungeon, the darksome mine, the catacomb's dim labyrinth; and from their sombre depths vast processions of the [Pg 92]
"noble wrestlers of religion"[130] thronged to the long forsaken churches with grateful songs of praise to God.

But this treacherous calm was soon to be again broken. The superstitious tyrant Maximin endeavoured to revive the dying paganism, and to renew the persecution. He paid Christianity the high compliment of attempting a complete organization of the heathen priesthood on the model of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and restored the ancient worship with unwonted pomp. He prohibited the assemblies in the cemeteries, and reiterated the edict of extermination against the Christians.[131] But the loathsome death of this brutal voluptuary soon delivered the church from the most implacable of its foes. From the distant island of Britain—that ultimate far Thule of the empire—had arrived the Cæsar who should enthrone the new faith on the seat of its persecutors, and establish it as the religion of the state,[132] an event more perilous to its purity and spiritual power than the direst oppression it had ever endured. Constantine having overcome the enemies of Christianity, who were also his own, became its protector, more, it is easy to believe, either from conviction of its truth or from policy than on account of the alleged miraculous vision of the cross of Christ, the presage of a bloody victory.[133] He issued at Milan, A. D. 313, that decree of full and [Pg 93]
unlimited toleration[134] which became thenceforth the charter of the church's liberties.[135]

The sufferings of the more illustrious victims of persecution are alone recorded in history, [Pg 94]
which is silent concerning the great army of unknown martyrs, whose names are recorded only in the Book of Life. The bishops of the church were ever the first to feel the tyrants' rage. The episcopal chair was often but the stepping-stone to the scaffold. Yet faithful shepherds were not wanting to lead the flock of Christ, and to testify their devotion to their trust by the sacrifice of their lives. We have seen how Caius suffered even before the final outbreak of persecution. Marcellinus, his successor, incurred the resentment of the tyrant Maxentius, was degraded to the office of groom of the public stables, where the horses of the circus were kept, and soon sank beneath the weight of his miseries and those of the church.[136] Marcellus, sometimes confounded with Marcellinus, paid the penalty of exile for his firmness in maintaining the ecclesiastical discipline against those who apostatized from the faith in those times of fiery trial. This event is recorded in the Damasine inscription:

VERIDICVS RECTOR LAPSOS QVIA CRIMINA FLERE
PRAEDIXIT MISERIS FVIT OMNIBVS HOSTIS AMARVS
HINC FVROR HINC ODIVM SEQVITVR DISCORDIA LITES
SEDITIO CAEDES SOLVVNTVR FOEDERA PACIS
CRIMEN OB ALTERIVS CHRISTVM QVI IN PACE NEGAVIT
FINIBVS EXPVLSVS PATRIAE EST FERITATE TYRANNI
HAEC BREVITER DAMASVS VOLVIT COMPERTA REFERRE
MARCELLI VT POPVLVS MERITVM COGNOSCERE POSSET.[137]

The truth-speaking ruler, because he preached that the lapsed should weep for their [Pg 95]
crimes, was bitterly hated by all those unhappy ones. Hence fury, hence hatred followed, discord, contentions, sedition, and slaughter; and the bonds of peace were ruptured. For the crime of another, who in a time of peace had denied Christ, he was expelled the shores of his country by the cruelty of the tyrant. These things Damasus having learned, was desirous to relate briefly, that the people might recognize the merit of Marcellus.

Neither Marcellus nor Marcellinus was buried in the Catacomb of Callixtus—which, as Diocletian had confiscated all the public cemeteries, was inaccessible to the Christians—but in the private crypt of the Christian matron Priscilla, on the Salarian Way. Eusebius, the successor of Marcellus, was also banished on account of the controversy concerning the "lapsed." New light has recently been thrown on this subject by De Rossi's discovery, in the tomb of the bishop, of the following Damasine inscription in a fragmentary condition:

HERACLIVS VETVIT LABSOS [*sic*] PECCATA DOLERE
EVSEBIVS MISEROS DOCVIT SVA CRIMINA FLERE
SCINDITVR [IN] PARTES POPVLOS GLISCENTE FVRORE
SEDITIO CAEDES BELLVM DISCORDIA LITES
EXTEMPLO PARITER PVLSI FERITATE TYRANNI
INTEGRA CVM RECTOR SERVARET FOEDERA PACIS
PERTVLIT EXILIVM DOMINO SVB IVDICE LAETVS
LITORE TRINACRIO MVNDVM VITAMQ · RELIQUIT.

> Heraclius forbade the lapsed to grieve for their sins. Eusebius taught those unhappy ones to weep for their crimes. The people were rent in parties, and with increasing fury began sedition, slaughter, fighting, discord, and strife. Straightway both were banished by the cruelty of the tyrant, although the ruler was preserving the bonds of peace inviolate. He bore his exile with joy, looking to the Lord as his Judge, and on the Trinacrian shore gave up the world and his life.

The Heraclius mentioned in the inscription is probably the heretical leader referred to in the epitaph of Marcellus, previously given. No reference to this event occurs in any of the ecclesiastical writers, and this inscription, says Dr. Northcote, is the recovery of a lost chapter in the history of the church.[138] The remains of Eusebius were brought from Sicily, the place of his exile, by his successor, Melchiades, and interred in the Catacomb of Callixtus, but not with the other bishops, the approaches to whose tomb were blocked up with earth, probably to prevent its violation by the enemies of the faith. Melchiades, with whom the long succession of Rome's martyr bishops comes to a close, was the last of his order who was buried in the Catacombs, and De Rossi conjectures that he has discovered in the Cemetery of Callixtus his tomb, and the very sarcophagus in which he lay.[139] [Pg 96]

One of the most illustrious of the lay martyrs of the Diocletian persecution was the gallant young soldier Sebastian, who has given his name to one of the most ancient basilicas of Rome and to the adjacent Catacomb, and Adauctus, a treasurer of the imperial palace. In the Damasine epitaph of the latter occur the fine lines:

INTEMERATA FIDE CONTEMPTO PRINCIPE MVNDI
CONFESSVS $\overline{\text{XRM}}$ CAELESTIA REGNA PETISTI.[140]

> With unfaltering faith, despising the lord of the world, having confessed Christ, thou didst seek the celestial realms.

Several of the Christian cemeteries receive their designation from the martyrs of this period, among others those of Saints Agnes, Peter, and Marcellinus, of Pancratius, Generosa, Zeno, Soteris, and *Quattro Incoronati*, notice of whom will be more appropriate in the accounts of their respective sepulchres. History has also preserved the names of many other valiant confessors, who proved faithful even unto death amid the fiery trials and cruel mockings and scourgings to which they were exposed. Among these may be mentioned Cosmo and Damian, two holy brothers of Cilicia, who practised in Rome with great skill the healing art, from pure love to God and to their fellow-men, refusing to receive aught for their services; [141] Simplicius and Faustinus, who were drowned in the Tiber by the tyrant's orders, and their martyred sister Beatrice, whose tombs and epitaphs De Rossi believes he has recovered.[142] Most of the legends, however, of what may be called the Romish mythology are disfigured by absurd and superstitious additions; and the martyrs themselves have become the objects of idolatrous veneration far alien from the spirit of that primitive Christianity for which they died.[143] [Pg 97]

The following inscriptions from the Catacombs are the only records of the victims of persecution whose names they bear. [Pg 98]

Fig. 21.—Lannus, the martyr of Christ, rests here. He suffered under Diocletian. For his successors also.

PRIMITIVS IN PACE QVI POST
MVLTAS ANGVSTIAS FORTISSIMVS MARTYR
ET VIXIT ANNOS P · M · XXXVIII CONIVG · SVO
PERDVLCISSIMO BENEMERENTI FECIT.

Primitius in peace, after many torments, a most valiant martyr. He lived thirty-eight years, more or less. [His wife] raised this to her dearest husband, the well-deserving.

HIC GORDIANVS GALLIAE NVNCIVS
IVGVLATVS PRO FIDE CVM FAMILIA TOTA
QVIESCVNT IN PACE
THEOPHILA ANCILLA FECIT.

Here lies Gordianus, deputy of Gaul, who was executed for the faith, with all his family: they rest in peace. Theophila, a handmaid, set up this.[144]

[Pg 99] The history of the Catacombs is inextricably interwoven with that of Christianity. Their very structure reflects the character of the times in which they were made. The absence of constraint or concealment, and the superior construction and ornamentation of those belonging to the earliest times, indicate the comparative security of the church before it had awakened the jealousy or fear of the Roman emperors. Their immense extension and crowded galleries testify to the rapid increase of the Christian community. The altered character which they gradually assumed, the obstructed passages, the masked entrances, devious windings, and devices for concealment or escape, and the rudely scratched inscriptions and uncouth paintings, betray the sense of fear and the kindling rage of persecution which pursued the hunted Christians to these subterraneous sanctuaries of the faith. Their greater magnificence and more ornate structure, the costly mosaics, the marble stairways, and richly carved sarcophagi of the later ages, tell of the enthronement of Christianity on the seat of the Cæsars, and of the homage paid to the relics and shrines of the saints and martyrs. And their debased architecture, barbarous paintings, and progressive ruin during the later years of their history indicate the gradual eclipse of art, and their final abandonment. We must therefore carefully determine at least the proximate date of any particular feature if we would correctly interpret its significance.

[Pg 100] The last and most terrible persecution of the church before its final triumph left abundant evidence of its violence and lengthened duration in the changes which contemporaneously took place in the Catacombs. God prepared a place for his saints, and hid them in the clefts of the rock as in the hollow of his hand. When the public observance of Christianity was proscribed by law the believers withdrew from the light of day, and in the inmost and darkest recesses of these subterranean crypts, by the graves of their martyred dead, enjoyed the consolation of religious worship, and broke the bread and drank the wine in memory of their dying Lord.[145]

But after the decree of Valerian which forbade the entering or holding any assemblies in the Christian cemeteries, even these retreats were not safe, and the last sanctuaries of the faith were unscrupulously invaded. Persecution relentlessly followed the Christians through the labyrinthine windings of the Catacombs, and violated the sepulchres of the sainted dead by sacrilegious tumult and bloodshed. Sometimes the heathen soldiery, fearing to pursue their victims into these unknown passages, blocked up the entrance to prevent their escape; and many were thus buried alive and perished of hunger in these chambers of gloom.[146]

[Pg 101] An entire change in the construction of the Catacombs now took place. They became obviously designed for purposes of safety and concealment. The new galleries were less wide and lofty, and the *loculi* more crowded on account of the greater difficulty of removing the excavated material. At this time, too, many of the lower *piani* were made for additional graves and greater secrecy. The main entrances were blocked up and the stairways demolished. Sometimes entire galleries were filled with earth, the removal of which is the chief obstacle to modern exploration, or were built up with masonry to obstruct pursuit; and means of escape were provided, in case of forcible invasion of these retreats. A striking example of this occurs in the Catacomb of Callixtus. The ancient stairway was partially destroyed, the entrance completely obstructed, and some of the galleries walled up. Narrow passages for escape were made connecting with an adjacent *arenarium*, and a very narrow secret stairway constructed from the roof of the latter to the surface of the ground, as shown in the section above, which stairway could only be reached by a movable ladder connecting it with the floor.[147]

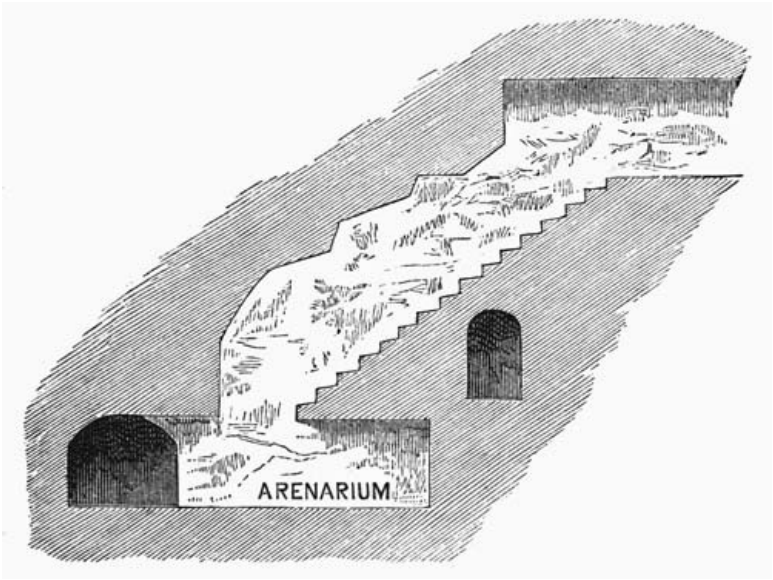

Fig. 22.—Secret stairway into Arenarium.

It is impossible that the mass of the Christian community, or even any considerable proportion of it, could ever have taken refuge in these subterraneous crypts. Their vast extent and the number of chambers would indeed permit a great multitude to remain concealed for a time in their depths; but the difficulty of procuring a regular supply of food, the confined atmosphere, and the probable exhalation of noxious gases from the graves—especially on the opening of a *bisomus*, or double tomb, for its second inmate—seem insuperable obstacles. As it was the religious leaders of the Christian community who were especially obnoxious to those in power, they would be the most likely to seek concealment in the Catacombs, not from inferiority of courage, but, like the afterward martyred Cyprian, that they might the better guide and govern the persecuted church. Hence the examples before given of bishops and other ecclesiastics lying hidden, some for years, in these depths, and visited by the faithful for instruction or for the celebration of worship.[148] There is evidence, however, that during the exacerbations of persecution private Christians sought safety in these recesses, and, burrowing in their depths, evaded the pursuit of their enemies. Tertullian speaks of "a lady, unaccustomed to privation, trembling in a vault, apprehensive of the capture of her maid, upon whom she depends for her daily food." The heads of Christian families, and those most obnoxious to the pagan authorities, would be especially likely to leave the fellowship of the living in order to live in security among the dead. Father [Pg 102] Marchi conjectures that supplies of grain were laid up for the maintenance of the hidden [Pg 103] fugitives, and De Rossi describes certain crypts in the Catacomb of Callixtus which were probably employed for storing corn or wine in time of persecution. Frequent wells occur, amply sufficient for the supply of water; and the multitude of lamps which have been found would dispel the darkness, while their sudden extinction would prove the best concealment from attack by their enemies.[149] Hence the Christians were stigmatized as a skulking, darkness-loving race,[150] who fled the light of day to burrow like moles in the earth.

These worse than Dædalian labyrinths were admirably adapted for eluding pursuit. Familiar with their intricacies, and following a well-known clew, the Christian could plunge fearlessly into the darkness, where his pursuer would soon be inextricably lost. Perchance the sound of Christian worship, and the softened cadence of the confessors' hymn, stealing through the distant corridors, may have fallen with strange awe on the souls of the rude soldiery stealthily approaching their prey; and, perhaps, not unfrequently with a saving and sanctifying power. But sometimes, tracked by the sleuth-hounds of persecution, or betrayed by some wretched apostate consumed by a Judas-greed of gold, the Christians were surprised at their devotions, and their refuge became their sepulchre. Such was the tragic fate of Stephen, slain even while ministering at the altar; such the event described by Gregory of Tours, when a hecatomb of victims were immolated at once by heathen hate; such the peril which wrung from a stricken heart the cry, not of anger but of grief, *Tempora infausta, quibus inter sacra et vota ne in cavernis quidem salvari possimus!*—"O sad times in [Pg 104] which, among sacred rites and prayers, even in caverns, we are not safe!" It requires no great effort of imagination to conceive the dangers and escapes which must have been frequent episodes in the heroic lives of the early soldiers of the cross.

In the Catacombs more safely than elsewhere could the Christians celebrate the ordinances of religion, often under cover of the rites of sepulture, which might even yet be sacred in the eyes of their enemies. And next to their funeral purposes this seems to have been their chief use. For this many of their principal chambers and chapels were excavated, supplied with seats, ventilated by *luminari*, and adorned with biblical or symbolical paintings. With what emotions must the primitive believers have held their solemn worship and heard the words of life, surrounded by the dead in Christ! With what power would come the promise of the resurrection of the body, amid the crumbling relics of mortality! How fervent their prayers for their companions in tribulation, when they themselves stood in jeopardy every hour! Their holy ambition was to witness a good confession even unto death. They burned to

emulate the zeal of the martyrs of the faith, the plumeless heroes of a nobler chivalry than that of arms, the Christian athletes who won in the bloody conflicts of the arena, or amid the fiery tortures of the stake, not a crown of laurel or of bay, but a crown of life, starry and unwithering, that can never pass away. Their humble graves are grander monuments than the trophied tombs of Rome's proud conquerors upon the Appian Way. Lightly may we tread beside their ashes; reverently may we mention their names. Though the bodily presence of those conscripts of the tomb—the forlorn hope of the army of Christianity—no longer walked among men, their intrepid spirit animated the heart of each member of that little community of persecuted Christians, "of whom the world was not worthy; who wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth, ... being destitute, afflicted, tormented."[151] [Pg 105]

It is impossible to arrive at even an approximate estimate of the number of victims of the early persecutions. That number has sometimes, no doubt, been greatly exaggerated. It has also, in defiance of the testimony of contemporary history, been unreasonably minified.[152] Tacitus asserts that under Nero a great multitude[153] were convicted and punished. Pliny says the temples were almost deserted[154] through this contagious superstition. Juvenal, Martial, and other classical authors, notice the extraordinary sufferings of the Christians. Cyprian, in the middle of the third century, says, "It is impossible to number the martyrs of Christ."[155] Eusebius, an eye-witness of the last persecution, states that innumerable multitudes suffered during its prevalence. After describing their excruciating tortures, he adds: "And all these things were doing not for a few days, but for a series of whole years. At one time ten or more, then twenty, again thirty or even sixty, and sometimes a hundred men, with their wives and children, were slain in one day."[156] He also describes the destruction of a Christian town, with all its inhabitants, by fire.[157] Lactantius, also a contemporary witness, tells us that the Christians were often surrounded on all sides and burnt together.[158] [Pg 106]

It is very remarkable that so few martyrs' epitaphs have been found in the Catacombs, not more than five or six altogether, and some of these are not of unquestioned genuineness. But this may be attributed to the humility and modesty of the early Christians, who shrank from claiming for the sufferers for the truth the august title of martyr, which they restricted to the one faithful and true witness, Jesus Christ. "We," said the victims of persecution at Lyons, "are only mean and humble confessors."

There do occur, it is true, certain inscriptions of a memorial character and of later date than the time of the persecution, some of which commemorate a large number of martyrs, but they are of little or no historic value. Such is the inscription to three thousand martyrs in the Catacomb of Priscilla, already given,[159] and the following from the Callixtan Catacomb: MARCELLA ET CHRISTI MARTYRES CCCCL—"Marcella and four hundred and fifty martyrs in Christ." Ancient itineraries speak of eighty, or even eight hundred, martyrs buried in one spot in the Catacombs; and Prudentius declares that he saw the remains of some sixty in a single grave.[160] But surpassing all the others in exaggeration is an inscription in the church of St. Sebastian commemorating one hundred and seventy-four thousand holy martyrs, and forty-six bishops, also martyrs, said to be interred in the neighbouring Catacomb. Another ancient tradition asserts that twelve thousand Christians, who were employed in building the Baths of Diocletian, were buried in the Catacomb of St. Zeno.[161] Piazza asserts that two hundred and eighty-five Christians were put to death in two days, under the Emperor Claudius II., A. D. 268, and that more than two thousand were executed for refusing to sacrifice to the image of the sun. Indeed, some Roman archæologists discern in every palm branch or cup, which are so frequently found in the Catacombs, irrefragable evidence of the martyr's tomb.[162] [Pg 107]

Such atrocious cruelty and lavish destruction of life as these traditions, even if exaggerated, imply, seem incredible; but the pages of the contemporary historians, Eusebius and Lactantius, give too minute and circumstantial accounts of the persecutions of which they were eye-witnesses to allow us to adopt the complacent theory of Gibbon, that the sufferings of the Christians were comparatively few and insignificant. "We ourselves have seen," says the bishop of Cæsarea, "crowds of persons, some beheaded, others burned alive, in a single day, so that the murderous weapons were blunted and broken to pieces, and the executioners, wearied with slaughter, were obliged to give over the work of blood.[163] ... They constantly vied with each other," he continues, "in inventing new tortures, as if there were prizes offered to him who should contrive the greatest cruelties."[164] Men whose only crime was their religion were scourged with iron wires or with *plumbatæ*, that is, chains laden with bronze balls, specimens of which have been found in the martyrs' graves, till the flesh hung in shreds, and even the bones were broken; they were bound in chains of red-hot iron, and roasted over fires so slow that they lingered for hours, or even days, in their mortal agony; their flesh was scraped from the very bone with ragged shells, or lacerated with burning pincers, iron hooks, and instruments with horrid teeth or claws, examples of which have been found in the Catacombs;[165] molten metal and plates of red-hot brass were applied to the naked body till it became one indistinguishable wound; and mingled salt and vinegar or unslaked lime were rubbed upon the quivering flesh, torn and bleeding from the rack or scourge—tortures more inhuman than savage Indian ever wreaked upon his mortal foe. Men were condemned by the score and hundred to labour in the mines, with the sinews of one leg severed, with one eye scooped out and the socket seared with red-hot iron. Chaste matrons and tender virgins were given over—worse fate a thousand-fold than death—to dens [Pg 108] [Pg 109]

of shame and the gladiators' lust, and subjected to nameless indignities, too horrible for words to utter.[166] And all these intense sufferings were endured often with joy and exultation, for the love of a divine Master, when a single word, a grain of incense cast upon the heathen altar, would have released the victims from their agonies. No lapse of time, and [Pg 110] no recoil from the idolatrous homage paid in after ages to the martyr's relics, should impair in our hearts the profound and rational reverence with which we bend before his tomb.

We are left, however, for the most part, without authentic record of the tragic scenes of Christian martyrdom. The primitive church, indeed, treasured up these memories of moral heroism as her most precious legacy to after times. Clement of Rome, it is said, appointed notaries to search out the acts of the martyrs;[167] and, as we have seen, Fabian suffered death for his zeal in preserving these records.[168] But these precious documents for the most part perished in the Diocletian persecution, although fragments were probably incorporated with the later martyrologies. The earlier Acts are the more authentic, and the more simple in character. Those of later date become more and more florid in style, and are overladen with the incredible and impossible, till their historic value is entirely destroyed, except when they are corroborated by collateral testimony, or by the monumental evidence of the Catacombs. Prudentius, attracted to Rome by the fame of these repositories of the martyrs' ashes, wrote a treatise[169] on their sufferings, in which his fervid imagination and rhetorical style found amplest indulgence. Later writers still further embellished and exaggerated the original Acts, till the wildest stories of ancient mythology, or mediæval legend, were surpassed by the monkish martyrologists.

This "holy romance," as Gibbon contemptuously calls it, becomes little else than a record of [Pg 111] the most astounding miracles, the most horrible tortures, and of more than human endurance.[170] It minutely describes the conflict between the Christian and his heathen persecutor: *hinc martyr, illinc carnifex*—here the martyr, there the executioner. The one wreaks his rage upon his victim, the other exhibits a stoical endurance of suffering rivaling that of the American savage at the funeral stake, or else an insensibility to pain that lessens the merit of his acts. "It is cooked, turn and eat,"[171] says St. Lawrence, broiling on a gridiron. He feels no pain from the vinegar and salt rubbed on his bleeding wounds. "Salt me the more, that I may be incorruptible," says Tarachus to his torturer. He continues to speak after his tongue is torn out by the roots. The lacerations of the ungulæ assume to the excited imagination the form of the name of Christ.[172] Divine odours breathe from the body, which shines like gold amid the flames that refuse to kindle upon it. A voice from heaven hails the invincible conqueror, and his soul in the form of a dove ascends to the skies.[173] The undying instincts of nature are flagrantly violated in some of the Acts. A mother rebukes [Pg 112] her child for begging a cup of water while suffering under the rods of the lictors; and while it is beheaded before her eyes she, alone unmoved, sings a versicle of thanksgiving.[174] Often the martyr endeavours to exasperate with taunts and defiance the heathen magistrate, who gnashes his teeth and rolls his eyes in impotent rage.[175] "Be dumb, wretch! O serpent of darkest mind, a curse be upon thee!" exclaims St. Boniface to his executioner. Vincentius menaces his judge with the fiery fate of the bottomless pit.[176] These Acts of the Martyrs were appointed to be read in the churches,[177] till they were prohibited by the Council of Trullo, A. D. 706.

The enthusiasm for martyrdom prevailed, at times, almost like an epidemic. It was one of the most remarkable features of the ages of persecution. Notwithstanding the terrific tortures to which they were exposed, the fiercer the tempest of heathen rage the higher and brighter burned the zeal of the Christian heroes. Age after age summoned the soldiers of Christ to the conflict whose highest guerdon was death. They bound persecution as a wreath about [Pg 113] their brows, and exulted in the "glorious infamy" of suffering for their Lord. The brand of shame became the badge of highest honour. Besides the joys of heaven they won imperishable fame on earth; and the memory of a humble slave was often haloed with a glory surpassing that of a Curtius or Horatius. The meanest hind was ennobled by the accolade of martyrdom to the loftiest peerage of the skies. His consecration of suffering was elevated to a sacrament, and called the baptism of fire or of blood.

Burning to obtain the prize, the impetuous candidates for death often pressed with eager haste to seize the palm of victory and the martyr's crown. They trod with joy the fiery path to glory, and went as gladly to the stake as to a marriage feast. "Their fetters," says Eusebius, "seemed like the golden ornaments of a bride."[178] They desired martyrdom more ardently than men afterward sought a bishopric.[179] They exulted amid their keenest pangs that they were counted worthy to suffer for their divine Master. "Let the ungulæ tear us," exclaims Tertullian,[180] "the crosses bear our weight, the flames envelope us, the sword divide our throats, the wild beasts spring upon us; the very posture of prayer is a preparation for every punishment." "These things," says St. Basil, "so far from being a terror, are rather a pleasure and a recreation to us."[181] "The tyrants were armed," says St. Chrysostom, "and the martyrs naked; yet they that were naked got the victory, and they that [Pg 114] carried arms were vanquished."[182] Strong in the assurance of immortality, they bade defiance to the sword.

Though weak in body they seemed clothed with vicarious strength, and confident that though "counted as sheep for the slaughter," naught could separate them from the love of Christ. Wrapped in their fiery vesture and shroud of flame, they yet exulted in their glorious victory. While the leaden hail fell on the mangled frame, and the eyes filmed with the

shadows of death, the spirit was enbraved by the beatific vision of the opening heaven, and above the roar of the mob fell sweetly on the inner sense the assurance of eternal life. “No group, indeed, of Oceanides was there to console the Christian Prometheus; yet to his upturned eye countless angels were visible—their anthem swept solemnly to his ear—and the odours of an opening paradise filled the air. Though the dull ear of sense heard nothing, he could listen to the invisible Coryphæus as he invited him to heaven and promised him an eternal crown.”[183] The names of the “great army of martyrs,” though forgotten by men, are written in the Book of Life. “The Lord knoweth them that are his.”

There is a record, traced on high,
That shall endure eternally;
The angel standing by God’s throne
Treasures there each word and groan;
And not the martyr’s speech alone,
But every wound is there depicted, [Pg 115]
  With every circumstance of pain—
The crimson stream, the gash inflicted—
  And not a drop is shed in vain.[184]

This spirit of martyrdom was a new principle in society. It had no classical counterpart.[185] Socrates and Seneca suffered with fortitude, but not with faith. The loftiest pagan philosophy dwindled into insignificance before the sublimity of Christian hope. This looked beyond the shadows of time and the sordid cares of earth to the grandeur of the Infinite and the Eternal. The heroic deaths of the believers exhibited a spiritual power mightier than the primal instincts of nature, the love of wife or child, or even of life itself. Like a solemn voice falling on the dull ear of mankind, these holy examples urged the inquiry, “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” And that voice awakened an echo in full many a heart. The martyrs made more converts by their deaths than in their lives. “Kill us, rack us, condemn us, grind us to powder,” exclaims the intrepid Christian Apologist; “our numbers increase in proportion as you mow us down.”[186] The earth was drunk with the blood of the saints, but still they multiplied and grew, gloriously illustrating the perennial truth—*Sanguis martyrum semen ecclesiæ.*[187]

Christianity, after long repression, became at length triumphant. The church on the [Pg 116] conversion of Constantine emerged from the concealment of the Catacombs to the sunshine of imperial favour. The legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus strikingly illustrates the wondrous transformation of society. These Christian brothers, taking shelter in a cave during the Decian persecution, awoke, according to the legend, after a slumber of over a century, to find Christianity everywhere dominant, and a Christian emperor on the throne of the Cæsars.[188] The doctrines of Christ, like the rays of the sun, quickly irradiated the world.[189] With choirs and hymns, in cities and villages, in the highways and markets, the praises of the Almighty were sung.[190] The enemies of God were as though they had not been.[191] [Pg 117] The Lord brought up the vine of Christianity from a far land, and cast out the heathen, and planted and watered it, till it twined round the sceptre of the Cæsars, wreathed the columns of the Capitol, and filled the whole land. The heathen fanes were deserted, the gods discrowned, and the pagan flamen no longer offered sacrifice to the Capitoline Jove. Rome, which had dragged so many conquered divinities in triumph at its chariot wheels, at length yielded to a mightier than all the gods of Olympus. The old faiths faded from the firmament of human thought as the stars of midnight at the dawn of day. The banished deities forsook their ancient seats. They walked no longer in the vale of Tempe or in the grove of Daphne.[192] The naiads bathed not in Scamander’s stream nor Simois, nor the nereids in the waters of the bright Ægean Sea. The nymphs and dryads ceased to haunt the sylvan solitudes. The oreads walked no more in light on Ida’s lofty top.

O ye vain false gods of Hellas!
Ye are vanished evermore!

Long before the recognition of Christianity as the religion of the empire its influence had been felt permeating the entire community. Amid the disintegration of society it was the sole conservative element—the salt which preserved it from corruption. In the midst of anarchy and confusion a community was being organized on a principle previously unknown in the [Pg 118] heathen world, ruling not by terror but by love; by moral power, not by physical force; inspired by lofty faith amid a world of unbelief, and cultivating moral purity amid the reeking abominations of a sensual age.

Yet this mighty energy thus at work eluded the notice, or excited only the disdain, of some of the keenest observers and greatest thinkers the world has seen. Classical literature contains only a few short notices of that religion which was transforming the age. A galaxy of philosophers and historians, gazing mournfully at the seething mass of moral putrefaction around them, and profoundly conscious of its apparently cureless evil, treated as contemptible the most powerful moral agent in the world—that regenerative principle which was to reorganize society on a higher type than ever was known before.[193] The kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation, and paganism seemed entirely unconscious of its impending doom.

But this wonderful influence, which accomplished so much, seemed at length strangely to lose its power, and did not fulfil the regenerative work which it began. It failed to check the degeneracy of the age or to avert the dissolution of the empire. The many crimes of that

colossal orgy cried to heaven for vengeance. The taint was too inveterate to be eradicated; the evil was immedicable; Rome was already effete and moribund. It was weighed in the balance and found wanting. Therefore the inexorable penalty, which evermore follows wrong, as a shadow its substance, was suffered to descend. An awful Nemesis, like an avenging Fate, overtook the great and wicked city in its pride and guilt; and the mystical Babylon of the West, reeking with sensuality, idolatry, and blood, soon beheld the Goths at her gates, and the Huns within her walls.[194]

[31] A deal of fanciful theory has been indulged in as to the origin of the Catacombs. They have been attributed to a pre-historic race of Troglodytes, who loathed the light of day, and burrowed like moles in the earth. MacFarlane has an eloquent apostrophe to the old Etrurians, by whom he imagined they were excavated twelve hundred years before the Christian era. We have seen also how they were erroneously attributed to the pagan Romans.

[32] *Victoribus victi leges dederunt.* On the Tiber, the Tigris, and the Nile, this saying was strikingly verified. Yet Judaism is an essentially conservative, not an aggressive, religion. It was unadapted for such wide-spread conquests as those of Christianity, or even of Mohammedism. The ancient mould of thought, having served its purpose, was broken. Judaism may be said to have died in giving birth to Christianity.

[33] *Hist.*, v, 5.

[34] In 1853 a Jewish Catacomb was discovered at Venosa, in Southern Italy, containing one gallery seven feet high and four hundred feet long. In 1854 another was discovered at Oria, with many Hebrew symbols and inscriptions. There were many Jews in Apulia and Calabria.

[35] In eo quippe haud ulla, ut in reliquis, Christianæ religionis indicia et signa apparebant—Bosio, *Rom. Sott.*, 142.

[36] *Cimitero degli Antichi Ebrei Scoperto recentemente in Vigna Randanini, illustrato da Raffaele Garrucci.* 8vo. Roma, 1862.

[37] See Fig. 18.

[38] Nunc sacri fontis nimus, et delubra locantur
Judæis.—*Sat.*, iii, 13.

[39] It is incredible that the Apostle Peter had any share in planting the Roman Church. If he had, Paul would not, as he does, utterly ignore his labours. "*Only Luke* is with me," writes St. Paul, just before his death; yet he and Peter are feigned to have suffered on the same day. The story of St. Peter's twenty-five years' episcopate at Rome is too absurd to require disproof. The very minuteness of detail in the legends of St. Peter is their own refutation. In vain are we shown the chair in which tradition asserts that he sat, the font at which he baptized, the cell in which he was confined, the fountain which sprang up in its floor, the pillar to which he was bound, the chains which he wore, the impression made by his head in the wall and by his knees in the stony pavement, the scene of his crucifixion, the very hole in which the foot of the cross was placed, and the tomb in which his body is said to lie; they all fail to carry conviction to any mind in which superstition has not destroyed the critical faculty. The mighty fane which rises sublimely in the heart of Rome in honour of the Galilean fisherman, like the religious system of which it is the visible exponent, is founded on a shadowy tradition, opposed alike to the testimony of Scripture, the evidence of history, and the deductions of reason. The question whether Peter *ever* was in Rome has recently been publicly discussed under the very shadow of the Vatican. Verily, *Tempora mutantur*.

[40] Nos quoque ut Judaicæ religionis propinquos, sub umbraculum insignissimæ religionis certé licitæ.—*Ad Nat.*, i, 11.

[41] Execrantur rogos, et damnant ignium sepulturas.—Minuc. Felix, *Octav.*, ii, 451. Tertullian declared it to be a symbol of the fires of hell. Possibly, also, the expense and publicity inseparable from the practice of cremation made it a matter of necessity for the early Christians to adopt the less costly and more private mode of subterranean interment. Merivale, indeed, asserts that the early Roman Christians burned their dead, (vi, 444,) and adduces in support of this strange theory only the pagan dedication D. M., found on some Christian tombs. As will be shown, (Book III, i,) these letters were part of a common epigraphic formula, and give no warrant for this startling statement.

[42] Bishop Hall.

[43] It would appear from this inscription that some of the family of Restitutus were still pagans, and were buried apart from the rest. The early Christians regarded it as unlawful to commingle the heathen and believers in common burial. St. Cyprian makes it a capital charge against the heretical Bishop of Asturia, that he "buried his children in profane sepulchres and in the midst of strangers." See also Ruth i, 17. Compare Cic., *de Leg.*, ii, 22, and *de Off.*, lib. ii.

[44] Apol. xxxix. The following inscription, recently discovered in the ruins of Cæsarea, a Roman town in Africa, attests the provision made by wealthy Christians for the burial of their poorer neighbours:

AREAM AT [AD] SEPVLCHRA CVLTOR VERBI CONTVLIT
ET CELLAM STRVXIT SVIS CVNCTIS SVMPTIBVS
ECCLESIÆ SANCTÆ HANC RELIQVIT MEMORIAM,
SALVETE FRATRES PVRO CORDE ET SIMPLICI
EVELPIVS VOS SATOS SANCTO SPIRITV.
ECCLESIA FRATRVM HVNC RESTITVIT TITVLVM....

A worshipper of the Word has given this area for sepulchres, and has built a vault at his own cost; he left this memorial to the Holy Church. Hail, brethren! with a pure and simple heart, Euelpius

[salutes] you, born of the Holy Spirit.

The congregation of the brethren replaced this inscription....

[45] 2 Tim. iv, 21. Suet., *Vit. Ner.*, c. 28, 29; Tac., *Ann.*, xv, 37. See also Dio., lxiii, 13.

[46] E.g. Flavia Domitilla, the niece of Domitian, and her husband, Clemens. Their children had been adopted by the Emperor, and designated as his successors. So near came Christianity to grasping the sceptre of the Cæsars in the first century. Dio Cass., *Hist.*, lxvii, 13. Suet. in *Domit.*, xv. The niece of Domitilla, also of the same name, suffered exile for the faith, A. D. 97. She gave the land for the Catacomb which still bears her name.

Marcia, Mammæa, the mother of Alex. Severus, the Emperor Philip, and Prisca and Valeria, the wife and daughter of the arch-persecutor Diocletian, either embraced or greatly favoured Christianity.

[47] *Apol.*, c. 37.

[48] [Transcriber's note: Footnote missing in the original.]

[49] Religiosum locum unusquisque sua voluntate facit, dum mortuum infert in locum suum. *Marcian. Digest.*, i, 8, 6, § 4.

[50] *Cod. Justin.*, lib. ix, tit. 19, *de Sepulchro Violato*, leg. 1, 5; *Cod. Theod.*, lib. ix, tit. 17. Proximum sacrilegio majores semper habuerunt. So the poet exclaims:

Res ea sacra, miser; noli mea tangere fata:
Sacrilegae bustis abstinuere manus.—

"Touch not my monument, thou wretch; it is a sacred thing: even sacrilegious hands refrain from the violation of graves."

[51] Xen., *Mem.*, ii, 2, § 13.

[52] *Roman Sepulchral Inscriptions*, p. 9, London, 1858.

[52a] [Transcriber's Note: Footnote missing in the original.]

[53] Mille pedes in fronte, trecentos cippus in agrum
Hic dabat; heredes monumentum ne sequeretur.
Hor., *I Sat.*, viii, 12.

[54] Literally, "the angry gods."

[55] Reinesius.

[56] Corpora animadversorum quibuslibet petentibus ad sepulturam danda sunt. *Digest.*, xlviii, 24, 2.

[57] Both of these are given by Dr. McCaul in his *Christian Epitaphs of the First Six Centuries*, an admirable little volume, my indebtedness to which will be elsewhere acknowledged. He also quotes the following from Henzen's *Inscr. Lat. Select. Col.*, No. 6371: PETO A BOBIS [VOBIS] FRATRES BONI PER VNVM DEVM NE QVIS VI TITVLO MOLESTET POST MORTEM—"I beseech you, good brothers, by the one God, that no one by force injure this inscription after my death."

[58] Aringhi, lib. iv, c. xxvii.

[59] Sometimes an anathema was invoked upon the disturber of the grave, as in the following interesting example, found in the island of Salamis, and quoted by Dr. McCaul from Kirchoff, *Corpus Inscript. Græc.*, No. 9303: Οἶκος αἰώνιος Ἀγάθωνος ἀναγνώστου καὶ Εὐφημίας ἐν δυσὶ θήκαις ἰδίᾳ ἑκάστῳ ἡμῶν. Εἰ δέ τις τῶν ἰδίων ἢ ἑτερός τις τολμήσῃ σῶμα καταθέσθαι ἐνταῦθα παρὲξ τῶν δύω ἡμῶν, λόγον δῴη τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἀνάθεμα ἤτω μαραναθάν—"The everlasting dwelling of Agatho, a reader, and Euphemia, in two graves, one for each of us separately. If any one of our relatives, or any one else, shall presume to bury a body here beside us two, may he give an account of it to God, and may he be anathema maranatha."

[60] It is remarkable that Shakespeare's epitaph should present almost as uncouth a specimen of epigraphy as any of the barbarous inscriptions of the Catacombs. See the following copy:

Good Friend for Iesus SAKE forbeare
To diGG T-E Dust EncloAsed HERe
Blest be T-E Man $^{T}_{Y}$ spares T-es Stones
And curst be He $^{T}_{Y}$ moves my Bones.

[61] Maitland reads thus: IN CHRISTO. MARTYRIVS VIXIT ANNOS XCI PLVS MINVS ELEXIT DOMVM VIVVS. IN PACE.—"In Christ. Martyrius lived ninety-one years, more or less. He chose a home during his life-time. In peace."

[62] Collegium salutare Dianæ et Antinoi, constitutum ex Senatus Populique Romani decreto, quibus coire, convenire, collegiumque habere liceat. Qui stipem menstruam conferre volent in funera, in id collegium coeant, neque sub specie ejus collegii nisi semel in mense coeant, conferendi causa unde defuncti sepeliantur.

[63] The *sesterce*, or *sestertius*, was about 2d·5 farthings, the *as* about 3d·4 farthings. The *amphora* held about six gallons.

[64] Muratori, tom. ii, classis vii, *Collegia Varia*.

[65] *Ibid.*

[66] Trajan regarded with suspicion even fire brigades and charitable societies, (Pliny, X *Epis. 43 et 94*,) and forbade the assemblies of the Christians, but permitted the monthly contribution of

the clubs—Permittitur tenuioribus stipem menstruam conferre. *Digest.*, xlvii, 22, 1.

[67] Modicam unusquisque stipem *menstrua die*, vel quum velit, et si modo velit, et si modo possit, apponit: nam nemo compellitur, sed sponte confert.... Nam inde non epulis ... sed egenis alendis *humandisque* ... etc. Tert., *Apol.*, c. 39.

[68] See first footnote.

[69] *Bullettino*, 1864, 62.

[70] Rom. xvi, 5, 3.

[71] *Philosophoumena*, ix, 11.

[72] Actorem sive syndicum, per quem, quod communiter agi fierique oporteat, agatur, fiat. —*Digest.*, iii, 4, 1, § 1.

[73] E veramente che almeno fino dal secolo terzo i fideli abbiano possiduto cemeteri a nome commune, e che il loro possesso sia stato riconosciuto dagl'imperatori, è cosa impossibile a negare.—De Rossi, *Rom. Sott.*, tom. i, p. 103.

[74] The dreaded *crimen majestatis*.

[75] Hostes Cæsarum, hostes populi Romani.

[76] Non pluit Deus, duc ad Christianos.—Aug., *Civ. Dei*, ii, 3.

[77] Si Tiberis ascendit in mœnia, si Nilus non ascendit in arva, si cœlum stetit, si terra movit, si fames, si lues, statim, "Christianos ad leones."—*Apol.*, x. "But I pray you," he adds, "were misfortunes unknown before Tiberius? The true God was not worshipped when Hannibal conquered at Cannæ, or the Gauls filled the city."

[78] Eusebius describes their activity in bringing wood and straw from the shops and baths for the burning of Polycarp. *Eccl. Hist.*, iv, 15.

[79] Ergo abolendo rumori Nero subdedit reos et quæsitissimis pœnis affecit, quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Christianos appellabat.... Et pereuntibus addita ludibria, ut ferarum tergis contecti laniatu canum interierint, aut crucibus affixi, aut flammandi atque, ubi defecisset dies, in usum nocturni luminis urerentur.—*Ann.*, xv, 44.

[80] A telegraphic despatch from Rome of date January 16, 1873, announces that the Pope claims to have discovered the bodies of the apostles Philip and James. Highly improbable, and of no practical importance if true. Not the bones of the saints buried centuries ago, but the spirit which animated them and the principles for which they died, are the true sources of the church's power.

[81] Sulpic. Sever., *Hist.*, ii, 41.

[82] Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, iii, 17. A. D. 93-96.

[83] Prope jam desolata templa cœpisse celebrari; et sacra solennia diu intermissa repeti.—*Epis. ad Traj.* Among the most distinguished sufferers during this persecution was Clement, third bishop of Rome, exiled to Pontus, and, it is said, cast into the sea, A. D. 103; also the venerable Ignatius, bishop of the church at Antioch, linked by tradition with the Saviour himself, as one of the children whom he took in his arms and blessed. Condemned by Trajan to exposure to wild beasts in the amphitheatre at Rome, a passion for martyrdom possessed his soul. "Suffer me to be the food of the wild beasts," he exclaimed, "by whom I shall attain unto God. For I am the wheat of God; and I shall be ground by the teeth of wild beasts that I may become the pure bread of Christ."—*Epis. ad Romanos*, §§ 4, 5.

[84] Sacra Romana diligentissimè curavit, peregrina contempsit.—Spartian. in *Hadrian.* A. D. 117-138.

[85] Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, iv, 9. Jus. Mar., *Apol.*, i, 68, 69.

[86] A. D. 138-161.

[87] Irenæus, iii, 3, § 3.

[88] A. D. 161-180.

[89] The following inscription, referring to the Antonine period, is given by Maitland, (page 40,) as from the Catacomb of Callixtus. Although it seems to imply the actual prevalence of persecution, it is evidently, even if genuine, of later date than the time alleged. The presence of the sacred monogram, as well as the somewhat florid and pleonastic style, indicate an origin not anterior to the age of Constantine, when it became the fashion with outward pharisaism to adorn the sepulchres of the martyrs, although the truths for which they died were often treated with neglect:

ALEXANDER MORTVVS NON EST SED VIVIT SVPER ASTRA ET CORPVS IN HOC TVMVLO QVIESCIT. VITAM EXPLEVIT SVB ANTONINO IMP QVI VBI MVLTVM BENEFITII ANTEVENIRE PRAEVIDERET PRO GRATIA ODIVM REDDIDIT. GENVA ENIM FLECTENS VERO DEO SACRIFICATVRVS AD SVPPLICIA DVCITVR. O TEMPORA INFAVSTA QVIBVS INTER SACRA ET VOTA NE IN CAVERNIS QVIDEM SALVARI POSSIMVS. QVID MISERIVS VITA SED QVID MISERIVS IN MORTE CVM AB AMICIS ET PARENTIBVS SEPELIRI NEQVEANT TANDEM IN COELO CORVSCANT. PARVM VIXIT QVI VIXIT IN. X. TEM.

"In Christ. Alexander is not dead, but lives above the stars, and his body rests in this tomb. He ended his life under the Emperor Antonine, who, foreseeing that great benefit would result from his services, returned evil for good. For while on his knees and about to sacrifice to the true God, he was led away to execution. O sad times! in which, among sacred rites and prayers, even in caverns we are not safe. What can be

more wretched than such a life? and what than such a death? when they cannot be buried by their friends and relations—at length they sparkle in heaven. He has scarcely lived who has lived in Christian times."

Fig. 20.—Reputed Martyr Symbol.

Maitland renders the concluding letters, IN. X. TEM, by "In Christianis temporibus." The furnace seems to indicate that the martyr suffered death by fire, or, possibly, by immersion in boiling oil—a mode of punishment which St. John is said to have undergone, but without receiving any harm.

Another still more apocryphal inscription is given by Maitland, (page 65.) It is probably of the fifth century. The Pudentiana referred to is said to have spent her patrimony in relieving the poor and burying the martyrs.

HOC EST COEMETERIVM PRISCILLAE
IN QVO EXISTVNT CORPORA TRIVM MILLIVM MARTYRVM
MARTYRIO PER ANTONINUM IMPERATOREM
AFFECTORVM QVOS S. PVDENTIANA
FECIT IN HOC SVO VENERABILI TEMPLO SEPELIRI.

"This is the Cemetery of Priscilla, in which are the bodies of three thousand martyrs, who suffered under the Emperor Antonine, whom St. Pudentiana caused to be buried in this her own place of worship."—Aicher, *Hortus Inscriptionum*. More authentic relics of this reign are the large tiles with which part of the Catacomb of Callixtus is paved. They all bear the words, OPVS DOLIARE EX PRAEDIIS DOMINI N ET FIGL NOVIS, which, according to Marini, is the stamp of the imperial manufactory of Marcus Aurelius.

[90] "Hanc dextram ad te Jupiter, tendo, quae nullius unquam sanguinam fudit," is the form of prayer given by Claudian. Euseb., v, 5.

[91] A. D. 180-193.

[92] See chap. ii, book iii.

[93] *Strom.*, lib. ii, A. D. 193.

[94] *Apol.*, 37. Sicut sub Hilariano præside, cum de areis sepulturarum nostrarum adclamâssent, areæ non sint.—*Ad Scap.*, c. iii. A. D. 203.

No more pathetic episode is contained in the whole range of the Martyrology than that of the youthful mother, Perpetua, who suffered at Carthage under Severus. Few can read unmoved the acts of her martyrdom, which bear the stamp of authenticity in their perfectly natural and unexaggerated tone, and the absence of miracle. Young—she was only twenty-two—beautiful, of noble family, and dearly loved, her heathen father entreated her to pity his gray hairs, her mother's tears, her helpless babe. But her faith proved triumphant over even the yearnings of natural affection; and, wan and faint from recent childbirth pangs, she was led, with Felicitas, her companion, into the crowded amphitheatre, and exposed to the cruel horns of infuriate beasts. Amid the agonies of death, more conscious of her wounded modesty than of her pain, with a gesture of dignity she drew her disheveled robe about her person. She seemed rapt in ecstasy till by a merciful stroke of the gladiator she was released from her suffering, and exchanged the dust and blood of the arena, and the shouts of the ribald mob, for the songs of the redeemed, and the beatific vision of the Lord she loved.

[95] Cædit et humanas hostias.—Lamprid., *Heliogabalus*.

[96] A. D. 222.

[97] Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, vi, 21.

[98] The site, according to tradition, of St. Maria in Trastevere.

[99] A. D. 250-253. Execrabile animal Decius, qui vexaret ecclesiam.—Lactan., *de Mort. Persec.*, c. 3, 4. He would rather tolerate, he said, a rival for his throne, than a bishop in Rome. Cypr., *Ep.* 53.

[100] Called respectively *Sacrificati*, *Thurificati*, and *Libellatici*, of whom the first were esteemed the most guilty. The indignant rhetoric of Cyprian expresses his holy horror at this vile apostasy: "They made haste to give their souls the mortal wound.... That altar where he was about to die—was it not his funeral pile? Should he not have fled, as from his coffin or his grave, from that devil's altar, when he saw it smoke and fume with stinking smell?... Thou thyself wast the sacrificial victim. Thou didst sacrifice thy salvation, and burn thy faith and hope in these abominable fires"—Nonne ara illa, quo moriturus accessit, rogus illi fuit? Nonne diaboli altare quod fœtore tætro fumare et redolere conspexerat, velut funus et bustum vitæ suæ horrere ac fugere debebat?... Ipse ad aram hostia, victima ipse venisti. Immolâsti illic salutem tuam, spem tuam, fidem tuam, funestis illis ignibus concremâsti.—*De Lapsis*, p. 124.

[101] Dionysius of Alexandria, in *Euseb.*, vi, 41.

[102] A. D. 254-259.

[103] Ἐκκλησία, Euseb., vii, 10.

[104] Milman, *Hist. of Christianity*, Am. ed., Book II., chap. vii.

[105] Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, vii, 10.

[106] Ut episcopi et presbyteri et diacones incontinenter animadvertantur, ... capite quoque mulctentur.—*Cypr.*, ep. 72, *ad Successum*.

[107] Οὐδαμῶς ἔξέσται ὑμῖν ἢ συνόδους ποιεῖσθαι ἢ εἰς τὰ καλούμενα κοιμητήρια εἰσιέναι—Dionys., in *Euseb.*, vii, 11. Jussum est, ut nulla conciliabula faciant, neque cœmeteria ingrediantur.—Pontius, *Passio Cypriani*.

[108] In Africa, Cyprian, the intrepid bishop of Carthage, after a stormy episcopate, obtained the crown of martyrdom. On receiving the sentence condemning him to death, he exclaimed, “God be thanked!” and went as joyous to his fate as to a marriage feast.—Pontius, *Passio Cypr.*

[109] “Vitam solitariam agebat in cryptis.” Of St. Urban it is similarly said, “Solebat in sacrorum martyrum monumenta.”—*Acts of Cecilia.*

[110] Baronius: *Ann.*, tom. iii, p. 76. Among his companions in death was Hippolytus, a Roman convert, of whom a beautiful legend is recorded. His pagan relatives, entrusted with the secret of his retreat, supplied his wants by means of their children, a boy and girl of ten and thirteen years. He one day detained the children in the hope that their parents would seek them, and thus have the opportunity of religious instruction from the good bishop. His plan succeeded, and eventually they with their children were baptized and suffered martyrdom together! Baron., *Ann.*, iii, 69. Even though unauthentic, this story is a type, doubtless, of many incidents which occurred in the strange social relations of the church in the Catacombs.

[111] Xistum in cimiterio animadversum sciatis ... et cum eo diaconos quatuor.—Cypr., *Epis.*, lxxx, *ad Successum*.

[112] Another martyr whose Acts, although disfigured with some grotesque and exaggerated circumstances, contain elements of great beauty, was Lawrence, a deacon of the bishop Sixtus. Esteeming it no sacrilege, but rather the highest consecration of the property of the church, he distributed it in alms among the suffering Christians. Being commanded to surrender to the emperor the confiscated ecclesiastical treasure, he presented to the commissioner a number of aged and impotent poor, saying, “These are the treasures of the church.” After incredible tortures, which form the subject of many a picture of Roman Catholic art, he is said to have been roasted to death over a slow fire. Ambros., *Officin.*, i, 41.

[113] A. D. 259.

[114] Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, viii, 13.

[115] *Ib.*, viii, 23.

[116] A. D. 275.

[117] *Probus et vere probus situs est.* Obiit A. D. 283.

[118] Gregory of Tours, writing in the sixth century, asserts that under Numerian, the brother and contemporary of Carinus, Chrysanthus and Daria suffered martyrdom in a Catacomb on the *Via Salaria*. A number of the faithful being observed to visit their tombs, the emperor ordered the entrance to be built up and covered with a heap of sand and stones, that they might be buried alive in common martyrdom. When their remains were discovered by Damasus, in the fourth century, he refrained from removing them, and simply made an opening from an adjacent gallery, that pilgrims to the early shrines of the faith might behold, without disturbing it, this “Christian Pompeii.” Gregory asserts that these interesting relics were still to be seen in his day—the skeletons of men, women, and children lying on the floor, and even the silver vessels (*urcei argentei*) which they used.

[119] Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, viii, 1.

[120] *Ibid.*

[121] *De Mort. Persec.*, c. xxiii.

[122] Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, viii, 1.

[123] Caius ... fugiens persecutionem Diocletiani in cryptis habitando, martyrio coronatur.—*Lib. Pontif.*; cf. Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, vii, 32.

[124] Ἐκ τῶν ἐν στρατείαις ἀδελφῶν καταρχομένου τοῦ διωγμοῦ.—*Hist. Eccles.*, viii, 1.

[125] *Vita Const.*, ii, 54.

[126] The following inscription, found in Spain, and given by Gruter, seems designed as the funeral monument of dead and buried Christianity. But though apparently destroyed, like its divine Author, instinct with immortality it rose triumphant over all its foes.

DIOCLETIAN · CAES · AUG · GALERIO · IN ORIENTE · ADOPT · SVPERSTITIONE CHRIST · VBIQ · DELETA ET CVLTV DEOR · PROPAGATO.

“To Diocletian, Cæsar Augustus, having adopted Galerius in the East, the Christian superstition being every-where destroyed, and the worship of the gods extended.”

[127] Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, viii, 2. The effects of the persecution were felt even in Britain. (Gildas, *de Excid. Britan.*, in Bingham, viii, 1.) Alban was the first British martyr at a somewhat earlier date.

[128] “The dungeons destined for murderers,” says Eusebius, “were filled with bishops, presbyters, deacons, readers, and exorcists, so that there was no room left for those condemned for crime.”—*Hist. Eccles.*

[129] Nec unquam sine cruore humano cœnabat.—Lactan., *de Mort. Persec.*

[130] Date of Edict, April 30, A. D. 311. Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, ix, 1.

[131] Eusebius gives the edict, taken from a brazen tablet at Tyre, in which the Emperor speaks of “the votaries of an execrable vanity, like a funeral pile long disregarded and smothered, again rising in mighty flames and rekindling the extinguished brands.” *Hist. Eccles.*, ix, 9.

[132] The courtly panegyrist of Constantine gratefully speaks of him as a “light and deliverer arising in the dense and impenetrable darkness of a gloomy night.” Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, x, 8.

[133] Eusebius compares the victory of the Milvian Bridge to that of Moses and the Israelites over Pharaoh and his hosts. *Hist. Eccles.* ix, 9.

[134] Daremus et Christianis et omnibus liberam potestatem sequendi religionem quam quisque voluisset—"We give to the Christians, and to all, the free choice to follow whatever mode of worship they may wish."—Decree of Milan, preserved in Lactantius, *de Mort. Persec.*, and in Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, x, 5.

[135] In the violent deaths or loathsome diseases of many of their persecutors the Christians recognized the retributive judgments of the Almighty, which were considered so remarkable as to occasion the special treatise *de Mortibus Persecutorum*, attributed to the pen of Lactantius. Nero died ignominiously by his own hand. Domitian was assassinated. During the reign of Aurelius war, famine, and pestilence wasted the land. Decius perished miserably in a marsh, and his body became the prey of the prowling jackal and unclean buzzard. Valerian, captured by the Persians, after having served as a footstool to his haughty foe, is said to have been flayed alive and his skin stuffed with straw. Aurelian was slain by the hand of a trusted servant, and Carinus by the dagger of a husband whom he had irreparably wronged. Diocletian, having languished for years the prey of painful maladies, which even affected his reason, it is said committed suicide. Galerius, like those rivals in bloodshed and persecution, Herod and Philip II., became an object of loathing and abhorrence, being "eaten of worms" while yet alive. Maximian fell by the hand of the public executioner; and Maxentius, in the hour of defeat, was smothered in the ooze of the Tiber beneath the walls of his capital. Severus opened his own veins and bled to death. The first Maximin was murdered; the second, a fugitive and an exile, committed suicide by poison, and, according to Eusebius, was so consumed by internal torments that "his body became the tomb of his soul." Licinius, the last of the persecutors, was slain by his ferocious soldiery, and his name, by a decree of the Senate, forever branded with infamy. Thus with indignities and tortures, often surpassing those they inflicted on their Christian subjects, perished the enemies of the church of God, as if pursued by a divine retribution no less inexorable than the avenging Nemesis of the pagan mythology. See Lactantius, *de Mort. Persec.*, *passim*; Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, viii, 17; ix, 9, 10; Tertul., *Ad. Scap.*, c. 3.

[136] The church of St. Marcello, in the Corso, commemorates the scene of his indignities. There is reason to believe that each church or *titulus* within the city had its own cemetery without the walls, over which the presbyter of the title had jurisdiction. Marcellinus, as bishop, had charge of the ecclesiastical Cemetery of Callixtus, as appears from a contemporary inscription.

[137] Gruter, *Inscrip.*, p. 1172, No. 3.

[138] *Rom. Sott.*, p. 172.

[139] There is a pleasing tradition recorded of Sylvester, the successor of Melchiades, to the effect that, having fled, on account of the persecution, to the caverns of Mount Soracte, the Emperor Constantine sent for him to receive religious instruction. Seeing the soldiers approach, as he thought to lead him to martyrdom, Sylvester exclaimed, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation," but was in a few days installed as bishop of Rome in the imperial palace of the Lateran. Soracte, once sacred to Apollo and the Muses, but now to Christ and the saints, is known, in commemoration of this event, as *Monte San Silvestro*.

[140] Gruter, p. 1171, No. 8.

[141] Their names and piety are commemorated by two churches in Rome. Eusebius also records with approbation the story of the Christian matron Sophronia, wife of the Prefect of Rome, who committed suicide to escape the polluting embraces of the tyrant Maxentius. *Hist. Eccles.*, viii, 14.

[142] *Bullettino*, January, 1869.

[143] The following satirical remarks of De Brosses, a Romanist writer, concerning the supply of relics from the Catacomb of St. Agnes, will indicate how unauthentic are these objects of veneration: "Vous pourriez voir ici la capitale des Catacombes de toute la chrétienté. Les martyrs, les confesseurs, et les vierges, y fourmillent de tous côtés. Quand on se fait besoin de quelques reliques en pays étranger, le Pape n'a qu'à descendre ici et crier, *Qui de vous autres veut aller être saint en Pologne?* Alors s'il se trouve quelque mort de bonne volonté il se lève et s'en va."

[144] From the Catacomb of St. Agnes. The ancient Martyrology records the conversion of a Roman nobleman of this name in the time of Julian, together with that of his wife and fifty-three members of his household, and his subsequent martyrdom and burial in the Catacombs. It is probable that Theophila had learned in Gaul to write Latin, though only in those singular Greek characters which, as Julius Cæsar informs us, were used in that country, and that, after the death of the whole family, she employed some equally unlettered stone-mason to engrave this remarkable inscription.

[145] De Rossi gives several dated inscriptions of the reign of Diocletian, (Nos. 16 to 28,) thus absolutely identifying the age of those portions of the Catacombs.

[146] In Hawthorne's "Marble Faun" there is a fantastic legend of "The Spectre of the Catacombs," the ghost of an apostate betrayer of the Christians, which still haunts the scene of its hateful perfidy.

[147] See plan of this *arenarium* and stairway in chap. v, fig. 26.

[148] In A. D. 359 Liberius, bishop of Rome, lay hid for a year in the Catacomb of St. Agnes, till the death of the Arian Constantius; and in A. D. 418 Boniface I. in the Catacomb of St. Felicitas, during the usurpation of the antipope Eulalius.

[149] The similar excavations of Quesnel, in France, were long inhabited by both human beings and cattle.

[150] Latebrosa et lucifugax natio.—*Minuc. Felix.*

[151] Compare the following spirited lines of Bernis:

"La terre avait gémi sous le fer des tyrans;
Elle cachait encore des martyrs expirans,
Qui dans les noirs détours des grottes reculées
Dérobaient aux bourreaux leurs têtes mutilées."

Poëme de la Religion Vengée, chap. viii.

[152] See especially Dodwell's learned but unsatisfactory Essay, *De Paucitate Martyrum*, and Gibbon's laboured extenuation of the severity of the persecutors.

[153] Ingens multitudo.—*Ann.*, xv.

[154] Jam desolata templa.—*Epis.*, 97, lib. x.

[155] Exuberante copia virtutis et fidei numerari non possunt martyres Christi.—*Lib. de Exhort. Martyr.*, c. xi.

[156] Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, viii, 9.

[157] *Ibid.*, viii, 11.

[158] Universum populum cum ipso pariter conventiculo concremavit. Lactan., *Instit. Divin.*, v, 11: Gregatim amburebantur.—*Ibid.*

[159] Page 78.

[160] Sexaginta illic defossas mole sub una
Reliquias memini me didicisse hominum.—*Peristeph.*, xi.

[161] The story of the martyrdom of ten thousand Christians on Mount Ararat, under Trajan, and of the massacre of the Thundering Legion, consisting of six thousand Christians, by Maximian, are fictions of later date. In the Church of St. Gerion at Cologne are many reputed relics, chiefly heads, of these last. The legendary tendency to exaggeration in numbers seems irresistible. In commemorating the slaughter of the Innocents the Greek Church canonized fourteen thousand martyrs. Another notion, derived from Rev. xiv, 3, swelled the number to a hundred and forty-four thousand. The absurd story of the eleven thousand martyrs of Cologne is probably founded on a mistaken rendering of the inscription VRSVLA · ET · XI · MM · VV, interpreted, Ursula and eleven thousand virgins, instead of eleven virgin martyrs.—*Maitland*, p. 163. A Romish legend, of course exaggerated, says seventy thousand Christians suffered martyrdom in the Coliseum.

[162] In Rock's *Hierurgia*, a Romanist work, is an account of a Catacomb at Nipi, near Rome, in which are said to be thirty-eight martyr tombs, the epitaph of one of whom plainly asserts his death by decapitation: MARTYRIO CORONATVS CAPITE TRVNCATVS IACET—"Crowned with martyrdom, having been beheaded ... lies here."

The beautiful terseness of the following would seem to indicate their genuineness: "Paulus was put to death in tortures, in order that he might live in eternal bliss."

"Clementia, tortured, dead, sleeps; will rise."

From the following, found on a cup attached to a tomb, it would seem that the martyr was first compelled to drink poison, which proving ineffectual, he was dispatched by the sword: "The deadly draught dared not present to Constans the crown, which the steel was permitted to offer."

[163] Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, viii, 9.

[164] *Ibid.*, viii, 12.

[165] Called *ungulæ*, from their resemblance to the claws of a beast of prey.

[166] See examples of the above named tortures in Eusebius's *Hist. Eccles.*, v, 2; vi, 41; viii, 14; *The Martyrs of Palestine*, viii; and Lactantius, *passim*.

On the 22d of April, 1823, says Cardinal Wiseman, a grave in the Catacombs was opened, and, beside the white and polished bones of a youth of eighteen, whose epitaph it bore, was found the skeleton of a boy of twelve or thirteen, charred and blackened chiefly about the upper part. This was probably the remains of a youthful martyr hastily interred in another's grave, to come to light after the lapse of fifteen centuries.

Prudentius describes the martyr Hippolytus as torn limb from limb:

Cernere erat ruptis compagibus ordine nullo,
Membra per incertos sparsa jacere situs.

[167] *Lib. Pontif.*, c. iv. These notaries were called by the Greeks ὀξυγράφοι or ταχυγράφοι, that is, short-hand writers. Eusebius says they reported the extemporaneous discourses of Origen. *Hist. Eccles.*, vi, 36.

[168] Hic fecit sex vel septem subdiaconos, qui septem notariis imminerent ut *gesta martyrum* fideliter colligerent.—*Lib. Pontif.*

[169] The Peristephanon—"Concerning the [martyrs'] crowns."

[170] In the thirteenth century many of the stories were collected in the *Legenda Aurea* by Jacques de Voragine, an archbishop of Genoa. After the discovery of printing the press teemed with this legendary literature, Flowers of the Saints, Acts of the Martyrs, etc., embellished with numerous engravings, representing with horrible minuteness the Dantean tortures on which the monkish mind loved to expatiate.

[171] Assatum est: versa et manduca.

[172] —Latus ungula virgineum

Pulsat utrimque, et ad ossa secat,
Eulalia numerante notas.
Scriberis ecce! mihi Domine;
Quàm juvat hos apices legere.—*Peristeph., Hymn* ix.

[173] See martyrdom of Polycarp, Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, iv. 15.

[174] At sola mater hisce lamentis caret,
Soli sereno frons renidet gaudio.—Prudent., *Peristeph.*

[175] His persecutor saucius
Pallet, rubescit, æstuat,
Insana torquens lumina.
Spumasque frendens egerit.—*Ibid.*, *Hymn* ii.

[176] Bitumen et mixtum pice
Imo implicabunt Tartaro.—*Ibid.*

[177] Hence called legends, a word which has in consequence come to signify the incredible or fictitious. Upon a mere verbal mistake was founded the account by the mediæval writers of a most formidable weapon called the *catomus*, which name gave rise to the verbs *catomare* and *catomizare*, to express its use. It was at length discovered that *catomus* was but the Latin form of the Greek adverbial phrase κατ' ὤμων, signifying, "upon the shoulders." (Maitland, p. 167.)

[178] *Hist. Eccles.*, v, 1.

[179] Multique avidius tum martyria gloriosis mortibus quærebant quam nunc episcopatus pravis ambitionibus appetunt.—Sulpio. Sever., *Hist.*, lib. ii.

[180] *Apol.*, c. 30.

[181] Gregory Nazianzen. *Orat. de Laud. Basil.* See also the striking language of Ignatius. (Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, iii, 36.)

[182] Chrys. *Hom. 74, de Martyr.*

[183] Kip, p. 88—from Maitland, p. 146. Sometimes the ardour for martyrdom rose into a passion, or indeed an epidemic. Eusebius says, (*Hist. Eccles.*, viii, 6,) that in Nicomedia "Men and women with a certain divine and inexpressible alacrity rushed into the fire."

[184] Inscripta CHRISTO pagina immortalis est,
Excepit adstans angelus coram Deo.
Et quæ locutus martyr, et quæ pertulit:
Nec verbum solùm disserentis condidit,
Omnis notata est sanguinis dimensio,
Quæ vis doloris, quive segmenti modus:
Guttam cruoris ille nullam perdidit.—*Peristeph.*

[185] The pagans called the martyrs βιαθάνατοι, or self-murderers.

[186] Tertul., *Apol.*, c. 50.

[187] As early as the middle of the second century Justin Martyr says, "There is not a nation, Greek or Barbarian, or of any other name, even of those that wander in tribes or live in tents, among whom prayers and thanksgiving are not offered to the Father and Creator of the universe in the name of the crucified Jesus." The decree of Maximin states that almost all men had abandoned the worship of the gods and joined the Christian sect: Σχεδὸν ἅπαντας ἀνθρώπους, καταλειφθείσης τῆς τῶν θεῶν θρησκείας, τῷ ἔθνει τῶν Χριστιανῶν συμμεμιχότας. Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, ix, 9. Lucianus of Antioch says that before the last persecution the greater part of the world, including whole cities, had yielded allegiance to the truth—Pars pæne mundi jam major huic veritati adstipulatur; urbes integrae; etc.—Trans. of Euseb. by Rufinus.

[188] Even the sanguine imagination of Tertullian cannot conceive the possibility of this event. "Sed et Cæsares credidissent super Christo," he exclaims, "si aut Cæsares non essent seculo necessario, aut si et Christiani potuissent esse Cæsares."—*Apol.*, c. 21.

[189] Οἷά τις ἡλίου βολή.—Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, ii, 3.

[190] *Ibid.*, ix, 1; x, 9.

[191] *Ibid.*, x, 4. Literally, "They are no more because they never were." In his eloquent oration on the renovation of the cathedral of Tyre Eusebius applies, with remarkable elegance and propriety, the promises of Scripture concerning the restoration of the exiled Jews from Babylon and the final establishment of the church of God (Psa. lxxx; xcviii; Isa. lii; liv) to the condition of Christianity in his day. The above citations are given almost in his very words.

[192] A few years after the death of Constantine the Emperor Julian found at this celebrated shrine of Apollo, on the festival of the god, instead of the hecatombs of oxen and the crowds of worshippers which he expected, only a single goose, and a pale and solitary priest in the decayed and deserted temple.—Gibbon, ii, 448, Am. ed.

[193] See a thoughtful essay on this topic in Froude's *Short Studies on Great Subjects, First Series*.

[194] The church itself experienced many corruptions before the date of Constantine. Among the recent converts from paganism a crop of heresies sprang up. "When the sacred choir of the Apostles," says Hegesippus, (*apud* Euseb., iii, 32,) "had passed away, then the combinations of impious error arose by the fraud and delusion of false teachers." The schisms of Marcian and Novatian, Valentine and Montanus, early rent the Christian community. The exclusive ecclesiasticism of Cyprian, the episcopal assumptions of Victor, and the secular ambition and rapacity of Paul of Samosata, were portents of the spirit which afterward bore such bitter fruit.

That pride and luxury had begun to invade the simplicity of primitive times, which, when the church basked in the sunshine of imperial favour, so completely withered its spiritual power.

CHAPTER III.

THE DISUSE AND ABANDONMENT OF THE CATACOMBS.

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FROM the period of the Edict of Milan, A. D. 313, a new era opens in the history of the Catacombs. Christianity, emerging from those gloomy recesses where she had so long hidden in darkness, walked boldly in the light of day. She laid aside her lowly garb, put on the trappings of imperial state, and at length, unhappily, exchanged her primitive simplicity for worldly power and splendour. But therein was her danger. The shadow of that power shed a upas influence over the church. The unhallowed union between the bride of heaven and a sinful world gave birth to corruption and religious error. Pampered when subservient to the policy of the Cæsars, she soon became its willing instrument, and stained her snowy robes by complicity with imperial vice. Christianity became at length "a truth grown false," and men, to use the fine figure of D'Aubigné, forsaking the precious perfume of faith, bowed down before the empty vessel that had contained it.

The influence of Constantine seems to have been fraught with more of evil than of good to the new religion that he espoused. He appears to have adopted the Christian name from expediency rather than from conviction, and, stained with the kindred blood of wife and son and nephew, ill deserves the title of Saint, bestowed in fulsome adulation by a venal church. Even the priests of the false gods, aghast with horror at his crimes, exclaimed, "There is no expiation for deeds like these." He used both pagans and Christians, both orthodox and heretics, as instruments for his political purposes. His object seems to have been rather to raise and strengthen a hierarchy of ecclesiastical supporters than to assist the cause of truth; and he imposed on the organization of the Greek and Latin churches that monarchical and secular character which they have ever since retained.[195]

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The transfer of the seat of empire from the Tiber to the Bosphorus left Christianity to develop itself at Rome less trammelled by imperial influence; and, perhaps, in a less corrupt form than in the East. After the edict of toleration, the places of worship which had been closed or destroyed during the persecution were opened, or rebuilt with a magnificence rivalling that of the ancient temples. But the Catacombs still continued invested with a deep and pathetic interest, as the cradle of the faith, the refuge of the church during the storm of calamity, and the sepulchre of the saints and martyrs. Hence numerous basilicas or oratories were erected over or near the entrances of the ancient cemeteries in honour of the holy dead.

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On the full recognition of Christianity the necessity for subterranean sepulture ceased; hence it fell gradually into disuse, and was superseded by burial in or near the now numerous basilicas. Even the Roman bishops were no longer interred in the so-called Papal Crypt, but in churches above ground; and this example was soon generally followed. "The inscriptions with consular dates," says Dr. Northcote, "probably furnish us with a sufficiently accurate guide to the relative proportions of the two modes of burial. From A. D. 338 to A. D. 360 two out of three burials appear to have taken place in the subterranean portion of the cemeteries, while from A. D. 364 to A. D. 369 the proportions are equal. During the next two years hardly any notices of burials *above* ground appear, but after that subterranean crypts fell rapidly into disuse."[196]

It is a remarkable circumstance, here indicated, that in the years A. D. 370 and 371 a sudden and general return to subterranean sepulture took place. This change has been very satisfactorily explained by the contemporary history of the Catacombs. Great injury had already been inflicted on these ancient sepulchres by the practice which had become prevalent of erecting basilicas, more or less sumptuous, over the tombs of the illustrious martyrs of the age of persecution.[197] As the ecclesiastical authorities shrank from disturbing their remains it became the custom to excavate the ground down to the level of their graves. As these were often in the lower levels of the Catacombs, hundreds of graves were sometimes destroyed in these excavations and constructions.[198] Damasus, bishop of Rome from A. D. 358 to A. D. 384, who was indefatigable in his efforts to protect and, where possible, to restore the Catacombs, endeavoured to prevent this wholesale destruction of these sacred crypts. He explored many of the galleries, which, to preserve inviolate the martyrs' graves, had been blocked up with earth and stones during the period of persecution. He cleared out[199] and enlarged the passages leading to the more distinguished tombs, and constructed ample flights of stairs for the accommodation of the numerous pilgrims to these sacred shrines. He lined many of the chambers with marble slabs, constructed shafts for the admission of light and air, and supported the crumbling walls and galleries, where necessary, with piers and arches of solid masonry. He also composed numerous metrical inscriptions in honour of the martyrs, which were engraved on marble in a singularly elegant character. There are few of the Catacombs in which traces of his restorations or adornments are not to be found.

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The piety or superstition of the wealthy converts to Christianity led them to enlarge the subterranean chapels and martyr-tombs, and to decorate them with costly marbles, frescoes, mosaics, stucco ornaments, and vaulted roofs. The contemporary tombs and monuments were also on a scale of magnificence before unknown; and the inscriptions assumed a florid and inflated character far different from the simplicity of the primitive ages. The

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architecture and paintings also indicate, with the increase of wealth and luxury, the decline and fatal eclipse of art.

To the period of Damasus belongs the description, by Prudentius, of the shrine of Hippolytus, part of which has been already quoted.[200] "That little chapel," he continues, "which contains the cast-off garments of his soul, is bright with solid silver. Wealthy hands have put up glistening tablets, smooth and bright as a concave mirror; and, not content with overlaying the entrance with Parian marble, they have lavished large sums of money on the ornamentation of the work." It was during the period of the labours of Damasus that the revived interest in the Catacombs was so strikingly manifested by the sudden return to the subterranean mode of burial, and that many of the tombs and chapels received their most elaborate adornment.[201]

The perversion of a natural instinct, beautiful and praiseworthy in itself, became the root of much evil in after times. Our hearts are irresistibly drawn toward the place where lie the [Pg 125] remains of the dear departed in the last long sleep of death. Although we know that only the slumbering dust is there, we love to meditate above their graves, and seem there to hold closer communion with their spirits than elsewhere. Especially would the early Christians be drawn to the tombs of their fathers in the faith, many of whom were also their fathers in the flesh, whose saintly patience or glorious martyrdom had hallowed their memory for evermore. They would naturally be led to adorn and beautify their sepulchres, and in pious devotion to meditate and pray beside their honoured remains. This innocent, and even laudable, practice gradually, and perhaps inevitably, led to abuses. The admiration of the martyr's faith and patience and heroic spirit gradually intensified into superstitious veneration for his body, blood, bones, ashes, clothes, staff, or any personal relic. Judaism regarded the touching of aught connected with the dead as involving a ceremonial pollution; but Christian ideas invested even the crumbling dust of the martyrs with especial sanctity.

The first clear evidence that we have of this feeling is in the case of Ignatius, who suffered under Trajan, A. D. 107. Perhaps from a fear that superstitious reverence might be paid to his remains, he prayed that the wild beasts might become his sepulchre, so that nothing of him might be left.[202] His desire was only partly fulfilled, for "the larger and harder bones remained, which were carried to Antioch and kept as an inestimable treasure left to the Church by the grace which was in the martyr."[203] Eusebius speaks of the charred remains of Polycarp as "more precious than the richest jewels, and more tried than gold."[204] [Pg 126] The martyrs blood was esteemed a talisman of especial power. A sponge saturated therewith was sometimes worn as a sacred relic, and it may be as a supernatural amulet, by their friends or relatives. Prudentius describes the spectators of the martyrdom of St. Vincent as dipping their clothes in his blood, that they might keep it as a sort of palladium for successive generations:

> Crowds haste the linen vest to stain
> With gore distilled from martyr's vein,
> And thus a holy safeguard place
> At home, to shield the future race.[205]

In the account of the death of Hippolytus, he describes the gathering of his mangled limbs with a minuteness too revolting for the poetry even of martyrology.[206] With a refinement of cruelty, the persecutors of Gaul cast the remains of the martyrs of Vienne to the dogs, and guarded their lifeless bodies for days, in order to deprive the Christians of the melancholy satisfaction of paying the last sad rites of burial to any fragments that remained.[207]

The primitive Christians justly discriminated between the reverence due to the martyrs and the adoration to be rendered only to the Supreme Being. "We worship Christ as the Son of God," says the church of Smyrna, "but the martyrs we deservedly love as the disciples and imitators of Our Lord."[208] "We do not build temples to our martyrs as gods," says [Pg 127] Augustine, "but only memorials of them as dead men whose spirits live with God; nor do we erect altars or sacrifice to our martyrs, but to the only God, both theirs and ours."[209] But the enthusiastic feelings of the people at length failed to make this proper distinction, and many even of the theological writers of the day, not foreseeing the disastrous consequences to which the practice would lead, were carried away with the popular current.

One form which this veneration took was that of festivals in honour of the martyrs. "By a noble metaphor," says Milman,[210] "the day of their death was considered that of their birth to immortality."[211] The church of Smyrna celebrated the anniversary of their martyred bishop's passion "with joy and gladness as his natal day."[212] Tertullian asserts that the practice has the authority of apostolic tradition.[213] These festivals were at first kept with religious solemnity, accompanied by the celebration of the eucharist, often in the rock-hewn chambers of the Catacombs, where a thin tile separated the dead in Christ from the devout worshippers who commemorated the passion of their common Lord. During the ages of persecution this was a rite of deep and touching significance. Frequently his partaking of that feast was the recipient's own consecration to the martyr's death. But after the peace of the church it often degenerated into a scene of excess and vulgar revelry, more like the pagan banquets for the dead than a Christian solemnity. Indeed, they were avowedly employed in ignoble appeal to the baser appetites, as counter-attractions to the pagan [Pg 128] feasts, to induce the poor to attend the festivals of the church.[214] This degradation of an originally praiseworthy practice, and the intensifying and abject superstition to which it led,

provoked the taunts of the heathen and the censure of the more devout and thoughtful Christians. The philosophic Julian recoiled from the adoration of relics as from pollution. Another pagan writer contrasts the veneration of obscure martyrs' names, hateful to the gods and to men,[215] with the refined and poetic *cultus* of Minerva and Jupiter.[216] Vigilantius, the Spanish presbyter, strongly condemns the "ashes worshippers and idolaters;" while, on the other hand, Jerome magnifies the sanctity of these relics, "around which," he says, "the souls of the martyrs are constantly hovering to hear the prayers of the supplicant." After in vain trying to restrain their abuses and excesses, the ecclesiastical authorities were at length compelled to suppress these festivals.

The reverence paid to the relics of the martyrs had two remarkable and contrary effects. Having led in the first place to the adornment of their sepulchres, it ultimately caused their destruction and spoliation. In consequence of this feeling it became an object of ambition to share the resting-place of those who had been so holy in life and so glorious in death. Hence new graves were often excavated in the back of the *arcosolia*, cutting through the beautiful [Pg 129] frescoes with which they were adorned, and mutilating or destroying the paintings.[217] The *cubicula* were also defaced, their symmetry injured, and their construction endangered by similar imprudent excavations.

Numerous inscriptions inform us that many persons secured this privilege during their lives, as the following examples: IN CRYPTA NOBA RETRO SANCTOS EMERVM SE VIVAS BALERA ET SABINA (*sic*)—"In the new crypt behind the saints: Valeria and Sabina bought it for themselves while living." ΕΝΘΑΔΕ ΠΑΥΛΕΙΝΑ ΚΕΙΤΑΙ ΜΑΚΑΡΩ ΕΝ ΧΩΡΩ—"Here lies Paulina in the place of the blessed." Another inscription of the period of Damasus tells of one who was buried "within the thresholds of the saints, a thing which many desire and few obtain."[218] Sometimes the name of the saint or martyr is mentioned, as in one which records the purchase of a grave, "at the tomb of Hippolytus, above the *arcosolium*,"[219] and another at that of Cornelius.[220] So also the tomb of Cecilia was separated from that of one of the primitive bishops by scarcely an inch of rock. Great injury was thus done to the Catacombs by the indiscreet devotion of those who observed this practice. Many pilgrims to the graves of the martyrs, deriving, they thought, a spiritual benefit from proximity to their sacred dust, took up their abode in little cells beside their graves while alive, and shared their sepulchres in death. In answer to the inquiry of his friend Paulinus of Nola, whether it was a profit to the soul that the body should be buried near the shrine of some saint,[221] [Pg 130] Augustine wrote a special treatise[222] in justification of the practice; although *how* the martyrs help men, he confesses, is a question beyond his understanding. We have already seen the very strong opinion entertained on this subject by Jerome, the contemporary of Augustine. More in accordance with reason and scripture is the sentiment contained in the epitaph of the archdeacon Sabinus, lately found at San Lorenzo:

NIL IVVAT IMMO GRAVAT TVMVLIS HAERERE PIORVM
SANCTORVM MERITIS OPTIMA VITA PROPE EST
CORPORE NON OPVS EST ANIMA TENDAMVS AD ILLOS
QVAE BENE SALVA POTEST CORPORE ESSE SALVS.[223]

> It nothing helps, but rather hinders, to stick close to the tombs of the saints; a good life is the best approach to their merits. Not with the body but with the soul must we draw nigh to them; when that is well saved it may prove the salvation of the body also.

Even Damasus, who, if any ought, might claim sepulture with the sainted dead, shrank from disturbing their remains, and was buried in a tomb *above* the Catacomb of Callixtus. Of the subterranean crypt he says:

HIC FATEOR DAMASVS VOLVI MEA CONDERE MEMBRA
SED TIMVI SANCTOS CINERES VEXARE PIORVM.

> Here I, Damasus, confess I wished to lay my limbs, but I feared to vex the holy ashes of the saints.

The desire for communion with the holy dead continued throughout successive generations. Multitudes of pilgrims still visited the shrines of the martyrs, and, after the wont of travellers, left traces of their presence in the numerous *graffiti* which are written on the walls. Some of these are names of classical form, as Leo, Felix, Maximus, Theophilus; others, [Pg 131] written in less accessible places, are of later date and of foreign character, Spanish, British, or German, as Ildebrand, Ethelred, Lupo, Bonizo, Joannes. The names are frequently accompanied with the letters *Pb.*, or *Presb.*, the indication of the ecclesiastical grade of the writer.

Many of the loftiest dignitaries in church and state, popes and prelates, princes and nobles, kings and queens, and even some illustrious wearers of the imperial purple, continued to be brought, often from afar, throughout the period of the Middle Ages, to lie in death as near as possible to the hallowed dust of the early martyrs and confessors of the faith. Among them were some stained with blood, who hoped to expiate their crimes by their religious austerities, and to enter paradise through the intercession of the saints near whose remains their bones were laid. Several petty kings of the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy, some expelled by their subjects or rivals, others flying from the post of duty, muttered their prayers and counted their beads in the crypts of the Catacombs, and were buried in their vicinity. The following are a few of the more illustrious, taken from the list of the Abbé Gaume:[224] Popes Leo I., Gregory I., II., and III., Leo XI.; the Emperor Honorius and Mary his wife, Valentinian

and Otho II.; Cedwalla, king of the West-Saxons; Conrad, king of the Mercians; Offa and Ina, Saxon kings, with Eldiburga, wife of the latter; the Empress Agnes, Queen Charlotte of Cyprus, and the Countess Matilda, who so enriched the papal see by her donations. These were buried, not in the Catacombs, but in the basilicas erected over them, which were considered to share their sanctity. Thus, as St. Chrysostom remarks, referring to the tradition concerning the sepulchres of St. Peter and St. Paul, kings laid aside their crowns at the tombs of the fisherman and the tentmaker.[225]

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During the latter part of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century the management of the Catacombs seems to have been no longer in the hands of the ecclesiastical authorities, but under the control of the fossors,[226] with whom the bargain for interment was made by the friends of the deceased. Numerous inscriptions occur in which this bargain is recorded, together with the names of the buyers and sellers, and sometimes those of the witnesses to the contract, and even the price that was paid, as in the following examples: COSTAT NOS EMISSE IANVARIVM ET BRITIAM LOCVM ANTE DOMNA EMERITA A FOSSORIBVS BVRDONE ET MICINMO ET MVSCO RATIONE AVRI SOLIDVM VN SEMES (*sic*)—"It is unquestionable that we, Januarius and Britia, bought a place in front of [the tomb of] Lady Emerita[227] from the fossors Burdo, Micinus, and Muscus, for the consideration of one solidus and a half of gold"—(about $7.) EMPTVM LOCVM A BARTIMISTVM VISOMVM HOC EST ET PRETIVM DATVM A FOSSORE HILARO ID EST FOLN ... PRESENTIA SEVERI FOSS. ET LAVRENT—"The place bought by Bartimistus, that is, a bisomus; and the price paid to the fossor Hilarus, 1400 folles, (about $5 65,) in the presence of the fossors Severus and Laurence." The fossors also probably prepared and engraved the funeral slabs, as seems to be implied in the following: LOCV MARMARORI (*sic*) QVODRISOMVM—"A quadruple tomb [bought] of the stonecutter."[228]

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In the following illustration from the Catacomb of Callixtus the fossor is seen standing in a *cubiculum* lined with graves, and surrounded by the implements of his labour. On his shoulder is the mattock with which he dug the friable tufa, and in his hand the lamp with the spike by which it was fastened to the rock while he worked. At his feet lie the compasses for marking out the *loculi*, and over his head we read the simple epitaph, "Diogenes the fossor, buried in peace on the eighth before the calends of October."

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Fig. 23.—Diogenes the Fossor.

The accompanying engraving from Aringhi shows the fossor actively engaged in excavating the vaulted gallery by the light of the lamp suspended near him. The marks made by the mattocks, in the manner here shown, may be seen in the walls of the passages as plainly as though the fossor had but just ceased his labours.

After a brief return to subterranean burial in the time of Damasus the practice fell rapidly into disuse, and after A. D. 410 scarcely a single certain example can be found. In that fatal year the blast of the Gothic trumpet, startling the ear of midnight[229] in the streets of Rome, proclaimed its capture by the hosts of the stern Alaric. Amid the social and civil commotions that accompanied the breaking up of the empire, there was neither time nor means to adorn the sepulchres of the saints, and the Catacombs fell into inevitable neglect and decay. Of this year not a single sepulchral inscription remains, a striking indication of the anarchy and confusion prevailing, when even the customary honours were not paid to the dead.

Like a mighty deluge sweeping away and overwhelming the art

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Fig. 24.—The Fossor at Work.

and civilization of the South, came the invasion of the barbarous hordes of the North; yet like a deluge fertilizing and enriching the soil, and leaving germs of future fruitfulness behind. Having conquered the world with its arms and corrupted it with its vices, the mighty fabric of the Roman empire lost internal strength and cohesion, and began to crumble to pieces. The secret causes of its dissolution had long been stealthily at work, and its fall at last was utter and complete. Thrice in the space of three years (A. D. 408, 409, 410) Rome was besieged by the hosts of Alaric, and, in vain purchasing respite by a costly ransom, she was at last given up as a prey to the bold, eager, and greedy savagery of the North. The pillage of the world, accumulated during a thousand years of conquest, left, however, little pretext for violating the resting-places of the dead. As the rude soldiery gloated with hungry eyes on the lavish gold and silver, the precious jewels and sumptuous vestments on every side, they recked little for mere works of art, and many a porphyry vase and priceless statue was wantonly shivered by barbarian battle-axe. Nevertheless, the conqueror respected the basilicas of the apostles and the sacred vessels of their shrines, declaring that he made not war upon the saints.[230]

But succeeding conquerors were less scrupulous or more rapacious. Five times in the course of the fifth century, and as often in the sixth, the Eternal City, “that was almighty named,” was besieged by her implacable foes. The churches were plundered of the massy plate and other treasures, and even the dim crypts of the Catacombs [Pg 136] echoed the clanging tread of the armed soldiery as with sacrilegious hands they stripped the shrines of the saints of their costly adorning, and rifled the graves of the dead in search for hidden treasure.[231] Each successive invasion to which Rome was exposed renewed these scenes of desecration and robbery. The Huns, the Goths, the Lombards, and, later, the Normans and Saracens, were rivals in spoliation and destruction.

During the intervals of peace the Roman pontiffs endeavoured to restore the Catacombs and re-adorn the martyr shrines, which were still the objects of pious veneration. They were also used during the barbarian invasions, as during the pagan persecutions, as places of refuge. Boniface I., having been for some time concealed in the Catacomb of Felicitas, afterwards elaborately ornamented it. Symmachus and Vigilius were also especially diligent in their care for the Catacombs. The latter restored many of the Damasine epitaphs which had been destroyed.[232] [Pg 137] We read also of popes of the sixth and two following centuries restoring the cemeteries and making provision for the celebration of the martyrs’ festivals at their subterranean shrines. The sculpture and frescoes of the period of course exhibited the depraved taste and debased execution of the times.

A new element of destruction came now into play. This was the wholesale translation of the bodies of the saints from the Catacombs to the churches of the city, in order to save them from profanation by Astolphus and his sacrilegious Lombards. These pious robbers ransacked and systematically despoiled the ancient cemeteries, and carried off the relics of the martyrs. Pope Stephen III. thereupon published a letter from St. Peter himself menacing with eternal damnation the violators of these hallowed tombs. These spiritual terrors, however, were found insufficient to protect the sacred relics. The work of translation was resumed, and Pope Paul I. records the removal in A. D. 761 of the bodies of over a hundred “martyrs, confessors, and virgins of Christ, with hymns and spiritual songs, into the city of Rome.” He complains also of the neglect into which the Catacombs had fallen. Their deeper recesses were given up to owls and bats, and nearer the entrance the prowling fox or jackal found a covert. There, too, the Campagnian shepherds frequently folded their flocks, and “converted the sacred places into stables and dunghills.” They became, also, the lurking places of thieves and debtors, outlaws and bandits, who took refuge in their tangled labyrinths.

We have observed the practice in the fourth century of building churches over the martyrs’ tombs. The natural reverence for their remains soon passed into a superstitious veneration [Pg 138] and belief in their miraculous efficacy. Even such acute minds as those of Origen, Chrysostom, and Ambrose seem infected with this superstition.[233] It soon became considered essential to the consecration of a church that it should be hallowed by some holy relics. These were placed not only on the altar, but in the sides of portals, to be kissed by the devout on entering.[234] The furnishing of these relics became a gainful trade. St. Augustine complains of certain vagabond monks who went about selling relics of the martyrs, if indeed martyrs they were.[235] In consequence of this practice a Theodosian law of the year A. D. 386 forbids the removal of any body that was buried, or the tearing asunder or sale of the remains of a martyr.[236] In consequence of the number of spurious relics, the fourth Council of Carthage, in A. D. 401, prohibited the use of any whose genuineness could not be authenticated.[237] Martin of Tours narrates how he discovered, by summoning the ghost of a so-called martyr, that the revered relics were only those of a common thief.[238] The Empress Constantina wrote to Gregory the Great, at the end of the sixth century, for the head of St. [Pg 139] Paul, in order to consecrate a new church. He replied that he could not divide the bodies of the saints, and declared that the danger of invading their tombs was sometimes even fatal.

[239] But this pious reverence gave place to a more mercenary spirit, and the trade in relics became a traffic of infamy and disgrace. Not only were the bodies of the so-called martyrs torn asunder and their limbs sold to diverse and distant places, but with sacrilegious fraud the relics of favourite saints were multiplied till as many different cities claimed to have their only true and genuine heads, arms, or bodies, as contended for the honour of being the birth-place of Homer.[240]

These relics were endowed in popular apprehension with most miraculous powers. They emitted a delightful fragrance that ravished the senses. A fleshless skull declared the name and martyrdom of its owner. The bones of St. Lawrence moved in their grave to make room for those of another saint. The liquefaction of a martyr's blood may still be witnessed by the faithful on the anniversary of St. Januarius at Naples.[241] If we may credit numerous traditions, these wonder-working human remains healed the sick,[242] raised the dead, and, more difficult still, converted heretics to the true faith. Nay, the mere contact with the *brandea* or handkerchief from the martyr's tomb, the filings of his chains, or the oil from the lamp before his shrine, communicated spiritual as well as physical benefit. These sacred relics possessed a talismanic power to protect from evil. They were borne into battle to avert the hurtling death and to blunt the edge of the sword. They were affixed to towers as a safeguard against the thunderbolt.[243] They were inlaid in the crowns and regalia of kings, [244] and worn in rings and amulets as prophylactics against poison or disease, and they lent an awful sanctity to the oath taken upon the altar.[245]

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The slender historical evidence on which idolatrous homage is paid to these relics is seen in the case of the so-called "Saint Theodosia of Amiens." Her epitaph, found in a Catacomb near the Salarian Way, reads as follows:

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AVRELIAE THEVDOSIAE
BENIGNISSIMAE ET
INCOMPARABILI FEMINAE
AVRELIVS OPTATVS
CONIVGI INNOCENTISSIMAE
NAT · AMBIANA.

> Aurelius Optatus to his most innocent wife Aurelia Theudosia, a most gracious and incomparable woman, by nation an Ambian.

The Congregation of Relics decided that Theudosia was both a saint and martyr, and a native of Amiens. Her remains were solemnly conveyed to that city, and on the 12th of October, 1833, they were received with the utmost magnificence by no less than twenty-eight mitred prelates and fifteen hundred other ecclesiastics, placed in a gorgeous shrine, and honoured as in ancient times they honoured a tutelar goddess. Cardinal Wiseman preached on the occasion, and compared the removal of her remains to her native place to that of the patriarch Joseph's bones from Egypt to Canaan; and Bishop Salinis commended the homage of her relics "because the martyrs are, after Jesus Christ, also *Christs* to open heaven to mankind."[246]

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By this practice of the translation of relics Rome broke the chain of positive evidence, and destroyed the tender and pathetic associations connected with the remains of the sainted dead. The martyr's tomb, in its original position and undisturbed, is an object of intensest interest; but removed to some distant church or abbey and redecorated with florid adornment or theatrical finery, his alleged relics provoke only skepticism or contempt. Indeed, so little attempt at probability is there in the names given to these relics that a Romanist writer, the Abbé Barbier de Montault, confesses that the greater part of the bodies found in the Catacombs wanting proper names have received, when they were exposed to public veneration, names at haphazard, which have only a vague or general signification, as Felix, Fortunatus, Victor.[247]

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We return from this digression to the mediæval history of the Catacombs. The efforts of Stephen III., Adrian I., and Leo III., in the eighth and ninth centuries, to restore their ancient honour and magnificence, were unavailing. The tombs of the saints were continually being abandoned and destroyed. The translation of the sacred relics was renewed with increased energy. Pope Paschal I. was the most zealous agent in the prosecution of this work. An inscription in the church of St. Prassede, which he built for their reception, records the translation thither of 2,300 bodies in a single day, July 20, A. D. 817. Successive popes continued to remove cartloads of relics from the Catacombs in order to enhance the dignity or sanctity of the churches which they built or restored, and as an evidence of their own pious zeal. At this period, probably, the multitude of relics were borne to the Pantheon, since known as St. Maria ad Martyres—

> Shrine of all saints and temple of all gods
> From Jove to Jesus.[248]

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These perpetual spoliations of the Christian cemeteries led to the rapid destruction of many of their galleries and chambers, and to their final abandonment like a worked-out mine—a mine, too, which had been the source of greater riches to the church than treasures of silver or gold. In the removal of the relics of the martyrs the principal motive for the protection or adornment of the Catacombs was taken away, and during the gathering darkness of the Middle Ages they speedily passed out of the knowledge of mankind. In a few of those in the immediate vicinity of some church or monastery a subterranean chapel was still kept open,

and an occasional mass was celebrated on the presumed anniversary of the martyr whose name was associated, often erroneously, therewith; or some zealous and adventurous pilgrim might even penetrate their obscure recesses. But a blight had fallen on the once beautiful Campagna. Desolation, pestilence, and death brooded over the deserted plain. Through the natural dilapidations of time, and the spoliations of Saracens, Normans, and Greeks, who successively invaded Italy and wasted the country with fire and sword, the basilicas and oratories of the Byzantine period crumbled to decay or were destroyed, and the monasteries were deserted; their cowled and sandaled occupants, long the sole custodians of the Catacombs, taking refuge within the city walls. The rains of a thousand autumns and the frosts of as many winters caused the crumbling of the *luminari*, the falling in of the roofs, and ruin of the galleries. The knowledge of the past was lost in the gathering gloom of the dark ages, so that in an enumeration of the Roman Catacombs in the fourteenth century only three are mentioned, and these were connected with some church. In the fifteenth century but one, that of Sebastian, was known. [Pg 146]

Yet there is evidence that some of the galleries were accessible, and were used for dark and sinister purposes, in keeping with their gloomy and desolate character. During the lawless period from the eleventh to the fifteenth century, when faction and civil war and anarchy laid waste the country, and even the classic mausolea above ground were converted into armed fortresses, these gloomy vaults became the rendezvous of insurgents and conspirators, who feared no betrayal of their bloody secrets by the silent sleepers in their narrow cells. In their dark recesses were concocted those “treasons, stratagems, and spoils” that desolated the land. Frequently armed bands of the retainers of hostile houses—the Montagues and Capulets of the day—met in these subterranean battle-grounds, and the war-cry of Guelph and Ghibelline, of Colonna and Orsini, rang through the hollow corridors, disturbing the quiet of the graves. Bloodshed and cruelty often desecrated the spot sacred to religion and the ashes of the sainted dead. Petrarch thus describes these unhallowed uses of the Catacombs:

> They are become like robbers’ caves,
> So that only the good are denied entrance;
> And among altars and saintly statues
> Every cruel enterprise is planned.[249]

During the period of the “Babylonish Captivity,” when the Papal See was removed from the banks of the Tiber to those of the Rhone—from the protection of the fortress of St. Angelo to the castled heights of Avignon—the decay of every thing pertaining to the church in Italy was precipitated. The city of Rome, which depended for its prosperity entirely upon its ecclesiastical pomps and pageants, became impoverished and almost deserted. The Campagna changed to a wilderness, and the entrances to the Catacombs were choked with rubbish or overgrown with tangled thickets and gigantic weeds. Many of these entrances were also walled up by the civic authorities to prevent their becoming the resort of robbers, and for the safety of the inhabitants. [Pg 147]

During the short and tumultuous career of that strange reformer, Colonna di Rienzi, (1347-1354,) some of the hidden crypts are mentioned as the scene of the plots and counterplots of that troublous time; and, like the sewers and Catacombs of Paris during the Revolution, and the cloacæ of Rome in time of proscription and civil war, they became places of refuge and concealment. On the eve of his massacre Rienzi was urged to seek safety in those ancient sanctuaries of the persecuted church, but he replied, as Nero is said to have done thirteen centuries before, that he would not bury himself alive.[250]

With the exception of these rare allusions there is little mention of the Catacombs in the chronicles of the Middle Ages, and they became in course of time virtually unknown. They were not, however, entirely unvisited. The cemetery of Sebastian was never quite forgotten, but was always open to pilgrims; and even in the darkest period there seem to have been some who, inspired by devotion or curiosity, penetrated the most accessible crypts, and left inscribed upon the walls the date of their visit. Thus, in one place we find a record of a bishop of Pisa and his companions who visited the Catacombs early in the fourteenth century. Another *graffito*, with the names of three persons and the date A. D. 1321, reads thus: “Gather together, O Christians, in these caverns, to read the holy books, to sing hymns in honour of the saints and martyrs who, having died in the Lord, lie buried here; to sing psalms for those who are now dying in the faith. There is light in this darkness. There is music in these tombs.”[251] [Pg 148]

On one of the graves were found a small silver-gilt coronet, with the date A. D. 1340, and a palm leaf worked in silver. In another crypt are written six names—German, in Latinized form—with a cross after each, and beneath, the date A. D. 1397.[252] They were probably a company of German priests on a pilgrimage to the Eternal City and its sacred shrines. In two or three *cubicula* in the Catacomb of Callixtus are *graffiti* recording the visits of certain Franciscan friars in the fifteenth century. Brother Lawrence of Sicily, over date January 17, 1451, records that with twenty others he had come to visit the holy place.[253] In 1467 some Scottish pilgrims,[254] and two years after an abbot of St. Sebastian, with a large party,[255] left records of their visits to this Catacomb. The names of Pomponio Leto and other literati of the Roman Academy have also been found in several of the crypts. These men, however, although the avowed lovers of antiquity,[256] were enthusiastic only in the pursuit of heathen learning, and justly merited the reproach of being more pagan than Christian. With the [Pg 149]

exception of such infrequent and transient visits, it would appear that this priceless treasury of Christian archæology and legacy of the primitive church to the present age was completely forgotten till it was revealed to the eyes of a wondering world by the explorations of the sixteenth and following century.

[195] *Zosimus.* His profession of Christianity provoked the scorn of the apostate Julian.—*Ibid.*

Scott compares him to a prodigal who strips an aged parent of the ornaments of her youth in order to decorate a flaunting paramour. But New Rome shared the decline of the mother city, as a graft taken from an old tree partakes of the decay of the parent stem. As the ancient liberties died out, the gorgeous but degrading despotisms of the East usurped their place. The emperors assumed the style and titles of gods. The most unmanly adulation was at length lavished on the slave or herdsman elevated by capricious fortune to the throne of the world. At the time of the princess Anna Comnena this degradation seems to have reached its nadir. "Your Eternity" was the blasphemous epithet of the ephemeral puppet flaunting for a moment in the livery of infamy. "If I may speak and live," whispered with bated breath the titled slave—Prospathaire, or Acolyte—who stood nearest the throne, shading his eyes with his hands, as if overpowered by the effulgence of the imperial countenance. The rude Latin Crusaders made short work of these lofty titles and this solemn etiquette.

[196] *Roma Sotterranea*, pp. 95, 96. During the lifetime of Constantine subterraneous sepultures seem to have been generally prevalent.

[197] These were called *martyria* or *memoriæ*. See Euseb., *Vit. Const.*, iii, 48.

[198] The effects of this practice are apparent at *S. Agnese fuori le Mura*, erected over the tomb of the virgin martyr, and at San Lorenzo, where the galleries of the Catacomb of Cyriaca have been exposed and in part destroyed.

[199] In extending the Catacombs for the purpose of burial it was sometimes found easier to cut new galleries at a higher level, using the bed of earth in the old as the floor of the new. Sometimes the new galleries cut right through the *loculi* of the old.

[200] Chap. i, p. 11. To the same period belongs the description of the Catacombs by Jerome, quoted on page 36. Jerome at one time acted as secretary to Damasus.

[201] St. Ambrose, about this time, censures the constructing of costly sepulchres, as if they were to be the receptacle of the soul instead of the body.—Frustra struunt homines pretiosa sepulchra, quasi ea animæ, nec solius corporis, receptacula essent.—*De Bono Mortis.*

Basil urges men to prepare their funeral by works of piety while they live. "For what need have you," he asks, "of a sumptuous monument, or a costly entombing?"—*Hom. in Divites.*

[202] Ignat., *Ep. ad Rom.*, § iv. Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, iii, 36.

[203] Acts of Martyrdom, § xii.

[204] *Hist. Eccles.*, iv, 15.

[205] Plerique vestem linteam
Stillante tingunt sanguine,
Tutamen ut sacrum suis
Domi reservent posteris.—*Peristeph.*, v.

[206] Hic humeros, truncasque manus et brachia, et ulnas,
Et genua, et crurum fragmina nuda legit.—*Ibid.*, iv.

[207] Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, v, 1.

[208] *Ibid.*, iv, 15.

[209] Nos martyribus nostris non templa sicut diis, sed memorias sicut hominibus mortuis, quorum apud Deum vivant spiritus, fabricamus; nec ibi erigimus altaria, in quibus sacrificemus martyribus, sed uni Deo et martyrum et nostro.—*De. Civ. Dei*, xxii, 10.

[210] *Hist. of Christianity*, book iv, c. 2.

[211] Hence called *Natalitia*, Γενέθλια.

[212] Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, iv, 15.

[213] *De Coron. Mil.*, c. ii.

[214] Diesque festos, post eos, quos relinquebant, alienos in honorem sanctorum martyrum vel non simili sacrilegio, quamvis simili luxu celebrantur.—Augustin., *Epis.* xxix. See also Boldetti, *Osservazioni sopra i cimiteri dei SS. Martiri*, p. 46.

[215] Diisque hominibusque odiosa nomina.—Aug., *Epis.*, xvi.

[216] *Ibid.*

[217] See Figs. 12 and 76.

[218] "Intra limina sanctorum, quod multi cupiunt et rari accipiunt."

[219] "At Ippolytu super arcosoliu," (*sic.*)

[220] "Ad Santum Cornelium." See also the epitaph on p. 132.

[221] "Apud sancti alicujus memoriam."

[222] *De Curâ pro Mortuis Gerendâ*, written about A. D. 421.

[223] *Bullettino*, 1864, 33.

[224] *Les Trois Romes*, tom. iv, p. 39. Aringhi gives a similar list in his chapter, De imperatoribus ac regibus, qui apud Vaticanum sepulturæ traditi sunt.—*Roma Subterranea*, lib. ii, c. 9.

[225] Chrys., *Quod Christus sit Deus*. See legend, p. 186.

[226] From *fodere*, *fossum*, to dig.

[227] Saint Emerita suffered martyrdom during the Valerian persecution.

[228] Jerome strongly censures the making merchandise of the resting-places of the dead—Quì sepulchra venditant, et non coguntur ut accepiant pretium, sed a nolentibus etiam extorquent. —*Quæst. Heb. in Gen.* xxiii.

[229] "Nocte Moab capta est, nocte cecidit murus ejus!" exclaims Jerome.—*Ad Principiam.*

[230] Gibbon, iii, 283. *Am. Ed.*

[231] The following lines by Pope Vigilius, A. D. 537, describe this event:

> Dum peritura Getæ posuissent castra sub urbem,
> Moverunt sanctis bella nefanda prius,
> Totaque sacrilego verterunt corde sepulcra,
> Martyribus quondam rite sacrata piis.

"Whilst the Goths had placed their camp, soon to perish, before the city, they first waged unhallowed war against the saints, and with sacrilegious mind destroyed whole sepulchres once solemnly consecrated to the pious martyrs."

During the fifth and sixth centuries cemeteries were opened within the walls in consequence of the peril of venturing beyond the gates.

[232] DIRVTA VIGILIVS NAM POSTHAEC PAPA GEMISCENS
HOSTIBVS EXPVLSIS OMNE NOVAVIT OPVS.—*Inscr. in Lateran.*

"Pope Vigilius, afterwards lamenting the demolished monuments, renewed the entire work after the expulsion of the enemy."

[233] These Fathers quoted such passages as 2 Kings xiii, 21; Eccles. xlviii, 13, 14; xlix, 10-15; Acts v, 15, and xix, 11, in proof of the efficacy of relics.

[234] Hence in the celebration of the mass the priest kisses the altar and invokes pardon "by the relics of the saints that are there."—See Missal. Optatus tells of a lady who used to kiss the relics of he knew not what martyr, if martyr it were, before communion.—Ante spiritualem cibum et potum, os nescio cujus martyris, si tamen martyris, libare dicebatur.—*Oper.*, lib. i.

[235] Membra martyrum, si tamen martyrum, venditant.—Aug., *de Oper. Monach.*

[236] Humatum corpus nemo ad alium locum transferat; nemo martyrem distrahat, nemo mercetur.—Cod. Theod., *De Sepulchris Violatis*, leg. 7.

[237] Omnino nulla memoria martyrum probabiliter acceptetur nisi aut ibi corpus, aut aliquæ certe reliquæ sint.—*Conc. Carth.*, v, *Can.* 14.

[238] Sulpitii Severi, *Vita Martini*, cap. viii. Julian recoiled from relic worship as from the stench of dead men's bones. He compared the churches to whited sepulchres full of rottenness and of all uncleanness.

[239] Greg. Max., *Epis.* iv.

[240] At the time of the Reformation the reputed fragments of the true cross, it is said, would have freighted a large ship. The relics of the saints were hawked about the country from house to house by pedlers who farmed their sale, paying a percentage to the church or abbey to which they belonged. D'Aubigné's *Hist. Ref.*, i., c. 3.

[241] On one occasion the blood refused to liquefy, on account, said the priests, of the malign influence of the French. The French general sent word that unless the miracle took place within an hour his cannon should blow the church about their ears. The blood liquefied immediately.

[242] The affidavit of its subject attests the miraculous cure, probably of hysteria or hypochondria, recently wrought by a relic from the Catacombs at the *Hôtel Dieu* in Montreal, Canada.

[243] A nail of the true cross, says Gregory of Tours, thrown into the Adriatic by Queen Radegunda, made it thenceforth one of the safest seas to navigate instead of one of the stormiest. —*De Gloria Martyrum.* Of another, Constantine made a bit for his horse.

[244] The Iron Crown of Lombardy the Roman Congregation of Relics has declared to be a sacred talisman, being made of a nail of the Crucifixion, although the first authentic mention of it occurs in the midnight of the dark ages, A. D. 888. From the time of Charles V. no sovereign ventured to wear this sacred crown till Napoleon, seeking to consecrate his usurped authority, with his own hand placed it on his head at Milan, A. D. 1805, with the vaunting words, "God hath given it me; let him take heed who touches it."—*Dieu me l'a donnée; gare à qui la touche.* It was carried off from the cathedral of Monza by the Austrians in 1859.

[245] On marble tablets in the Church of St. Prassede, in Rome, is an enumeration of its precious treasures, among which are a tooth of St. Peter and one of St. Paul, part of the chemise of the Virgin Mary—*de camisia beatæ Mariæ Virginis*, part of Christ's girdle—*de cingulo D. N. Jesu Christi*, part of Moses' rod, some of the earth on which Christ prayed, also of the reed and sponge, three spines of the crown of thorns, part of the towel with which he washed his disciples' feet, part of the swaddling clothes—*pannis*—in which he was wrapped at his nativity, and part of the seamless robe—*de veste inconsutili*. The whole of this robe was formerly exhibited at Trêves, where the deluded votaries of this Christian idolatry invoked its intercession in the formula, "Holy

Coat, pray for us!" In the year 1854, in the official "Gazette of Vienna," it was announced that the tooth of St. Peter, given by Pius IX. to the Emperor of Austria, would be for four days exposed to the sight and homage of the faithful. Before the Reformation these relics were still more puerile and absurd, and calculated to provoke a smile or sneer as the humourist or the cynic predominated in the observer. At the Church of All Saints at Wittemberg, says D'Aubigné, were shown a fragment of Noah's ark, some soot from the furnace of the Three Hebrew Children, and nineteen thousand other relics. At Schaffhausen was exhibited the breath of St. Joseph that Nicodemus had received in his glove. At Wurtemberg might be seen a feather plucked from the wing of the archangel Michael. (*Hist. Ref.*, i, c. 3.) Heywood, in his interlude of "The Four P's," one of whom was a Pardoner, among his "relykes," enumerates "Of All-hallowes (that is, All-Saints) the blessed jaw-bone," the great toe of the Trinity, and others in which is a still stranger mixture of absurdity and blasphemy. (See "Inquiry into the Origin of the Reformation," by the present writer, in *Evangel. Repos.*, London, Eng., Feb., 1865.) Augustine says the dung-heap on which Job sat was still visited in his day! In St. Peter's at Rome is exhibited a coin said to be one of the thirty pieces of *gold* (?) for which Judas betrayed his Master. They were made, according to the legend, by Terah, Abraham's father, who was a famous artificer under King Nimrod. They were the price of the field of Ephron, and also the coins with which Joseph was bought, and with which his brethren purchased corn in Egypt. Despite the anachronism, Moses is said to have given them as a dowry to the Queen of Sheba, who presented them to Solomon. Nebuchadnezzar, it is alleged, carried them away, and the Magi brought them back as an offering to Christ. Finally Mary cast them into the treasury of the Temple, whence the priests gave them to Judas for his perfidy. (See *Bingham*, xiv, 4, § 18.)

The stone upon which the sovereigns of England are crowned is, according to a venerable tradition, that which formed Jacob's pillow at Bethel.

In the cathedral of Genoa is deposited the wonderful cup known in history as the Holy Grail, which in times of yore was the object of so many knightly quests, and more recently the subject of so many stately epics. It was a vessel composed of a single emerald originally, (so runs the legend,) the marvellous cup wherewith Joseph divined—the cup put into the mouth of Benjamin's sack. It was also the mystical cup of wisdom of Solomon, and, at length, that out of which Christ partook of the Last Supper. Hence its name, San Greal, that is, *sanguis realis*, the real blood. Joseph of Arimathea brought it to Britain, but it mysteriously disappeared in consequence of the laxness of the times. How it came to Genoa does not clearly appear. From the time of Wolfram von Eschenbach, a minnesinger of the thirteenth century, down to Tennyson and Lowell, this has been a favourite subject of poetry. See an article on the legend, by the writer, in *Harper's Weekly*, Feb. 5, 1870.

[246] As recently as the year 1870 the alleged relics of a newly discovered St. Aureliana, a virgin martyr of the third century, who is supposed to have been a member of the family of the Roman emperor Aurelian, were transferred, with many religious ceremonies, from the Catacombs to Cincinnati, in the United States. In the Roman Catholic cathedral at Buffalo, N. Y., is a slab from the Catacombs with the inscription, DP · PEREGRINVS XII KAL · MARTIAS Q · VIXIT · M · —"Peregrinus, buried the twelfth day before the calends of March, who lived ... months." He was, therefore, an infant; yet he is claimed to be a martyr, and a wax figure of an adult man with gaping wounds exhibits the alleged mode of his death. At its feet is placed what is said to be a phial of the martyr's blood. In the same church are also what is described as "a large piece of the true cross on which trickled the sacred blood of Christ," and "particles of the bones of Saints Peter and Paul and of many other holy martyrs."

Maitland quotes an account from Mabillon of the reverence paid to a certain St. Viar, founded on the discovery of a stone bearing the letters S · VIAR. This was, however, found to be a fragment of the inscription *PRAEFECTV*S · VIAR*VM*—"Curator of the Ways." There is absolutely no warrant whatever for such assumptions as these. There is not in the whole range of Christian epigraphy a single contemporary inscription of unquestioned genuineness which can lead to the identification of the remains, name, and date of a primitive martyr.

[247] Le plupart des corps saints trouvés dans les Catacombes manquant de noms propre, ont reçu lorsqu'on les a exposés à la vénération publique, des noms de circonstance, qui n'ont qu'une signification vague; comme Felix, Fortunatus, Victor.—*Année Liturgique à Rome*, p. 151.

[248] *Childe Harold.* Boniface IV. is said to have previously transferred twenty-eight cartloads of relics from the Catacombs to this place. He thus, as we read in barbaric verse on his epitaph in the crypt of St. Peter's, purified the shrine of all the demons, and dedicated it to all the saints:

> "—Templa ...
> Delubra cunctorum fuerant quæ demonorum (*sic*)
> Hic expurgavit sanctis cunctisque dicavit."

[249] Quasi spelunca di ladron son fatti,
Tal ch'à buon solamente uscio si chiude;
E tra le altari, e tra statue ignude,
Ogni impressa crudel par che si tratti.
Canzone xi.

[250] This ancient use of the Catacombs has not been forgotten in modern times. That intrepid pontiff, Pius VII., rather than yield to the demands of the first Napoleon, threatened to retire to those gloomy recesses which had sheltered so many of the primitive bishops.

[251] MacFarlane, p. 36.

[252] *Ibid.*, 49, 50.

[253] "Fuit hic ad visitandum sanctum locum istum."

[254] "Quidem Scoti hic fuerunt."

[255] "Cum magnâ cometivâ."

[256] “Unanimes antiquitatis amatores.”

CHAPTER IV.

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THE REDISCOVERY AND EXPLORATION OF THE CATACOMBS.

It would seem that the rediscovery of the Catacombs was providentially reserved to a period especially adapted for their profitable study. In the fullness of time, when the great Reformation was emancipating the minds of men from the trammels of superstition, and long-venerated beliefs and usages were being compared with the still older primitive faith and practice, this marvellous testimony of the purity, simplicity, and piety of the early church was unveiled. These Christian evidences, which have no parallel save in the sacred scriptures themselves, after having been sealed up during the dark ages of ignorance and superstition, were brought to light in a period of intellectual quickening and revived classical learning, which stimulated the minds of men to the study of the past and to the rescue from oblivion of the priceless remains of antiquity. The newly-invented printing-press and the engraver's burin preserved the record of much that has since perished; and Roman archæologists, seeking in the monuments of antiquity for corroboration of papal doctrine and practice, brought to light the disproof of their existence in the early ages of the church. A rejection of this testimony would invalidate *all* monumental evidence, whether sacred or secular, concerning the past.

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The rediscovery of this subterranean city took place in the year 1578. Some labourers digging *pozzolana* in a vineyard on the Salarian Way came suddenly upon an ancient cemetery,[257] with its paintings, inscriptions, sarcophagi, and graves. The event produced a profound sensation in Rome. The city was amazed, says Baronius, who himself examined and described the newly-discovered Catacomb, at finding beneath her suburbs long-concealed Christian colonies.[258] These ancient shrines became again favourite places of devotion. Here, among others, St. Charles Borromeo and St. Philip Neri spent whole nights in prayer.

The earliest systematic explorers of the Catacombs were Alfonso Ciacconio, a Spanish priest, and Philip de Winghe and Jean l'Heureux,[259] two Flemish laymen. The voluminous MSS. and drawings of the two former, however, were never published, and they lie buried in those vast cemeteries of literature, the libraries of Rome, Naples, Brussels, and Paris. The valuable MS. of l'Heureux, the result of twenty years' labour, although ready for publication, and even licensed for printing, in 1605, remained unprinted for two centuries and a half, when it was given to the public by Padre Garrucci under the appropriate title of *Hagioglypta*.[260] Such a lengthened period between licensing and publication is probably unparalleled in literary history.

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To Antonio Bosio, a native of Malta and an advocate by profession, belongs the honour of first unveiling to the astonished gaze of Europe the wonders of this vast city of the dead. He has well been called the Columbus of this subterranean world. Inspired and sustained by a lofty enthusiasm, he spent six and thirty years groping among those gloomy corridors, deciphering the half-effaced inscriptions, and making drawings of the remains of early Christian art. So habituated did he become to this troglodytic existence that the Cimmerian gloom of the Catacombs was more grateful to his eyes than the light of day, which dazzled and almost blinded him. His labours were prodigious, and often both severe and perilous. He had frequently to force a passage with his own hands through the accumulated rubbish of centuries, and was constantly in danger, in the zeal of exploration, of being lost in the windings of the galleries, from which danger he had some narrow escapes. In his great work he describes himself as rushing along with breathless haste, the desire with which he burned adding wings to his weary feet. Again he is creeping serpent-wise through the low and crumbling passages, consoling himself for the difficulty and discomfort by the thought that this lowly attitude befitted the humble and reverent spirit in which a place consecrated by such memories ought to be approached. But he was rewarded for all his toil by the discovery of "pictures bright with the colours of yesterday, and characters still sharp and angular from the primeval graving tool."

The elder D'Israeli has cited Bosio as an illustrious example of the enthusiasm of genius. "Taking with him a hermit's meal for the week," he remarks, "this new Pliny often descended into the bowels of the earth by lamp-light, clearing away the sand and ruins till some tomb broke forth or some inscription became legible, tracing the mouldering sculpture and catching the fading picture. Thrown back into the primitive ages of Christianity amidst the local impressions, the historian of the Christian Catacombs collected the memorials of an age and of a race which were hidden beneath the earth."[261]

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The literary industry of this pioneer explorer was immense. He carefully examined all the Latin, Greek, and Oriental Fathers; all the ecclesiastical records, canons, and decrees of councils; the lives of the saints, the acts of the martyrs—everything, in fact, which could illustrate the history of the Catacombs and of the early church. The result of these labours is seen in the bulky MS. volumes, of many thousand pages, written with his own hand, which are still extant in the Oratorian Library at Rome. He was not permitted to see the publication of his great work, in which was disclosed to the world the wonderful *terra incognita* lying so long hidden beneath the busy life of the Eternal City, but died while writing the last chapter. It was too valuable a contribution to Christian archæology, however, to remain unpublished, and it was given to the world, under the appropriate title of

"Subterranean Rome,"[262] in the year 1632, or five years after its author's death.

This book contains an admirable topographical account of each cemetery which he had explored, taking in order the great consular roads leading from the city. Bosio's attempted identification of the cemeteries and principal tombs and shrines described in the ancient ecclesiastical records is not always sufficiently accurate. He is rather uncritical and confused in his arrangement, although honest and, in matters of personal observation, exact. His work is of great value as giving an account of many crypts and monuments, and copies of many paintings which have perished through the decay or vandalism of the last two hundred years, or whose position has been forgotten. Among these is the Jewish Cemetery before mentioned, of which no evidence is extant save Bosio's description. His name, written in his own peculiarly bold style, is met with in many of the newly opened galleries of the Catacombs, showing that he had previously explored those parts since filled with earth. [Pg 154]

Many objects of priceless value have been lost since Bosio's day by the desultory and unsystematic excavations of private and independent explorers. These were conducted, not upon a system of enlightened archæological research, but upon mere caprice; and were guided too often by a superstitious zeal for the identification and translation of the relics of the saints, or by the more sordid motive of trafficking in their remains, or of pillaging the gold and silver with which some of the more illustrious shrines were still adorned. In this quest many paintings, sculptures, and inscriptions were destroyed or defaced of which no record has been preserved. After the year 1688 the excavations were pursued under pontifical supervision, though often neglected through indifference or embarrassed by want of funds.

In 1651 a Latin translation of Bosio's great work[263] was published by Padre Aringhi, a learned Oratorian priest, who added numerous important discoveries of his own. This book has been largely consulted in the preparation of these pages, collated, of course, with more recent and more accurate explorers. [Pg 155]

The Catacombs were now frequently visited by travellers, who have left a record of their impressions in their published works. Among these were two distinguished Englishmen, John Evelyn and Bishop Burnet. The sturdy Protestantism of the latter, rejecting the unwarranted inferences drawn by the Roman archæologists from this testimony of the primitive ages, was betrayed into an unjust skepticism as to the character of that testimony. He does not scruple to affirm that "those burying places that are graced with the pompous title of Catacombs are no other than the *puticoli* mentioned by Festus Pompeius, where the meanest sort of the Roman slaves were laid," and that they did not come into the possession of the Christians till the fourth or fifth century.[264] A more careful or more candid examination of those early evidences of Christianity would have shown him the error of this statement, in which he has been followed by Misson, a French Protestant, and by some other writers.

In 1681 Bertoli published an interesting work on the sepulchral lamps of the Catacombs[265] with numerous illustrations; but a more valuable contribution to the literature of this subject was a collection of Christian epitaphs[266] by Raphael Fabretti, for many years custodian of these sacred crypts, who prevented the wholesale destruction of the inscriptions by their careless removal. The learned Benedictine, Mabillon, personally examined the evidences of the Catacombs, and wrote a treatise concerning the reverence of the unknown saints.[267] This led to the publication, under the patronage of Clement XI., of a theological and apologetic, rather than scientific, treatise on the cemeteries of the holy martyrs and early Christians of Rome,[268] by Marc Antonio Boldetti, the successor, for thirty years, of Fabretti, as *custode* of the Catacombs. But in his case, as in that of several other Roman archæologists, theological zeal was allied with antiquarian enthusiasm, and sometimes impaired or destroyed the value of his researches. [Pg 156]

Gruter's vast collection of ancient inscriptions,[269] published early in the century, and more especially that of Muratori,[270] were valuable contributions to Christian epigraphy. The learned Jesuit, Marangoni, prepared the material of a systematic work on the topographical principle of Bosio, when the labour of nearly a score of years was destroyed by fire. "It seems," says De Rossi, recording the event, "that the literary history of the Catacombs is but an Iliad of disaster and irreparable losses."

The next name of distinction that we meet in connection with this subject is that of Bottari, equally versed in profane and sacred antiquities. His great work on the sculpture and paintings of the Catacombs[271] was issued from the Vatican press, under the patronage of Clement XII., during the years 1737-1754. Other archæologists, among whom we may enumerate Buonarrotti, Mamachi,[272] Marini, Lupi, Zaccaria,[273] Danzetta,[274] Olivieri, Borgia, and others, illustrated the subject in various works during the eighteenth century. The establishment of the Christian Museum in the Vatican by Benedict XIV. greatly facilitated the study of these antiquities. The taste for archæological research, however, even among ecclesiastics, was principally confined to the remains of pagan antiquity; and amid the many museums of Rome only one was devoted to the Christian monuments of the primitive ages, of which such vast treasures lay buried in the earth. [Pg 157]

During the present century important contributions have been made to the literature of the Catacombs by D'Agincourt,[275] Röstell,[276] Raoul-Rochette,[277] the Abbés Gaume[278] and [Pg 158]

Gerbet,[279] Bishop Munter,[280] Cardinal Mai,[281] and especially Padres Marchi[282] and Garrucci.

Cardinal Wiseman, in his beautiful tale of Fabiola,[283] attempts to rehabilitate the primitive ages in the garb of modern Romanism. He brings together from widely different periods the legends and traditions, often based on very scanty evidence, which are most favourable to the claims of ultramontanism, and thus completely destroys the historic value of the work, rendering it in essence, as it is in form, a mere romance.

The most magnificent contribution to the literature of the Catacombs, at least in point of artistic excellence and costliness, is the superb work of M. Perret,[284] in six huge folio volumes, with some five hundred coloured drawings, two thirds of which were never before copied, and as many *fac-simile* inscriptions. It was prepared under the direction of the French Academy of Inscriptions, and by a vote of the Legislative Assembly of the French Republic of 1851 a grant of one hundred and eighty thousand francs was given to defray the cost. No expense was spared in its production. An able corps of artists and architects were [Pg 159] employed for several years in the undertaking. The galleries and *cubicula* are represented in elaborate drawings, plans, and sections, and many of the frescoes are copied full size. In these latter, however, the artists have injudiciously endeavoured to reproduce the original force, colour, and expression, instead of giving *fac-similes* of the faded, and often half-obliterated, paintings. Many of the pictures have, therefore, a pre-Raphaelite beauty, which destroys their value as accurate representations of the art of the Catacombs. It is to be regretted that the letter-press which accompanies these plates is not more worthy of the general magnificence of this splendid work. “It is strung together,” says the writer already quoted,[285] “without discrimination or critical research, and conveys a very inaccurate notion of the results which scientific inquiry, as opposed to mere ecclesiastical tradition, has now reached.” We have rarely ventured to make a statement on its authority unless corroborated by more authentic testimony, but many of its accurate drawings of subterranean architecture enhance the value of these pages.

All previous explorers, however, are left far behind by the invaluable labours of the Cavaliere De Rossi, the present *custode* of the Catacombs, and head of the Roman archæological commission. His profound knowledge of Christian antiquities, his unchallenged candour and honesty of statement, his patience and ingenuity in exploration, his scientific method, accurate observation, and careful deductions, place him far beyond [Pg 160] any of his predecessors in this fascinating but difficult field of inquiry. While, however, his statements of facts may always be relied upon, his theoretical conclusions must sometimes be received with caution, in consequence of that seemingly inevitable tendency in Roman Catholic writers to discover ancient evidences in favour of their modern belief and practice where they can be found by no one else.

The Catacombs are now placed under the jurisdiction of the Roman Cardinal Vicar, assisted by a commission of sacred archæology appointed by the present pontiff. As far as the comparatively limited means at their command will allow, they zealously prosecute the excavation and exploration of this subterranean Rome with a systematic method which has already been attended with remarkable success, and which promises the most happy results in the future. From its crumbling ruins, paintings, decorations, and inscriptions of different ages, De Rossi reconstructs its history, often with the greatest minuteness and fidelity. His *Roma Sotterranea*[286] contains a general history of the Catacombs on the principle adopted in this volume, and a particular analysis of that of Callixtus, embodying his most important discoveries. The learned author is also publishing a complete collection of all the Christian inscriptions of the first seven centuries found in the vicinity of Rome. The first volume[287] contains all those with consular dates, which are invaluable as fixing the chronology of the [Pg 161] Catacombs and as evidences of doctrine, showing its gradual corruption in later times. De Rossi also edits a bimonthly journal—the *Bullettino di Archeologia Cristiana*—in which the new discoveries are announced.

Dr. Maitland has the honour of being the first English writer on this subject, with the exception of the incidental allusions of travellers like Evelyn and Burnet. His admirable volume on the “Church in the Catacombs” is one of great interest, but having been written thirty years ago is quite out of date; and the recent discoveries of De Rossi and others have shown some of its conclusions, especially on the origin of the Catacombs, to be erroneous. His chapters on religious art and symbolism are of permanent value, and the theological bearing of these Christian evidences has been discussed with great candour and moderation.

In 1852 Mr. MacFarlane published a small volume giving a popular account of the Catacombs, making no reference, however, to their doctrinal teachings. “I have,” he says, “carefully avoided controversy.” The Rev. J. W. Burgon’s “Letters from Rome” contain some valuable chapters on this subject. The Rev. J. Spencer Northcote, D.D., a Roman Catholic clergyman, published in 1857 a compendious “Account of the Burial-places of the Early Christians in Rome,” compiled chiefly from Padre Marchi, whose strongly Romanist views he fully adopted. In conjunction with the Rev. W. R. Brownlow, M.A., he published in 1869 the [Pg 162] results of De Rossi’s labours in a condensed form, with reduced copies of many of his plates. With the same reserve as in the case of his former volume, this is a valuable contribution to the literature of this subject.[288] More recently the Rev. W. B. Marriott, B.D., has written a work entitled “The Testimony of the Catacombs,” consisting of three monographs

illustrating the development of the *cultus* of Mary, the gradual encroachments of the papal see, as indicated in Christian art, and a critical analysis of the celebrated Autun inscription.

In America, the Right Rev. Wm. Ingraham Kip, D.D., published in 1853 a little book of a popular character, giving an account of the Catacombs, chiefly from Maitland, MacFarlane, and Aringhi. The authorities on which it is based, however, have since been superseded, and some of the views which they held disproved by recent discovery.

The only remaining work to be mentioned as illustrating this subject is an admirable volume on Christian epigraphy[289] by the Rev. John McCaul, LL.D. The learned author's expansions, interpretations, and emendations of the frequently elliptical, obscure, and ungrammatical inscriptions of the Catacombs and other early Christian cemeteries, and the reconstruction from a few mutilated fragments of important historic evidence, seem to the uninitiated more a sort of divination than a process of reasoning.[290]

[257] The Catacomb of St. Priscilla.

[258] Ipsamet urbs obstupuit, cum abditas in suis suburbiis se novit habere civitatis Christianorum colonias.—*Ann. Eccl.*, ann. 130. It is singular that in the very year of their rediscovery Onophrius Pavinius, an Augustinian friar, published an account of the Christian cemeteries entirely from the ancient documents of the church. Only three of them were then accessible, those of Sebastian, Lawrence, and Valentine.

[259] Grecised into Joannes Macarius.

[260] Paris, 1856.

[261] *Essay on the Literary Character.* Eng. ed., p. 144.

[262] *Roma Sotteranea, opera postuma di Antonio Bosio composta disposta ed accresciuta da Giovanni di Severano, Sacerdote della Congregazione dell'Oratorio.* Roma, 1632.

MacFarlane and Kip are in error as to the period of Bosio's labours, antedating them about thirty years.

[263] *Roma Subterranea novissima post Ant. Bosium et Joan. Severanum.* Romæ, 1651. Two vols. fol. It is said that there are only two copies of this work in America. Aringhi's version, being in Latin, is better known out of Italy than the Italian treatises of Bosio, Boldetti, or Bottari.

[264] "Letters from Italy in 1685 and 1686." Rotterdam. Pp. 209.

[265] *Li antichi lucerni sepolcrali figurante raccolte dale cave sotterranea e grotte di Roma.* Roma, 1681.

[266] *Inscriptionum antiquarum quæ in ædibus paternis asservantur etc.* Romæ, 1702.

[267] *De Cultu Sanctorum Ignotorum.*

[268] *Osservazioni sopra i cemeteri dei SS. Martiri ed antichi cristiani di Roma.* Roma, 1720.

[269] *Inscriptiones Antiquæ.* Amstelodami, 1707.

[270] *Novus Thesaurus Veterum Inscriptionum.* Mediolani, 1739.

[271] *Sculture e Pitture Sacre estratte dai Cimeteri di Roma.* Roma.

[272] His *Originum et Antiquitatum Christianorum*, Roma, 1749-51, treats especially on the sarcophagi of the Catacombs.

[273] This celebrated Jesuit projected a work "On the Use of Ancient Christian Inscriptions in Theology." See Migne, *Cursus Completus Theolog.*, vol. v, pp. 309, etc.

[274] Danzetta continued Zaccaria's plan. His work, which he called *Theologia Lapidaria*, left unfinished, was undertaken by Geatano Marini, who spent many years collecting materials to embrace the first ten centuries. He was interrupted by the French Revolution, and his thirty-one volumes of MS. in the Vatican are an unfinished monument of his learning and industry.

[275] In *L'Histoire de L'Art par les Monumens*. Six vols. fol. Paris. D'Agincourt came to Rome intending to spend six months in the study of this subject, but its fascination so grew upon him that it occupied the remaining fifty years of his life.

[276] In Bunsen's *Beschreibung der Stadt Rom*. Stuttgard, 1830.

[277] *Mémoire sur les antiquités Chrétiennes des Catacombes.* (*Mém. de l'Acad. des Inscr., XIII.*) See also *Tableau des Catacombes*.

[278] In *Les Trois Romes*.

[279] *Esquisse de Rome Chrétienne.*

[280] *Sinnbilder und Kunstvorstellungen der Alten Christen.* Altona.

[281] *Veterum Scriptorum Nova Collectio.* Roma, 1831.

[282] *Monumenti delle Arti Cristiane Primitive nella Metropoli del Cristianesimo.* Roma, 1844. The political troubles of the year 1848 prevented its completion. The theological zeal of this writer, however, has in many cases biassed his judgment. "In every page of his work," says a critic in the Edinburgh Review, (January, 1859, Am. ed. ccxxi, p. 48,) "an exuberant desire to find evidence in support of the later Romish doctrine among these records of the primitive church predominates over every other consideration."

[283] London, 1857.

[284] *Les Catacombes de Rome, par Louis Perret.* Six vols., fol. Paris, 1852-57. This book costs in the United States $600. Only three copies are known to be in America. One of these is a gift from the late emperor of the French to the parliamentary library of Canada.

[285] Edinburgh Review, January, 1859, p. 48. De Rossi speaks with tenderness of this superb edition—*la grandiza edizione*—which, in spite of its defects—*mal grado i suoi difetti*—is a valuable contribution to the literature of the Catacombs.

[286] *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana.* Roma, 1864-67. Four vols. fol., two of text and two of plates, which are of great fidelity. The text is from the Vatican press. The plates bear the imprint *Venezia*.

[287] *Inscriptiones Christianæ Urbis Romæ Septimo Sæculo Antiquiores.* Romæ. One vol. fol., 1857-61. It is dedicated to the present pope, "Another Damasus, who has brought to light the monuments of the martyrs ... overwhelmed with ruin."—"Pio IX., Pont. Max. alteri Damaso, qui monumenta martyrum,... ruinis obstructa in lucem revocat." Both of these works, which embody the result of the most recent explorations, have been laid under tribute in the preparation of these pages. Several of the illustrations are from the same sources.

[288] *Roma Sotterranea.* London, 1869. 8vo., pp. 414. It sells in New York for about $16 00.

[289] "Christian Epitaphs of the First Six Centuries," by the Rev. John McCaul, LL.D., President of University College, Toronto. Toronto and London, 1869. Dr. McCaul was previously well known to the archæological world by his learned volume on Brittanno-Romano Inscriptions, a work which has elicited the commendations of the highest critical authorities in Europe. The writer of these pages has been greatly assisted by his veteran scholarship and critical revision of the text.

[290] Among the smaller treatises on the Catacombs, and separate articles in the encyclopædias and journals of higher literature, may be mentioned the following, most of which have been consulted in the preparation of these pages: Remusat, *Musée Chrétien de Rome*; *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Juin 15, 1863; *Revue Chrétienne*, Mai, 1864; Jehan, *Dict. des Origin. du Christ.*, pp. 212, 89; Martigny, *Dict. des Antiq. Chrét.*, p. 106; Bouix, *Théologie des Catacombes*, Arras, 1864; Piper, *Mythologie und Symbolik der Christlichen Kunst*, Weimar, pp. 184, 51, and *Die Graben Schriften der Altenten Christen* in *Evang. Kallendar* 1855, p. 27, 1827, p. 37; *Edin. Rev.*, January, 1859, and July, 1864; *Contemp. Rev.*, September, 1866, and May, 1872; *Monumental Theology*, by Prof. Bennett, in *Meth. Quar. Rev.*, January and April, 1871; M'Clintock and Strong, *Cyclopædia, in verbo*. In the *History of Sacred Art in Italy*, by C. L. Hemans, son of the poetess, are two interesting chapters on the Catacombs, and valuable notes of ancient art, *passim*. Seymour's *Mornings with the Jesuits* has some interesting paragraphs on this subject, as has also Prof. Silliman's *Visit to Europe*. The Rev. Wm. Arthur, M.A., has an able Exeter Hall lecture on the Catacombs. In Murray's *Hand-Book of Rome*, ed. of 1867, is some interesting information on this topic. In *Harper's Mag.*, April, 1865, is a popular article by Prof. Greene, U. S. Consul at Rome. In Schaff's *Ch. Hist.*, 1, § 93; *Killen's Anc. Ch.*, pp. 348-351; Stanley's *Eastern Churches*, and Milman, *passim*, are interesting references to the subject. In Westcrop's *Hand-Book of Archæology*, London, 1867, and in the *Dict. Épig. Chrétienne*, Paris, 1852, are valuable contributions on the epigraphy of the Catacombs. Didron's *Iconographie Chrétienne*, Paris, 1841; Lord Lindsay's *Hist. of Art*, London, 1847; Lübke's *History of Art*, London, 1869; Mrs. Jameson's *Sacred Art*, Tyrwhitt's *Christian Art and Symbolism*, and Hare's *Walks About Rome*, have also been laid under contribution.

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CHAPTER V.

THE PRINCIPAL CATACOMBS OF ROME.

BEFORE leaving this division of our subject we will take a rapid survey of the more remarkable of that vast system of Christian cemeteries that engirdles the city of Rome. It will be more convenient to notice them in topographical order, beginning with those on the Appian Way, and sweeping around the city to the north-west, over the great roads on the borders of which the Catacombs are chiefly situated. The ground near these roads is honeycombed with sepulchral excavations, to which there are said to be six hundred entrances scattered over the Campagna. Bosio found them in almost every vineyard near the Salarian Way. In some of these the peasants keep their wine, although their fears prevent them from venturing far from the mouth; and sometimes villas fall in through the subsidence of the soil.

The various groups of crypts have been known by different names at different periods, or even at the same period; and it is sometimes difficult or impossible to disentangle the conflicting accounts, and to identify the cemeteries to which the ancient names were applied. The original records—the martyrologies and the *Liber Pontificalis*[291]—are
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sometimes utterly unreliable, and the very existence of the saints and martyrs whose lives are recorded is often exceedingly apocryphal; and even if their traditions are in the main correct, it is in many cases doubtful if they are buried in the Catacombs which bear their names. Frequently, however, these traditions are confirmed by inscriptions and other monumental evidence, which establish beyond doubt the identity of the Catacomb, as in the case of that of Callixtus and others which we shall notice.

Fig. 25.—Tombs on Appian Way.

Southeastward from the ancient Porta Capena of the city of Rome stretches the celebrated Appian Way, the most remarkable of those vast arteries of commerce along which flowed to the most distant provinces the vital currents from the great heart of the empire. This “Queen of Roads,”[292] as it was proudly called, was lined on either side by the stately tombs in which reposed the ashes of the mighty dead.[293] “The history of Christian Rome,” says Padre
[Pg 166]
Marchi,[294] “gives to this same road titles of glory incomparably more solid, just, and indisputable. We are forced to acknowledge it as the queen of Christian roads by reason of the greater number and extent of its cemeteries, and still more by the greater number and celebrity of its martyrs.” Under the present pontiff this historic highway has been excavated and opened for travel as far as Albano; and one may now traverse that avenue of tombs on the very causeway on which Horace and Virgil, Augustus and Mæcenas, Cicero and Seneca, must often have entered Rome. But it is invested with a profounder interest as the way by which the great Apostle of the Gentiles approached the city, “an ambassador in bonds,” to preach the gospel in Rome also, and to finish his testimony by a glorious martyrdom. By this very road also, according to an ancient tradition, his body was stealthily conveyed by night
[Pg 167]
and deposited in an adjacent Catacomb; and here wended many a mourning procession bearing to those lowly crypts the remains of Rome’s early bishops, martyrs, and confessors.

The ancient Porta Capena, with the dripping aqueduct above it,[295] have disappeared, and the fountain of Egeria, trampled by cattle, is no longer the haunt of nymph or naiad. Passing through the modern Sebastian gate and crossing the classic Almo, the traveller reaches at a short distance the little church of *Domine quo vadis*, with which is connected one of the most beautiful legends of the martyrology.[296]

About a mile and three quarters from the city he comes to Vigna Animendola, on the doorway leading to which is a marble tablet with the words CŒMETERIVM S. CALLIXTI. Beneath this vineyard lies the celebrated Catacomb of Callixtus, of which we propose to
[Pg 168]
enter into a somewhat detailed description, as it will give greater definiteness to the general

conceptions already received, and will serve as a typical example of the origin and history of the Catacombs in general.

In the year 1849 De Rossi found in a cellar in this vineyard a broken marble slab with the mutilated inscription ELIVS · MARTYR, and at the beginning the upper part of the letters RN. He immediately conjectured that this was a fragment of the tombstone of Cornelius, a Roman bishop of the third century, whose sepulchre would probably be found not far off. At his persuasion the pope purchased the vineyard, and the archæological commission began the work of excavation. They were rewarded by some of the most remarkable discoveries which have yet been made.

The cemetery is situated between the Via Appia and the Via Ardeatina, which are connected by narrow cross-roads. De Rossi has prepared a map of the principal part of it, divided into fifteen rectilinear and generally rectangular areas. The dimensions of these areas are not fractional but round numbers, as 100, 125, 150, and 250 feet, which cannot be the result of accident, and, with other evidences, indicate that they were, like similar pagan sepulchral areas, originally so many separate places of burial. When brought under the ecclesiastical control of Callixtus, about A. D. 200, they probably received one common name, became structurally united, and were used as a public cemetery of the church.

The first of these areas which we reach on entering the vineyard is that known as the crypt of St. Lucina. It has a frontage of one hundred feet on the Via Appia, and an extension *in agro* of two hundred and thirty feet. The limits of this area are exactly defined by the presence of a small pagan *hypogæum* on each side, which the Christians dared not [Pg 169] undermine. In the centre, near the road, is a massive monument, shown in the section of this crypt, Fig. 14, which De Rossi conjectures to have been a Christian mausoleum,[297] quoting Tertullian[298] as a witness that they had *monumenta et mausolea* at a very early period.[299] This is more probable from the fact that the property belonged to the noble Roman family of the Cæcilii, with which Cicero was connected, many of whose tombs were found in the neighbourhood. This probably explains its vicinity to the stately mausoleum of Cæcilia Metella. The names of many Cæcilii and other noble Roman families are also found on epitaphs in this crypt. This was unquestionably one of the most ancient areas of the Catacombs.

In this area, in 1852, the remaining portion of the epitaph of Cornelius was found at the foot of the tomb to which it evidently belonged, in a gallery of unusual width.

This tomb is flanked by pilasters covered with fine white stucco, and a mutilated inscription in the well-known manner of Damasus commemorates its adornment by that pontiff. Numerous *graffiti* indicate that this was a favourite shrine. Faded frescoes of Cornelius, Cyprian, and two other bishops, wearing the stole, tonsure, and nimbus, are attributed by De Rossi to the ninth century. Beside the tomb is a short column of masonry, covered with stucco, which probably sustained an altar or the vase of oil in which tapers were anciently burned before the shrines of the martyrs;[300] indeed, the fragments of such a vase have been [Pg 170] found among the rubbish of the tomb. Among the relics sent by Gregory the Great to Queen Theodelinda, according to the list still extant in the cathedral of Monza, said to be in the handwriting of that pope, is one *ex oleo S. Cornelii*, which must have come from this spot.

When the area of Lucina became crowded with tombs another of the same size was opened about a hundred yards off. It contains the celebrated “Papal Crypt,” the tomb of St. Cecilia, and other monuments of the greatest interest. We will give a somewhat detailed account of the construction and successive changes of this area, following the skilful analysis of De Rossi, who has given accurate plans, sections, and measurements of the whole. It extended, as is shown by the dotted lines in the accompanying plan, two hundred and fifty feet along the narrow cross-road marked M N, and one hundred feet *in agro*. This would, in the first place, be secured as a burial-ground by the Christian owner with the proper legal forms, which, we have seen, protected the places of sepulture from invasion or disturbance till the times of the later persecution. Openings were then made from the surface at A and B, and stairways constructed reaching to a depth of thirty-nine feet. These stairways were partly lined with brick-work, but were chiefly cut in the solid tufa. The walls were coated with fine stucco, white and firm—an evidence of antiquity—and ornamented with bands of a bright red pigment. The original steps were covered with marble, but they were afterwards restored with masonry. The upper part, indicated by dotted lines, is destroyed to the depth of ten feet, and there is evidence of the complete obstruction of the passage, doubtless during time of persecution. [Pg 171] The stairway B has been used as a wine store, and is obstructed by a wall and a smaller transverse stairway.

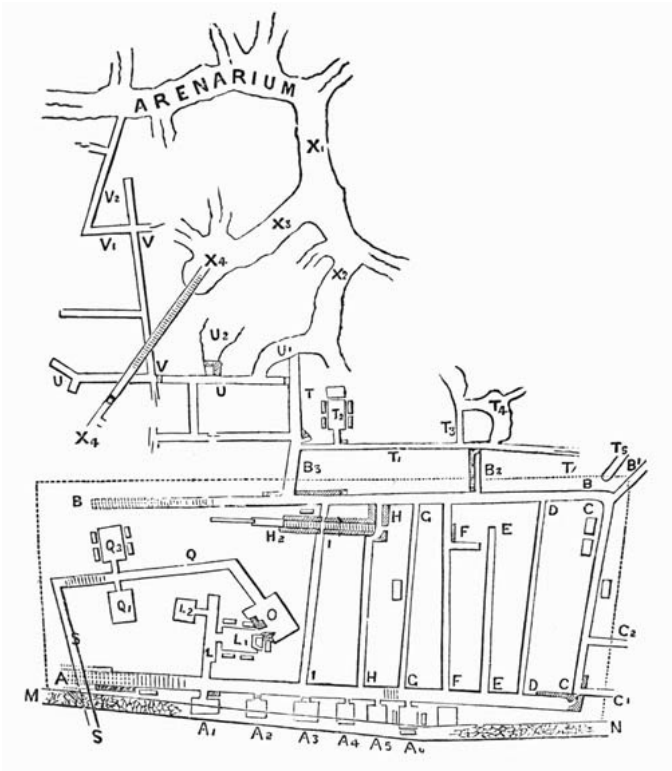

Fig. 26.—Part of Cemetery of Callixtus.

An *ambulacrum* or gallery was first excavated around the sides of the area, and several cross passages, as D, E, F, G, H, I, constructed. The walls are thickly lined with graves, and in places the floor has been lowered to give room for still more *loculi*. At D, C, the fossors finding the wall to crumble, had to strengthen it with masonry, and to desist from lowering the floor of the gallery. Hence the latter is not level, but has, in places, steps which have [Pg 172] been worn to an inclined plane. The increasing demand for graves led to the formation of the *cubicula* A_1 to A_6, as well as others in the interior of the area. Many of these are decorated with frescoes, and A_3 is known as the *Capella dei Sacramenti*, or Chapel of the Sacrament, on account of its so-called liturgical paintings. A_4 has a coloured marble floor of symmetrical design, and A_6 has a large *sepolcro a mensa* lined with marble and flanked with marble pilasters. The iron bars which supported the table tomb may still be seen. There are many Greek as well as Latin inscriptions in these galleries, and some of the tiles which close the *loculi* bear the stamp of the emperors M. Aurelius and Commodus, which fixes the date of this area. Some of the passages are entirely paved with such tiles. Numerous niches for lamps also occur. At F a well was excavated which still contains water. It is furnished with foot-holes, that a man might descend in order to clean it out. This is common in other wells in the Catacombs.

The ever-pressing necessity for graves compelled the fossors at length to attempt the construction of galleries on a lower level. Accordingly we find a stairway, H, H_2, of thirty-four steps leading down from the gallery H. The rock, however, through which this stairway descends is no longer the firm *tufa granolare* of the upper level, but a very friable stratum of *pozzolana*, which made it necessary to protect the walls with brick-work. Finding this stratum of great depth, they excavated a horizontal passage, and a still further narrow experimental cleft, as it were, in search of firmer rock, but soon abandoned the attempt, [Pg 173] failing to find any suitable for sepulture. The few graves they made had to be built of brick-work; and in one of these was found a little terra cotta sarcophagus, containing the body of an infant. This shows the utter unfitness of the *pozzolana* beds in which the *arenaria* are excavated for the construction of the Catacombs. We have seen that about A. D. 200 Callixtus became the guardian of this cemetery, which seems to have then become the burial-place of the bishops of Rome instead of the crypts of the Vatican as previously. According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, out of eighteen bishops from Zephyrinus to Sylvester, that is, from A. D. 197 to A. D. 314, no less than thirteen were buried in this cemetery. This Callixtus was originally a slave, afterwards elevated to the highest ecclesiastical dignities, including the episcopate itself—a proof of the superiority of the church to all social distinctions. According to Hippolytus, the undoubted author of the recently discovered *Philosophoumena*, he reached that dignity by dishonourable means, by fraud and guile. He was at one time banished by the emperor to the mines of Sardinia for embezzling moneys intrusted to his care, and on his return lapsed into heresy bordering on pantheism, or at least was charged with that offence. But although the character of Callixtus shows the nascent corruptions of the church of Rome even early in the third century, it should not prejudice us against the cemetery called by his name. He himself is interred elsewhere,[301] and the holy confessors and martyrs who slumbered here have consecrated the place forever with their hallowed dust.

Toward the middle of the third century, as we have seen, even the cemeteries themselves were not secure from invasion by the persecuting tyrants. When the protection of the law was withdrawn, the public stairways A and B, Fig. 26, were blocked up and partially destroyed, new passages, B_2 and B_3, were opened into the adjacent *arenarium* for the entrance and escape of the Christians, and a very narrow and steep secret stairway, X_4, was constructed from the roof of the latter to the open air, requiring a ladder, which might be removed to cut off pursuit, or the assistance of friends for entrance or departure.[302] We have here an affecting instance of the perils to which the persecuted Christians were exposed when hunted through these gloomy crypts by their cruel pagan foes. The difference between the straight and narrow galleries of the Catacombs and the wide and unsymmetrical windings of the *arenarium* will be remarked. Connexions were also formed with adjacent areas at S, C_1, C_2, and B_1, sometimes breaking directly through the *loculi* and *cubicula*. The utmost economy of space was now observed, every available foot of wall being occupied; the inscriptions become more rude, indicating poverty and oppression; and the stucco or marble ornaments give place to rude carvings of the tufa itself into cornices, columns, and capitals. Some of the *cubicula* are made of larger size, as if for worship, sometimes six or eight-sided, and occasionally with apsidal recesses.

During the terrible period of the Diocletian persecution, when the cemeteries were confiscated by the heathen government, the Christians, in order to prevent the profanation of the more sacred sepulchres, and especially that of the bishops, filled up the principal [Pg 175] galleries with earth at immense expense and labour. Much of this still encumbers the passages and forms the chief obstacle to their exploration. On the cessation of the persecution some of these galleries leading to the principal crypts were cleared out by means of cylindrical shafts made for the purpose; and sometimes new galleries were excavated in the tufa above the old ones, the floor of which was formed of the consolidated earth in the former gallery. Where this earth has been removed the height of the two galleries is, in places, twenty feet, filled with graves to the top, the upper part being much narrower than the lower. The obstructions in the stairways A and B were also removed and the stairs renewed.

We have seen that Damasus was indefatigable in his restoration of the Catacombs. It might, therefore, be expected that this important area would give evidence of his labours. Such evidence is found in a broad stairway of fine masonry, not shown in Fig. 26, made to accommodate the crowds of pilgrims who thronged to those sacred shrines, the “Papal Crypt” and tomb of St. Cecilia. This stairway was discovered by De Rossi in 1854, entirely blocked up with an immense mass of earth and rubbish, as were also the chambers to which it led. The removal of this was a work of great expense and labour. The vestibule, L, which we first enter, is constructed entirely of masonry, and is lighted by a large *luminare*. Its plastered walls are covered with *graffiti*, an indication that we are approaching a spot held in especial sanctity by the ancient church.[303]

These casual records of the generations of pilgrims who have visited the tombs of the [Pg 176] primitive bishops, martyrs, and confessors, have proved in many cases of great importance, and are, in the words of De Rossi, “the faithful echoes of history, and infallible guides through these subterranean labyrinths.” But they are sometimes also, as we shall see hereafter, indications of the corruption of doctrine, and of the nascent belief in human mediation between man and God.

It is somewhat of a disappointment to find, on entering this celebrated sanctuary, (L_1 in the plan,) that instead of being a veritable relic of the third or fourth century, most of the masonry is only a few years old. When an entrance was effected into it in 1854, which could only be done through the *luminare*, it was found in a ruinous condition, filled with earth, broken brick-work, and rubbish of every sort. When this was removed the vault gave way, and had to be almost entirely rebuilt and lined with masonry. The chamber itself is comparatively small, being only about eleven by fourteen feet. It has a barrel roof, and is lighted by a large *luminare*. The pavement was of marble, and covered graves made beneath it. On each side are eight large *loculi*, the lower row of which has spaces to contain sarcophagi. The walls were formerly lined with marble, and had semi-detached marble pillars, the bases of which still remain. At the end opposite the entrance is a large *sepolcro a mensa*, in front of which is a dais elevated two steps. In this dais are four sockets to receive the bases of as many short pillars which supported a marble table standing out from the wall, as unlike as possible to a modern Roman altar. The whole was surrounded by a low parapet of marble lattice work, fragments of which have been disinterred from the *débris* that encumbered the spot.

In this little chamber no less than eleven Roman bishops of the third century are recorded to [Pg 177] have been buried, and others in its immediate vicinity, when persecution or other reasons prevented their being laid in its sacred inclosure. As we have already seen,[304] De Rossi has recovered in the rubbish of this chamber what he conceives to be the original epitaphs of five of these bishops, and presumptive evidence of the presence of others. St. Sixtus, indeed, is frequently mentioned in the *graffiti* as he to whom especial reverence was here paid, and De Rossi found in this crypt fragments of his epitaph which we have previously given.[305] The following Damasine inscription was discovered by De Rossi among the *débris* of this chamber in one hundred and twenty fragments, and with great skill and learning reconstructed and restored to the wall.

HIC CONGESTA IACET QVAERIS SI TVRBA PIORVM
CORPORA SANCTORVM RETINENT VENERANDA SEPVLCHRA
SVBLIMES ANIMAS RAPVIT SIBI REGIA CAELI
HIC COMITES XYSTI PORTANT QVI EX HOSTE TROPAEA
HIC NVMERVS PROCERVM SERVAT QVI ALTARIA CHRISTI
HIC POSITVS LONGA VIXIT QVI IN PACE SACERDOS
HIC CONFESSORES SANCTI QVOS GRAECIA MISIT
HIC IVVENES PVERIQVE SENES CASTIQVE NEPOTES
QVIS MAGE VIRGINEVM PLACVIT RETINERE PVDOREM
HIC FATEOR DAMASVS VOLVI MEA CONDERE MEMBRA
SED CINERES TIMVI SANCTOS VEXARE PIORVM.

"Here, if you would know, lie heaped together a whole crowd of holy ones.
These honoured sepulchres inclose the bodies of the saints,
Their noble souls the palace of Heaven has taken to itself.
Here lie the companions of Xystus, who bear away the trophies from the enemy;
Here a number of elders, who guard the altars of Christ;
Here is buried the priest, who long lived in peace;
Here the holy confessors whom Greece sent us;
Here lie youths and boys, old men and their chaste offspring, [Pg 178]
Who chose, as the better part, to keep their virgin chastity.
Here I, Damasus, confess I wished to lay my limbs,
But I feared to disturb the holy ashes of the saints."[306]

An ancient itinerary states that eighty, or, according to one account, eight hundred, martyrs are buried in this part of the Catacomb; and in the corner of this very crypt is a pit of remarkable depth, probably the *polyandria*, in which were "heaped together a whole crowd" of the victims of persecution.

Besides these restorations of Damasus, there is evidence of successive decorations of this celebrated shrine down to the period of Leo III., at the end of the eighth century. So great have been the changes thus caused that De Rossi confesses that it is impossible to say what was the original character of the chamber.

Adjoining the "Papal Crypt" is that of St. Cecilia, (O, Fig. 26,) to which we pass from the former through a narrow doorway in the rock. This is one of the largest *cubicula* in the Catacombs, being nearly twenty feet square, and is flooded with light by a large *luminare*. The chamber, which gives evidence of having been greatly enlarged from its original dimensions, was once lined with marble and mosaic, as were also the sides of the doorway and the arch above. It has also been frequently adorned with paintings, a sure indication of its especial sanctity. Among these are a large head of Our Lord, of the Byzantine type, with a Greek nimbus, in a semicircular niche, and a full-length figure of St. Urban in pontifical [Pg 179] robes, with his name inscribed. Both of these, De Rossi thinks, belong to the tenth or eleventh century. Another picture, probably of the seventh century, of a richly attired Roman lady with jeweled bracelets and necklace, is conjectured to represent St. Cecilia. A large recess in the wall next to the "Papal Crypt" is thought to have held her sarcophagus. De Rossi and his English editors seem to accept substantially the Romish legend of this celebrated martyr. Protestant readers, however, will take the liberty of rejecting the miraculous part of the story as an invention of the fifth century, when the legend first appears.

St. Cecilia, virgin and martyr, according to her rather apocryphal Acts, was a maiden of noble rank—*ingenua, nobilis, clarissima*. She sang so sweetly that the angels descended to listen to her voice; and to her is ascribed the invention of the organ, which is therefore her attribute in art. She was betrothed to Valerian, a pagan of patrician rank, yet had vowed to be the spouse of Christ alone. She confessed her vow to Valerian on her marriage-day, and assured him that she was ever guarded by an angel of God, who would avenge its violation. He promised to respect her vow if he might behold her celestial visitant. She told him that his eyes must be first illumed by faith and purged with spiritual euphrasy by baptism, and sent him to St. Urban, then hiding in the Catacomb of Callixtus, who instructed and baptized him. On his return he found Cecilia praying, with an angel by her side who crowned her with immortal flowers—the lilies of purity and the roses of martyrdom. His brother Tiburtius came in, and, struck with the heavenly fragrance, for it was not the time of flowers, he also was converted and baptized. Refusing to sacrifice to the pagan gods, the brothers both [Pg 180] received the crown of martyrdom.[307]

Cecilia herself was reserved for a more glorious testimony. By order of the Roman prefect she was shut up in the *caldarium*, or chamber of the bath, in her own palace, which was heated to the point of suffocation. After a whole day and a night she was found unharmed. No sweat stood upon her brow, no lassitude oppressed her limbs. A lictor was sent to strike off her head. Three times the axe fell upon her tender neck, but, as the law forbade the infliction of more than three strokes, she was left alive though bathed in blood. For three days she lingered, testifying of the grace of God and turning many to the faith; and then, giving her goods to the poor and her house for a church forever, she sweetly fell asleep. Her body was placed in a cypress coffin—very unusual in the Catacombs, it is doubtful if a single example was ever discovered—and buried in the cemetery of Callixtus, "near the chapel of the popes."

But miracles ceased not with her death. In the translation of the martyrs from the Catacombs by Pascal I., in 817, the remains of Cecilia were overlooked. The saint appeared to the pope in a vision and revealed the place of her burial.[308] He sought the spot, and found her body as fresh and perfect as when laid in the tomb five centuries before! He placed it in a marble sarcophagus under the high altar of the church of St. Cecilia, which he rebuilt upon the site of her palace.

In the year 1599, or nearly eight centuries later, Cardinal Sfondrati, while restoring the church, discovered this ancient sarcophagus. It was opened in the presence of trustworthy witnesses, and there, say the ecclesiastical records of the time, vested in golden tissue, with linen clothes steeped with blood at the feet, besides remnants of silken drapery, lay the incorrupt and virgin form of St. Cecilia in the very attitude in which she died.[309] [Pg 181]

It is difficult to know what proportion of truth this legend contains; but, like many other of the Romish traditions, the large admixture of fiction invalidates the claims of the whole. Its sweet and tender mysticism, however, lifts it out of the region of fact into that of poetry, and almost disarms hostile criticism.[310] The excessive praise of virginity indicates a comparatively late origin. On the festival of St. Cecilia, the 22d of November, her tomb is adorned with flowers and illumined with lamps, and mass is celebrated in her subterranean chapel by a richly appareled priest—strange contrast to the primitive worship with which alone she was acquainted. In a sarcophagus discovered near her tomb were found the remains, it is assumed, of her husband Valerian and his brother Tiburtius, who had manifestly been beheaded; and also those of the prefect Maximus, who was converted by their martyrdom and was himself beaten to death by *plumbatæ*. The skull of the latter was found broken, as if by such a weapon, and its abundant hair matted with blood! [Pg 182]

Other definite areas of this Catacomb have been recognized and their outlines defined. Indeed, Father Marchi asserts that this is “the colossal region of *Roma Sotterranea*, all the rest being only small or middling provinces.”[311] About a hundred yards from the “Papal Crypt” is the tomb of another celebrated martyr and bishop, St. Eusebius; the *graffiti* on the walls, the stairway, and the decorations of which attest the reverence in which it was held. While digging here in 1856, De Rossi found the important epitaph of Eusebius before given.[312]

Intimately connected with this are also the adjacent cemeteries of St. Soteris, a virgin martyr of the same family from which Ambrose was descended; and that of St. Balbina, of vast extent, in several *piani*, and on a scale of unusual grandeur. These are as yet only partially explored, and promise the richest results to future examination. That of St. Balbina has many double, and even quadruple, *cubicula*, and the largest and most regular group of subterranean chambers that have yet been discovered, all lighted by one large hexagonal shaft. They were evidently excavated for worship, not for sepulture. This Catacomb was enlarged and beautified by Mark, bishop of Rome, in A. D. 330, who was buried in a basilica erected over these tombs.

These several areas were at first all distinct properties, and as carefully restricted within their respective limits as would be buildings above ground. When, however, the sepulchres of the Christians, no longer protected by law, were invaded by the persecutors, the different areas were connected by a vast and bewildering labyrinth of cross passages for the purpose of facilitating escape and of furnishing additional space for interment. As the areas, even when contiguous, were often at different levels, a good deal of ingenuity was exercised by the fossors in effecting a junction of the different galleries; though often they had to break through *loculi* and *cubicula* for that purpose. Thus the area we have described so fully is five feet lower than that which is adjacent on one side, which enables us to determine its exact limit. [Pg 183]

We will now take a more rapid survey of the other principal Catacombs of Rome.

Nearly opposite the cemetery of Callixtus, on the Appian Way, is that of Prætextatus. One of the entrances, situated in the Vigna Molinari, is represented in Fig. 2. A well-worn stairway, trodden by the feet of pious generations, leads to subterranean galleries of considerable extent. It is celebrated as the scene of the martyrdom of St. Sixtus and his deacons, A. D. 259; and as the burial-place of two of them, Felicitas and Agapetus, commemorative epitaphs of whom have been found. Their tomb, accidentally discovered by some labourers in 1857, presents the unique example of a large square crypt, not hewn out of the rock but built of solid masonry, and formerly lined with marble. This is explained by the ancient record that the Christian matron Marmenia constructed their tomb immediately beneath her own house. A Damasine epitaph of Januarius, who suffered under Aurelius, A. D. 162, has also been found here. In this cemetery, too, occurs that *suite* of chambers, with a hexagonal apartment, known as the chapel with two halls, represented in section and perspective in Figs. 10 and 11. [Pg 184]

Especial interest attaches to the Catacomb of St. Sebastian from the fact of its being the only one of which any knowledge was retained during the darkness of the Middle Ages. During that obscure period it was known in all the ancient documents as the *Cœmeterium ad catacumbas*, and has given their generic name to this vast system of subterranean sepulchres. Lying beneath the property of the Augustinian monks, it enjoyed religious protection in the rudest ages, and was open to the occasional pilgrims to the sacred places of the Eternal City. It is also that which is most frequently visited by modern travellers,

being accessible without the special permission which must be obtained for exploring the other Catacombs. It is situated on the Appian Way, about two miles from the Sebastian gate. A stately basilica was erected over the entrance to the Catacomb, it is said in the time of Constantine. A part of the original building which yet remains is claimed to be still older, dating from the first century. With this possible exception, few traces of the ancient structure now exist, the present building having been erected in 1611 by Cardinal Scipio Borghese. The church is very rich in paintings, sculptures, and relics, among which are the reputed head of Callixtus, arm of St. Andrew, and body of St. Sebastian, the impressions of the Saviour's feet in the stone from the Appian Way, and the very chair in which St. Stephen received the crown of martyrdom, and which was sprinkled with his blood!

This Catacomb takes its name from the Christian martyr Sebastian, who suffered during the Diocletian persecution. The story of his martyrdom is one of great beauty; but, as is the case [Pg 185] with most of these legends, its historic value is invalidated by the miraculous episodes of his history. According to the "Acts of St. Sebastian," this young and gallant officer was a native of Narbonne, in Gaul, who held the high rank of commander of the prætorian guard of Diocletian and Maximian. His access to the emperors enabled him to offer a powerful protection to the persecuted Christians, which he did not fail to extend. Two of his fellow-soldiers, Marcus and Marcellinus, were about to recant their profession, when Sebastian exhorted them to steadfastness with such fervour as to nerve them for martyrdom and convert the judges and all present. For his own fidelity to the Christian faith he was transpierced with arrows and left for dead. He recovered, however, either through the pious care of the Christian matron Irene, or through the special grace of the Virgin. Undeterred by his recent experience, he presented himself before the emperor, upbraided him for his persecution of the Christians, and foretold his death. He was immediately seized by the command of the tyrant and beaten to death with clubs in the hippodrome of the palace, A. D. 286. His body was ignominiously thrown into the Cloaca Maxima, or main sewer of Rome, in order to deprive it of Christian burial. But the place where it lay being revealed in a dream, his remains were rescued from their loathsome and unconsecrated grave, and piously interred in the Catacomb which bears his name.

The indignities that he suffered have been more than compensated by the honours paid his relics. Over his tomb the high altar of the church blazes with lights and jewels, and a marble effigy of the saint pierced with arrows commemorates his martyrdom. The genius of Berini, [Pg 186] Guido, and the Caracci, has glorified his memory in deathless painting and in "animated bust."[313]

Connected with the church is an irregular semi-subterranean building, where, tradition asserts, the bodies of St. Peter and St. Paul for a time reposed. It would appear, according to the legend, that upon the martyrdom of these "princes of the apostles" the oriental Christians sent for their hallowed remains as belonging of right to them as their fellow-countrymen. Their bodies were conveyed thus far from their original sepulchres when a violent storm prevented the accomplishment of the sacrilegious act, and the Roman Christians re-interred the sacred relics in this chamber, where they remained, according to one account, a year and seven months, or, according to another, forty years.[314]

The present structure dates probably from the time of Liberius, in the middle of the fourth century. The indefatigable Damasus made a marble pavement—*fecit platoniam*—and seems to refer to the legend in the following rather unclassical metrical inscription:

HIC HABITASSE PRIVS SANCTOS COGNOSCERE DEBES
NOMINA QVISQVE PETRI PARITER PAVLIQVE REQVIRIS
DISCIPVLOS ORIENS MISIT QVOD SPONTE FATEMVR
SANGVINIS OB MERITVM CHRISTVMQVE PER ASTRA SEQVVTI
AETHERIOS PETIERE SINVS ET REGNA PIORVM
ROMA SVOS POTIVS MERVIT DEFENDERE CIVES
HAEC DAMASVS VESTRAS REFERAT NOVA SIDERA LAVDES.

"Here, you must know, that saints once dwelt. If you ask their names, they were Peter and [Pg 187] Paul. The East sent disciples, as we willingly acknowledge. The saints themselves had, by the merit of their bloodshedding, followed Christ to the stars, and sought the home of heaven and the kingdoms of the blest. Rome, however, obtained to defend her own citizens. These things may Damasus be allowed to record for your praise, O new stars of the heavenly host."

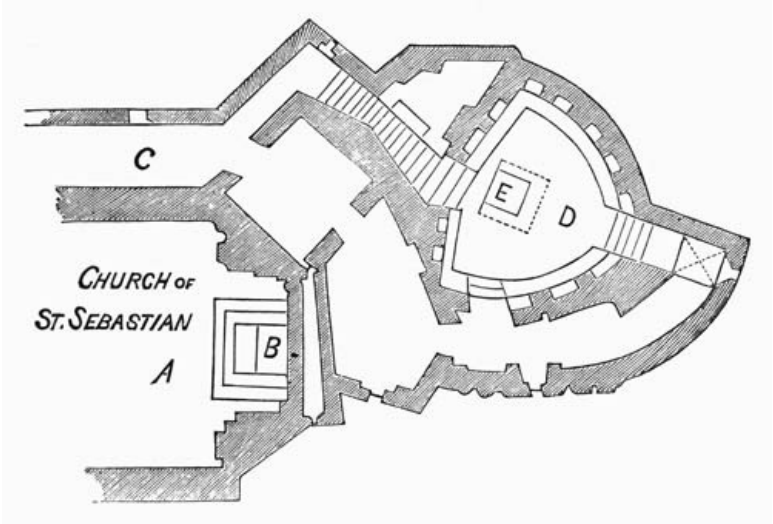

Fig. 27.—Plan of Crypt of Saint Peter and Saint Paul.

Figs. 27 and 28 show the plan and perspective of the crypt. D is the chamber and E the subterranean vault. Around the wall are twelve *arcosolia*, in front of which runs a low stone seat. In the centre is an opening in the floor widening into a vaulted and frescoed marble tomb about six feet square and as many deep. Here, according to tradition, the two great apostles lay side by side in death; and to this spot was especially given for many centuries the name *Catacumbæ*.

A door out of the left aisle of the church leads to the Catacomb proper. This, having been so long open, has been despoiled of every object of interest, and nearly all the monuments and inscriptions have been removed to the museums of the city. Though of considerable extent, it is not nearly as large as some others. Previous to De Rossi's exploration of the Catacomb of Callixtus in 1854 it was confounded with that cemetery, but he has shown that opinion to be erroneous. [Pg 188]

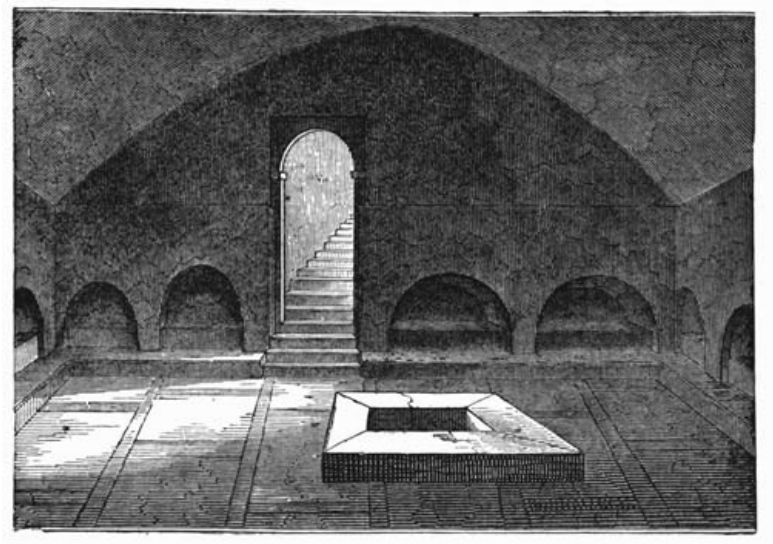

Fig. 28.—Crypt of Saint Peter and Saint Paul.

Nearly opposite the church of St. Sebastian is situated the Jewish Catacomb discovered in 1859 in the Vigna Randanini, and already in part described. The principal entrance is an open chamber, originally vaulted, with a floor of black and white mosaic and walls of masonry. A peculiarity in this cemetery is the number of deep graves in the floor capable of containing several bodies, and the number of sarcophagi, some of which are finely carved and gilt. The seven-branched candlestick frequently occurs on the walls and tombs. This Catacomb has been often rifled, and the galleries are strewn with marble fragments of its monuments. Most of the inscriptions have been dug out of this *débris* and affixed to the adjacent walls. At the other entrance, on the Appian Way, are raised stone seats, intended, it is thought, as resting-places for the bearers of the dead. [Pg 189]

Not far from this cemetery, but fronting on the Via Ardeatina, is one which De Rossi concludes upon very good evidence to be that of Domitilla, grand niece of the emperor Domitian, of whose banishment and probable martyrdom for the Christian faith we have already spoken. The entrance is an elegant structure of fine brickwork with a cornice of terra cotta, built in the slope of a rising ground and close by the roadside. Connected with the entrance are external chambers, in one of which is a well, which were designed, it is conjectured, for the custodian of the Catacomb, and for the holding of the religious services connected with the burial of the dead and the anniversaries of the martyrs. A spacious

vestibule within contains recesses once occupied by several large sarcophagi, fragments of which still remain. The entire roof and walls are covered with the most exquisite arabesques and graceful landscapes, as well as biblical paintings, in the style of the best classic period. It is evidently the monument of a family of wealth and distinction.

Connected with this Catacomb is that of Nereus and Achilles, the chamberlains of Domitilla, who suffered martyrdom in the second century. A broad and handsome stairway leads down to the supposed tombs of the martyrs in the lower level of the Catacomb. To facilitate the visits of pilgrims to these shrines the galleries have been widened and lined with masonry, probably by John I., A. D. 523. There are two principal *piani*, in the lower of which is a large chamber paved with marble and lighted by a *luminare* of unusual size, reaching to the surface of the ground. A large proportion of the inscriptions are Greek, or Latin in Greek characters, which circumstance refers the date of this Catacomb to a period when Greek was still regarded as a sort of sacred and official language of the church.

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On the Via Labicana are several interesting Catacombs. About a mile and a half from the city is that of Peter and Marcellinus, the former a priest and the latter an exorcist of the time of Diocletian, who with other martyrs are said to be buried here. The entrance to the Catacomb is from a church built in the ruins of the ancient structure traditionally called the mausoleum of Helena.

This tradition has given its name to the interesting Catacomb of Helena discovered in 1838 in the Vigna del Grande, about a quarter of a mile further along the Via Labicana. It was evidently constructed after the peace of the church. The marble stairway, mosaic pavements, and elegant stucco ornaments betray an imperial magnificence impossible during the age of persecution, and which is found in no other Catacomb. The similarity of style and material to that of the contiguous tomb of Constantia, the sister of Helena, indicates a synchronous construction. The entrance to the Catacomb is by one of those *brevissimæ ecclesiæ*, or oratories for meditation and prayer, which were early erected near most of the cemeteries, now generally in ruins. As shown in the illustration, the descent is by an easy stairway and an inclined plane to a vaulted gallery with mosaic pavement, in which are *arcosolia* with brick arches. The galleries are of great width, and the *luminari* will be observed to be cylindrical in shape. One of these, it will be seen, is choked with rubbish. The double entrance indicated is in accordance with the ancient usage, especially in subterranean assemblies, of separating the sexes. The same purpose is effected within the crypt by balustrades, and even by parallel galleries to the same chamber. This Catacomb is remarkable for the number of its *luminari*, *arcosolia*, *cubicula*, and mosaics. A variety of marble, glass, and terra cotta vases have also been found, as well as numerous coins and medals of the Constantinian period.

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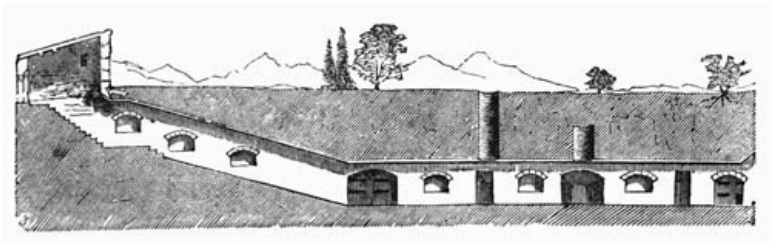

Fig. 29.—Section of Catacomb of Helena.

About three miles from Rome on this road, in the Vigna del Fiscale, is the Catacomb of *i Santi Quatro*, or *Quatuor Coronati*, the Four Crowned Ones, as they are called. They are said to have been Christian sculptors, who, for refusing to exercise their art in the service of idolatry, suffered martyrdom under Diocletian. Iron crowns, set with spikes, were forced upon their heads, and they were then scourged to death with *plumbatæ*. Ten miles from Rome in this same road is the Catacomb of St. Zoticus, also honoured as one of the primitive martyrs.

On the Via Tiburtina, about ten minutes' walk from the Porta di San Lorenzo, is the Catacomb of St. Cyriaca, named after a Christian matron of noble family, who founded it in her own land in the year A. D. 258. During the thirty-two years of her widowhood she employed her vast wealth in ministering to the necessities of the saints, and finally herself received the crown of martyrdom. Here it is said the body of St. Lawrence was first interred, and afterward removed to the neighbouring church, where it is still revered with devout superstition. The excavations made to insulate the ancient basilica of San Lorenzo, and to enlarge the cemetery at present in use, have laid open a number of galleries of this Catacomb, exposing the long hidden *loculi* and paintings to the light of day. The style of the ancient inscriptions and those of the modern necropolis, which, in accordance with a decree of the pope, are all in Latin, may be compared; not greatly to the advantage of the latter, notwithstanding the rigorous censorship they must first undergo. This Catacomb, with others, was explored and described by Bosio two centuries and a half ago. On the opposite side of the road is the cemetery of Hippolytus, commemorated in the verses of Prudentius in the fourth century.

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About a mile and a quarter from the Porta Pia, on the Via Nomentana, is situated the

Catacomb of St. Agnes. The legend of this saint is one of the most beautiful in the martyrology, and has been preserved with peculiar fulness of detail by St. Ambrose in his treatise *de Virginibus*. The youthful martyr was the daughter of rich and noble Roman parents, and is described in the Acts that bear her name as being of a sweet and tender beauty. Being sought in marriage by the son of the prefect of the city, she rejected his suit; declaring in a strain of impassioned eloquence her espousals to a bridegroom nobler, richer, and more beautiful far than any of earth, who had betrothed her by the ring of his faith, and would crown her with jewels to which earthly gifts were dross—a bridegroom so fair that the sun and moon were ravished by his beauty, and so mighty that the angels were his servants. [315] She thus betrayed her attachment to the cause of Christ, and was forthwith put to the torture in order to compel her recantation of the faith. With touching *naiveté* the Acts relate that no fetters could be found small enough for her wrists. As the crowning ignominy to which her maiden modesty could be exposed, she was sent to the place of shame—*ad locum turpitudinis*; but her unshorn hair flowed in golden waves to her feet, forming a perfect veil, and the eyes of the gazers on her degradation were smitten with blindness. Having been first cast into the flames, which, it is said, played harmlessly about her, she was publicly beheaded in the amphitheatre, and overcoming the feebleness of her age and sex, thus received the crown of martyrdom at the tender age of thirteen, A. D. 303.[316]

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She is frequently represented in art; sometimes, in allusion to her name, with a lamb as her attribute. Indeed, after Christ and the Apostles, no figure is more common.[317] The den of infamy in which she was exposed to shame became changed to the Christian sanctuary of *S. Agnese in Piazza Navone*, one of the most beautiful churches in Rome. A subterranean cell of peculiar sanctity is said to have been the scene of her degradation and deliverance. She was buried in a garden a mile from the city, and Constantia, the daughter of Constantine, having been healed at her tomb of a dangerous malady, that prince erected over her body the church of *S. Agnese fuori le Mura*, which is one of the least altered and most beautiful examples of the imperial basilicas. A long flight of stairs, whose walls are covered with inscriptions from the adjacent Catacombs, leads down to the church, which was constructed on a level with the reputed tomb of the saint.[318]

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Many noble Roman families chose the place of their sepulture near the tomb of so illustrious a martyr. Constantia herself was there interred, and soon after two other daughters of Constantine, Helena, the wife of Julian, and Constantina, the wife of Gallus. Having died, the former at Vienne in Gaul, the latter at the extremity of Bithynia, they were brought from the west and the east to rejoin their sister sleeping near this celebrated saint. This region became, in fact, the fashionable cemetery of the great during the fourth century; as is still evident from the superior regularity and spaciousness of the corridors, and the more laboured execution although inferior style of the paintings. Thus was formed in course of time the vast Catacomb of St. Agnes.

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Fig. 30.—Entrance to the Catacomb of St. Agnes.

The entrance to the cemetery is situated in a delicious valley about a quarter of a mile from the church, in view of the storied hills which have been celebrated by Martial and Pliny, and near the ruins of a pagan temple. Behind are the gray walls and towers of Rome, and on every side spreads the solemn expanse of the Campagna. All is graceful and picturesque in the landscape, “and it is not,” says Perret, “without a pious tenderness[319] that the charm of the place blends in the soul of the pilgrim to the shrine of the Christian heroine.” The stairs by which the descent is made date probably from the time of Constantine. The graves on either side of the somewhat spacious gallery have long been rifled of their contents. Several of these from their size were evidently designed for *bisomi*. The consular date, A. D. 336, on a tomb attests the age of this part of the Catacomb. One *suite* of chambers near the entrance, but in the lower and therefore more recently constructed *piano*, has received the

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title of the Basilica. The larger *cubiculum* has two tufa seats at the side, and one more elevated for the presiding presbyter. The altar, probably a small movable one of wood, if any at all, must have stood before the presbyter. On the opposite side of the gallery is a chamber, divided by columns and an arch, supposed to have been for the females of the assembly, or perhaps for the catechumens not yet admitted to the celebration of the eucharist. A connected series of five chambers has been found, and one *cubiculum*, called the *scuole grande*, will contain seventy or eighty persons. Much of the architecture, however, is debased, indicating the decline and eclipse of art in the fifth or sixth century. Another chamber is known as the Lady Chapel, or Crypt of the Virgin, on account of the so-called picture of the Madonna which it contains;[320] and a third as the Baptistery, from the presence of a spring of water, supposed to have been used in baptismal rites.

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One feature of especial interest associated with this cemetery is its connexion with an adjacent *arenarium*, or sand pit. This is situated near the basilica of St. Agnes, and overlies part of the Catacomb. It consists of a series of large and gloomy caverns utterly unlike the sepulchral crypts below. A stairway leads down to the Catacomb, and also a deep shaft with foot-holes cut in the rock for climbing. Probably this was the only way of escape in time of persecution. There is also apparent evidence of the existence of a windlass, by which the excavated tufa was raised, and either deposited in the *arenarium* or carted away. This cemetery has been carefully examined by Padre Marchi, who has published a plan of an area of about seven hundred by five hundred and fifty feet. The united length of the passages in this part is about two English miles. Yet Father Marchi says this area is only about one eighth of the whole Catacomb, the aggregate extent of whose streets would, therefore, be fifteen or sixteen miles.

Just without the Porta Pia on this Nomentan Way, is the little Catacomb of Nicodemus. At the third mile, we read in ancient records, was that of Ostrianus or Fons Petri, as it was called, from a tradition that Peter once baptized there. It has not, however, been satisfactorily identified. Nearly six miles from the city is the so-called Catacomb of Alexander, bishop of Rome A. D. 117-120, who, according to the *Liber Pontificalis*, suffered martyrdom by decapitation on this spot under the emperor Hadrian, together with the presbyter Eventius and the deacon Theodulus. Here were discovered in 1853, below the level of the Campagna, the ruins of an ancient basilica erected in honour of these martyrs. In the roofless structure was found a sarcophagus bearing the name of Alexander, and probably once containing his ashes. The graves here are less disturbed than in the

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Catacombs nearer Rome. This cemetery was used for sepulture comparatively late, as the language of some of the inscriptions indicates a decided approximation to modern Italian. In 1857 the foundations of a large church, designed to include the whole of the ancient structure, were laid with great pomp by the present pontiff.

The Salarian Way is exceedingly rich in Christian cemeteries. Prominent among these is the Catacomb of St. Priscilla, one of the noblest monuments of the primitive church. It is of interest also as that whose accidental discovery in 1578 led to the unveiling of these vast treasuries of Christian antiquity. The entrance is beautifully situated amid embowering verdure, in the vineyard of the Irish college, about two miles from the Porta Salara.[321] Tradition asserts that this cemetery was dug in the property of the senator Pudens, mentioned by St. Paul; and a crypt called, from the language of its inscriptions, the *Cappella Greca*, is alleged to be the sepulchre of his daughters Pudentiana and Praxedes, and other members of that distinguished Christian family. If so, this is the most ancient Catacomb yet discovered. The classical style of the architecture, frescoes, graceful stucco reliefs, and garlands, and the character of the inscriptions, all point to a period before art became degraded and the church oppressed. Some of the galleries are exceedingly long and straight, and one is the most extensive yet discovered. Its principal crypt is remarkable as being regularly built of masonry, and without the usual *loculi* in the walls, being evidently designed for the reception of sarcophagi—another proof of its high antiquity. A portion of this cemetery has been constructed with great labour in an ancient *arenarium*, and shows

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how unsuited these excavations were for the purposes of Christian sepulture. Long walls of solid masonry and numerous pillars of brick work have been built for supporting the roof and giving space for *loculi*. A large shaft for removing *pozzolana* has been transformed into a *luminare* by being bricked up to about half its original dimensions. Only one of the four *piani* in which the Catacomb is constructed being easily accessible, it has been but partially explored. The ancient records assert that Marcellinus and Marcellus, martyr-bishops of the church in the time of Diocletian, are buried here; also Crescentianus and Silvester; and we have already seen the memorial inscription of three thousand other martyrs, whose remains are said to hallow these sacred crypts.

On this same road are the Catacomb of St. Felicitas, with three *piani* of galleries much dilapidated; that of Thraso and Saturninus, of considerable extent but difficult of access; and the crypt of Chrysanthus and Daria, in which these martyrs were blocked up alive by command of the Emperor Numerian. On the old Salarian Way is the Catacomb of Hermes, who is said to have suffered in the time of Hadrian. It is partially constructed, as we have seen, in an *arenarium*, and contains the largest subterranean church yet found, with remarkable mosaics of Daniel and of the resurrection of Lazarus in the vaulting of the roof.

There are comparatively few Catacombs of interest on the northwest bank of the Tiber, owing to the smaller population of that part of Rome in ancient times. We shall briefly

enumerate the more important. On the Flaminian Way is the cemetery of St. Valentinus. On the Aurelian Way are those of Agatha, Pancratius, and Calepodius. The latter, the reputed burial place of Callixtus and of many martyrs, is beneath the church dedicated to Pancratius —the English Pancras—and on the supposed scene of his sufferings. On the Via Portuensis, near the city, is the Catacomb of Pontianus, a patrician Roman of the third century. It is remarkable for the very perfect subterranean baptistery to be hereafter described. On the Ostian Way, near the basilica of *S. Paolo fuori le Mura*, is the ancient cemetery of Commodilla, or Lucina, in which tradition asserts that the body of the apostle Paul was laid after his martyrdom. It is in a very ruinous condition, most of the galleries being choked up and impassable; but here Boldetti found the two oldest extant inscriptions. On this road also is the Catacomb of St. Zeno, in which were said to be buried twelve thousand Christians employed in building the Baths of Diocletian. [Pg 200]

On the Vatican Hill, now crowned with the grandest temple in Christendom, is said to have existed the oldest Christian cemetery of Rome. Tradition asserts that the remains of St. Peter were interred on this spot, on the site of an ancient temple of Apollo, and near the alleged scene of the apostle's martyrdom in the circus of Nero, and that hither they were restored after their removal to the crypt of Sebastian.[322] Here also ancient ecclesiastical documents record the burial of ten of the Roman bishops of the first and second centuries; [323] after which, we have seen, the Catacomb of Callixtus became their chief place of burial. [Pg 201] The series of papal interments in this place again begins with that of Leo the Great, A. D. 461. In the dim crypts beneath the high altar of St. Peter's are shown the tombs of most of his successors, many of them far removed in life and character from the lowly Galilean fisherman.[324]

We cannot better conclude this necessarily imperfect survey of these ancient Christian cemeteries than by quoting the following passage, though characterized by a somewhat fervid rhetoric, from "Les Trois Romes" of the Abbé Gaume: "Here is the glorious monument," he exclaims, "of the faith and charity of our forefathers! This work of giants was completed by a community of poor men, destitute of resources, without talent as without fortune, incessantly persecuted and frequently decimated. What, then, was the secret of their power? This is the problem suggested by the sight of the Catacombs in general, and of the Catacombs on the Appian Way in particular. The solution is in one word—FAITH. This power—unknown to the ancient world, and too little recognized in the modern world—this [Pg 202] faith, was the lever by which the early Christians could remove mountains, and turn and change the universe. With one hand they constructed in the bowels of the earth a city more astonishing than Babylon or the Rome of the Cæsars; and with the other, seizing on the pagan world in the abyss of degradation into which it was plunged, they raised it to the virtue of angels, and suspended it to the cross."

[291] This book, so often referred to, has been ascribed to Damasus but much of it is unquestionably of much later origin. While much of its information is valuable, more of it is quite unauthentic.

[292] "Qua limite noto
Appia longarum teritur *Regina Viarum*."—*Stat. Syl.*, II, 2.

[293] Often mere vulgar wealth exhibited its ostentation even in death by the magnitude and magnificence of these tombs designed to perpetuate the memory of their occupants forever. But, as if to rebuke that posthumous pride, they are now mere crumbling ruins, often devoted to ignoble uses, the very names of whose tenants are forgotten. Many of them, during the stormy period of the Middle Ages, were occupied as fortresses. More recently that of Augustus, on the Campus Martius, was used as an arena for bull-fights, and as a summer theatre, where Harlequin played his pranks upon an emperor's grave. Some of the tombs have been converted into stables, pig-styes, or charcoal cellars. The cinerary urn of Agrippina, wife of Germanicus, was long used as a measure for corn. In many a *vignarolo's* hovel in the Campagna swine may be seen eating out of sculptured sarcophagi, and in the imperial halls where banqueted the masters of the world they hold their unclean revels. "Expende Hannibalem," says the Roman satirist, "quot libras in duce summo invenies?"

[294] *Monumenti delle Arti Cristiane Primitive*, p. 73.

[295] Substitit ad veteres arcus, madidamque Capenam.—Juv., *Sat.*, iii.

[296] The legend asserts that as the Apostle Peter was leaving Rome in the early dawn, in order to escape martyrdom, he met Our Lord bearing his cross, and, throwing himself at his feet, exclaimed, *Domine quo vadis*—"Lord, whither goest thou?" In accents of tender rebuke the Master answered, *Venio Romam iterum crucifigi*—"I am going to Rome to be crucified again." Stung with contrition and remorse, the disciple, according to the tradition, returned to the city, and there was crucified—by his own request with his head downwards, as unworthy to share the same mode of death as the Lord whom he had denied. In the neighbouring church of St. Sebastian is a white marble slab bearing impressions *said* to have been made by the feet of Our Lord. The story is first mentioned by Origen, who applies it to St. Paul. St. Ambrose substitutes St. Peter, but the precise spot was not fixed till the fifteenth century; and Aringhi, in the seventeenth century, is the first who mentions the impression of the feet in "that stone most worthy, more valuable than any precious jewel." This white marble slab is certainly very unlike the dark gray porphyry of the Appian pavement, and the irregular depression in its surface bears slight resemblance to human feet. But no historical difficulties are too great for the devout credulity of Rome.

[297] *Rom. Sott.*, ii, 367.

[298] *De Resurrect. Carnis.*, c. 27.

[299] *Rom. Sott.*, i, 210.

[300] The Council of Elvira, A. D. 305, forbade the burning of wax tapers by day in the cemeteries of the dead—Cereos per diem placuit in cœmeterio non incendi. *Conc. Elib.*, can. 34.

[301] He was killed by being thrown out of the window of his house in a popular tumult in Rome. His body was cast into a well, and afterwards secretly conveyed to the cemetery of Calepodius, on the Via Aurelia, in the immediate vicinity.

[302] See section of this stairway in Fig. 22.

[303] Here were also found a number of polygonal basalt paving-stones, evidently from the roadway above.

[304] Pp. 81-83.

[305] Pp. 85, 86.

[306] The old brick building with three apsides and a vaulted roof, near the entrance to this crypt, long used as a gardener's storehouse, has been claimed as the basilica which Damasus provided for the burial of himself, his mother, and sister; but it was more probably the *fabricia* for worship or the celebration of the agape, or simply for the guardian of the Catacomb.

[307] About A. D. 230, say the Acts, although the Christians then enjoyed profound peace.

[308] An antique fresco at St. Cecilia represents the apparition of the martyr to the pontiff as he slept in his throne on St. Peter's day.

[309] In an arched recess under the high altar of St. Cecilia is a beautiful marble statue of the saint in a recumbent posture, by Stefano Maderna, accompanied by the following inscription:

EN TIBI SANCTISSIMAE VIRGINIS CAECILIAE IMAGINEM QVAM IPSE INTEGRAM IN SEPVLCHRO IACENTEM VIDI EADEM TIBI PRORSVS EODEM CORPORIS SITV HOC MARMORE EXPRESSI.

"Behold the image of the most holy Virgin Cecilia, whom I myself saw lying incorrupt in her tomb. I have in this marble expressed for thee the same saint in the very same posture of body."

[310] The modern additions have less claim on our reverence. The skeptical will see no reason why the remains of Cecilia should defy the laws of nature for fourteen centuries, when after only two those of Charles Borromeo, also a saint, which are exhibited at Milan arrayed in costly gold-embroidered robes and sparkling with gems, reveal only a black and decaying head and eyeless sockets, the skin shriveled and ruptured and the shrunken lips parting in a ghastly smile.

[311] *Monumen. Art. Crist. Prim.*, p. 172.

[312] Page 95.

[313] This striking object of Christian art has been known, says Mrs. Jameson, to cause in Italian women a devotion leading to hopeless passion, madness, and death. ("Sacred and Legendary Art," *in loco*.) The soldier saint is regarded as a sort of Christian Apollo, banishing disease and pestilence.

[314] Pope Gregory I. first mentions the story, *circ.* A. D. 600, as a reason for refusing to send the head of St. Paul to the Empress Constantina.

[315] Discede a me fomes peccati ... quia jam ab alio amatore præventa sum, qui mihi satis meliora obtulit ornamenta, et annulo fidei suæ subarravit me, longe te nobilior, et genere et dignitate.—Ambros., *Epis.* 34.

[316] Damasus at the end of the fourth century thus commemorates the event in one of his metrical inscriptions, now in a lateral aisle of the basilica of *S. Agnese fuori le Mura*:

FAMA REFERT SANCTOS DVDVM RETVLISSE PARENTES
AGNEN CVM LVGVBRES CANTVS TVBA CONCREPVISSET
NVTRICIS GREMIVM SVBITO LIQVISSE PVELLAM
SPONTE TRVCIS CALCASSE MINAS RABIEMQVE TYRANNI
VRERE CVM FLAMMIS VOLVISSET NOBILE CORPVS
VIRABVS IMMENSVM PARVIS SVPERASSE TIMOREM
NVDAQVE PROFVSVM CRINEM PER MEMBRA DEDISSE
NE DOMINI TEMPLVM FACIES PERITVRA VIDERET
O VENERANDA MIHI SANCTVM DECVS ALMA PVDORIS
VT DAMASI PRECIBVS FAVEAS PRECOR INCLYTA MARTYR.

"Fame reports that the pious parents formerly brought back Agnes when the trumpet had resounded the funeral chants; that suddenly the maiden left the bosom of her nurse, and willingly spurned the threats and rage of the cruel tyrant, when he resolved to burn her noble body in the flames; that she overcame her intense fear with her feeble strength, and spread her luxuriant hair over her naked limbs, lest the face of a perishing man might behold the temple of the Lord. O holy one, ever to be honoured by me, sacred ornament of modesty, illustrious martyr, I entreat that you aid the prayers of Damasus."

[317] Jameson, *Sac. and Leg. Art.*, p. 381. According to St. Jerome, in the fourth century her fame was in all lands.

[318] Here on the Festival of St. Agnes, January 21, is performed the ceremony of blessing two lambs, the emblems of the innocence and of the name—*Agnus*, a lamb—of the child-martyr. From the wool of these lambs are woven the *pallia*, which, after lying on the so-called tomb of St. Peter, are distributed by the pope to the great church dignitaries as emblems of office.

[319] "Attendrissement."—*Les Catacombes de Rome*, tom. ii, p. 52.

[320] See Fig. 90.

[321] See Fig. 1.

[322] This is probably “the trophy on the Vatican,” mentioned by the Roman presbyter Caius, quoted by Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.*, ii, 25. When Heliogabalus made his circus on the Vatican the body was said to have been again transferred to St. Sebastian; but it is impossible to unravel the tangled accounts of the ancient documents.

[323] On this spot De Rossi says was discovered in the seventeenth century the sepulchre of the very first bishop after Peter, (?) bearing simply the name LINVS.

[324] Of especial interest to English-speaking visitors to this shrine of departed greatness will be three urns containing the ashes of “James III.,” “Charles III.,” and “Henry IX.,” as they are designated, the last princes of the unfortunate house of Stewart. The third of these, Henry Benedict Maria Clement, second son of James the Pretender, took orders at Rome, was advanced to the purple, and during the life-time of his brother, Charles Edward, was known as Cardinal York. On the death of his brother he assumed the regal style of Henry IX., King of England. The usurpation of Bonaparte caused his flight to Venice, where, aged and infirm, the descendant of a line of kings sank into absolute poverty. His successful rival for the British throne, George III., learning his deplorable situation, generously settled on him an annuity of £4,000, which he enjoyed till his death in 1807, at the age of eighty-two. With the worn old man, dying upon a foreign shore, passed away the last survivor of the ill-starred dynasty which has contributed through successive generations so many tragic and romantic episodes to the drama of history.

BOOK SECOND.

THE ART AND SYMBOLISM OF THE CATACOMBS.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY CHRISTIAN ART.

THE conditions under which Christian art was cultivated in the early centuries were eminently unfavourable to its highest development. It was not, like pagan art, the æsthetic exponent of a dominant religion, enjoying the patronage of the great and the wealthy, adorning the numerous temples of the gods and the palaces and banquet chambers of the emperors and senators, commemorating the virtues of patriots and heroes, and bodying forth the conceptions of poets and seers. There was no place in the Christian system for such representations as the glorious sun-god, Apollo, or the lovely Aphrodite, or the sublime majesty of Jove, which are still the unapproached *chefs d'œuvre* of the sculptor's skill. The beautiful myths of Homer and Hesiod were regarded with abhorrence, and the Christians were expressly forbidden to make any representation of the supreme object of their worship, a prohibition which in the early and purer days of Christianity they never transgressed.

Nevertheless, the testimony of the Catacombs gives evidence that art was not, as has been frequently asserted, entirely abjured by the primitive Christians on account of its idolatrous employment by the pagans. They rather adopted and purified it for Christian purposes, just [Pg 204] as they did the diverse elements of ancient civilization. It was not till increasing wealth and the growing corruptions of the church led to the more lavish employment of art and its perversion to superstitious uses that it called forth the condemnation of the Fathers of the early centuries.

The art of any people is an outgrowth and efflorescence of an internal living principle: and as is the tree so is its fruit. An adequate representation of its art being given, we may estimate, at least proximately, the moral condition of any age or community. It is the perennial expression of the phenomena of humanity. The iconography of the early centuries of Christianity is, therefore, a pictorial history of its development and of the successive changes it has undergone.[325] The corruptions of doctrine, the rise of dogmas, the strifes of heresiarchs and schismatics, are all reflected therein.[326]

The frescoes of the Catacombs are illustrations, inestimable in value, of the pure and lofty character of that primitive Christian life of which they were the offspring. They were the exponent of a mighty spiritual force, "seeking," as Kugler remarks, "to typify in the earthly and perishing the abiding and eternal."[327] The very intensity of that old Christian life under repression and persecution created a more imperious necessity for a religious symbolism as an expression of its deepest feelings and as a common sign of the faith. Early Christian art, [Pg 205] therefore, was not realistic and sensuous, but ideal and spiritual. It sought to express the inner essence, not the outer form.

Christianity has nothing to fear from the comparison of these remains of its primitive art with those of the pre-existing art of paganism. As little has Protestantism to fear their comparison with the monuments of that debased form of Christianity into which the early church so soon, alas! degenerated. On the one hand may be seen the infinite contrast between the abominable condition of society under the empire and the purity of life of the early Christians; and on the other, the gradual corruption of doctrine and practice as we approach the Byzantine age. The exhumation of Pompeii and the recent exploration of the Catacombs bring into sharp contrast Christian and pagan art. While traversing the deserted chambers of the former "two thousand years roll backward," and we stand among the objects familiar to the gaze of the maids and matrons of the palmy days of Rome. But what a tale of the prevailing sensuality, what a practical commentary on the scathing sarcasms of Juvenal, the denunciations of the Fathers, and the awful portraiture of St. Paul, do we read in the polluting pictures on every side. Nothing gives a more vivid conception of the appalling degradation of pagan society in the first century of the Christian era than the disinterred art of that Roman Sodom. Amid the silence and gloom of the Catacombs we are transported to an entirely different world; we breathe a purer moral atmosphere; we are surrounded by the evidences of an infinitely nobler social life; we are struck with the immeasurable superiority in all the elements of true dignity and grandeur of the lowly and persecuted Christians to the highest development of ancient civilization.

The decoration of these subterranean crypts is the first employment of art by the early [Pg 206] Christians of which we have any remains. A universal instinct leads us to beautify the sepulchres of the departed. This is seen alike in the rude funeral totem of the American savage, in the massive mausolea of the Appian Way, and in the magnificent Moorish tombs of the Alhambra.[328] It is not, therefore, remarkable that the primitive Christians adorned with religious paintings, expressive of their faith and hope, the graves of the dead, or in

times of persecution traced upon the martyr's tomb the crown and palm, emblems of victory, or the dove and olive branch, the beautiful symbol of peace. It must not, however, be supposed that the first beginnings of Christian art were rude and formless essays, such as we see among barbarous tribes. The primitive believers had not so much to create the principles of art as to adapt an art already fully developed to the expression of Christian thought. Like the neophyte converts from heathenism, pagan art had to be baptized into the service of Christianity. "The germs of a new life," says Dr. Lübke, "were in embryo in the dying antique world. Ancient art was the garment in which the young and world-agitating ideas of Christianity were compelled to veil themselves."[329] Hence the earlier paintings are the superior in execution, and manifest a richness, a vigour and freedom like that of the best specimens of the classic period. Their design is more correct, their ornamentation more chaste and elegant, and the accessories more graceful than in the later examples. These shared the gradual decline which characterized the art of the dying empire, becoming more impoverished in conception, stiff in manner, and conventional and hieratic in type, till they sink into the barbarism of the Byzantine period.

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This is contrary to the opinion which has till recently been entertained. Lord Lindsay asserts of the paintings of the Catacombs that, "considered as works of art, they are but poor productions—the meagreness of invention only equalled by the feebleness of execution—inferior, generally speaking, to the worst specimens of contemporary heathen art."[330] But this characterization was the result of imperfect acquaintance with the subject. Indeed, he speaks of the Catacombs as "for the most part closed up and inaccessible, and the frescoes obliterated by time and destroyed." But recent discoveries have brought to light many important examples which completely disprove his depreciatory estimate. In many of the newly opened crypts the colours are as fresh as if applied yesterday; and, as regards style and execution, the frescoes of the Catacombs "approach," says the eminent art critic, Kugler, "very near to the wall paintings of the best period of the empire."[331] No one can look through the magnificent volumes of Perret without being struck with the grace, vigour, and classic beauty of many of the paintings there reproduced. It is admitted that the French artists have "touched up" the faded colours, and some of the pictures may be better termed restorations than accurate copies; but they are nowhere accused of being false to the general character and spirit of the originals.

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The antiquity of these better specimens of Christian art is still further confirmed by their being found in the oldest crypts of the Catacombs; and, like the architectural character of these more ancient chambers, they indicate the publicity of their construction and their legal protection. In the later excavations, on the contrary, the paintings are few in number, and inferior in type and execution—an evidence of the persecution and impoverishment of the Christians as well as of the decline of art. The more celebrated shrines, it is true, were repeatedly decorated at successive periods down to the ninth century;[332] but the times of these decorations may be approximately estimated by internal evidence, as the presence of the Constantinian monogram, of the nimbus,[333] and other characteristic signs testify.

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Early Christian art thus sprang out of that which was pre-existing, selecting and adapting what was consistent with its spirit, and rigorously rejecting whatever savoured of idolatry or of the sensual character of ancient heathen life. It stripped off, to use the figure of Dr. Lübke, what was unsuitable to the new ideas, and retained the healthy germ from which the tree of Christian art was to unfold in grand magnificence. As Christianity was the very antithesis of paganism in spirit, so its art was singularly free from pagan error. There are no wanton dances of nude figures like those upon the walls of Pompeii, but chaste pictures with figures clothed from head to foot; or, where historical accuracy required the representation of the undraped form, as in pictures of our first parents in the garden of Eden, or of the story of Jonah, they are instinct with modesty and innocence. Pagan art, a genius with drooping wing and torch reversed, stood at the door of death, but cast no light upon the world beyond. Christian art, inspired with lofty faith, pierced through the veil of sense, beyond the shadows of time, and beheld the pure spirit soaring above the grave, like essence rising from an alembic in which all the grosser qualities of matter are left behind. Hence only images of hope and tender joy were employed. There is no symptom of the despair of paganism; scarce even of natural sorrow.

Independent statues were in the first ages rarely if ever used.[334] There seemed to be greater danger of falling into idolatry in the imitation of these, in which form were most of the representations of the heathen deities, than in the employment of painting; and it was against the making of graven images that the prohibition of Scripture was especially directed.[335] Their fabrication, therefore, was especially avoided. Indeed, sculpture never became truly Christian, and even in the hands of an Angelo or a Thorwaldsen failed to produce triumphs of skill like those of Phidias or Praxiteles. Christian graphic art, however, in its noblest development far surpassed even the grandest achievements of which we have any account of the schools of Apelles and Zeuxis. Christianity is the embodiment of the gentler graces; paganism, in its purest form, that of the sterner virtues. The former finds its best expression in painting, the latter in sculpture.

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The first Christian paintings were light and graceful sketches, after the manner of the older classic art; and but for the substitution of a Christian for a heathen conception—a biblical scene or character, as Daniel in the lions' den, Jonah, or the Good Shepherd, or some

striking Christian symbol—it would be difficult to distinguish them from contemporary pagan pictures.[336] While the principal figure gave an unquestionably Christian character to the whole, the accessories, divisions of space, colouring, and general treatment were quite in the manner of the antique. Garlands, festoons of flowers and vases of fruits; graceful arabesques, luxuriant vines, grapes, birds and genii; ideal heads, masks, and fabulous animals; hunting, vintage and harvest scenes, and pastoral groups; personifications of the hours, seasons, rivers, and the like, made up the *entourage*, or formed part of the picture. Thus the roof of a crypt in the most ancient part (probably of the first century) of the cemetery of Domitilla is completely covered with branches trailing in graceful curves with exquisite naturalness, and entirely free from the conventional restraint and geometrical [Pg 211] symmetry which indicate the subsequent decline of art. Among the branches flit birds, and winged genii like little cupids. Another specimen of great beauty, of the second century, in the Catacomb of Prætextatus, exhibits a well drawn harvest scene, with wreaths of roses, vine, and laurel, and with birds flitting about their nests. A fresco of the Good Shepherd and an inscription attest its Christian character. The drapery and drawing of the figures in the earlier examples are also exceptionally good.

Several of the Christian symbols were common also to pagan art; as the palm, the crown, the ship, and others to be hereafter mentioned. They acquired, however, under Christian treatment a profounder and nobler significance than they ever possessed before. But there are other and more striking examples of the adoption, when appropriate to Christian themes, of subjects from pagan art. Orpheus charming the wild beasts with his lyre is a frequently recurring figure in the Catacombs, and is referred to by the Christian Fathers as a type of Him who drew all men to himself by the sweet persuasive power of his divine word. The victory of Our Lord over death and hell, and probably an ancient interpretation of his preaching to the spirits in prison,[337] may have found a sort of parallel in the beautiful legend of the faithful lover seeking in the under-world the lost Eurydice bitten by a deadly serpent; while, at the sound of his wondrous harp, gloomy Dis was soothed, Ixion’s wheel stood still, Tantalus forgot his thirst, and the stone of Sisyphus hung poised in air.[338] The [Pg 212] Orphic verses were also said by the Fathers to have contained many true prophecies concerning Our Lord. These, however, like the testimony of the Sibyls, were pious forgeries of post-Christian date.

Another fable of the pagan mythology reproduced in early Christian art is that of Ulysses and the Sirens. A sarcophagus in the crypt of Lucina represents the “much-planning” wanderer of Ithaca, bound to the mast, deaf to the blandishments of the rather harpy-like daughters of the sea, and so sailing safely by. Maximus of Turin, in the fifth century, explained the ship of Ulysses to be “a type of the church, the mast being the cross, by which the faithful are to be kept from the seductions of the senses. Thus,” he says, “shall we be neither held back by the pernicious hearing of the world’s voice, nor swerve from our course to the better life, and fall upon the rocks of voluptuousness.”[339]

These reminiscences of pagan art are more frequent in the sculptures of the sarcophagi, in which the classic type seems more persistent than in the paintings. Thus, in a bas-relief, in the Lateran Museum, of the ascent of Elijah in the fiery chariot to heaven, by a strange solecism Mercury is represented standing at the horses’ heads. This was probably the result of an unconscious imitation of some heathen design. On a sarcophagus from the Catacomb of Callixtus, in a harvest scene, is what seems to be a representation of Cupid and Pysche. This, however, was found buried beneath the floor, and bore indications of having been coated with plaster, as if in concealment of the heathen figures. On others have been [Pg 213] observed bas-reliefs of Bacchus attended by cupids, fawns and satyrs, the unfortunate Marsyas, the desertion of Ariadne, and the return of Ulysses. It is probable that some of these incongruities resulted from the sarcophagus having been carved by a pagan artist, inasmuch as sculpture was less likely to be practised by the Christians than painting. Indeed, some of these subjects, offensive to Christian feeling, have been carefully defaced with a chisel, or turned to the wall; as one in the crypt of Lucina, on which is a bacchanalian scene, while on the rough side, exposed to view, is inscribed the Christian epitaph. The sarcophagi of Constantia and Helena, daughters of Constantine, now in the Vatican Museum, bear vintage and battle scenes and Bacchic masks; and on that in which the Emperor Charlemagne was buried, probably of pagan origin, is represented the rape of Proserpine. On the gilded glasses of the Catacombs, some of which were evidently employed for festive purposes, pagan influence also appears in such representations as Achilles, Hercules, Dædalus, Minerva, the Graces, Cupid and Psyche, Neptune with his trident, and a river-god as the symbol of the Jordan.

Even in distinctively Christian subjects it is sometimes apparent that the artist had not freed himself from the influence of pagan types. Thus the Good Shepherd is represented with the short tunic and buskins of the Roman peasant, and often with the classic syrinx or rustic pipes, probably from some reminiscence of the popular rural deity, the god Pan. In the Lateran Museum is a manifest example—the sarcophagus of Paulina—of a pagan sculpture having been adapted as a Christian Good Shepherd. In a bas-relief of Jonah, in the Vatican Library, the classic influence is seen in the Triton blowing his horn, and Iris floating over the [Pg 214] vessel with her fluttering scarf, to indicate the subsidence of the storm. The ship is like the barges that navigate the Tiber, and the sea-monster that swallows the recreant prophet is like that which menaced Andromeda.

Christianity thus preserved amid the wreck of ancient civilization some germs of classic art, over which she brooded till they quickened under the more genial influences of later times. She became thus, as Dr. Lübke remarks, the mediator between the antique heathen life and the art of modern Christendom. That distinguished critic, Raoul-Rochette, has, however, attributed to pagan types too great an influence on the art of the Catacombs, and almost denies the latter all originality or distinctiveness of treatment; and he is certainly quite in error in speaking of the almost pagan physiognomy of the decorations of the Catacombs.[340] He was misled in forming these opinions in part by certain monuments in the Catacomb of Prætextatus, discovered and described by Bottari, and at first supposed to be of Christian origin.[341] This opinion, however, has been since refuted in an able monograph on the subject by Padre Garrucci.[342]

The exceptional and unique character of these monuments deserves a somewhat detailed examination. They occur in a gallery of the Catacomb, not far from the Appian Way. In the vault of an *arcosolium* is a representation of Venus—a subject never found in early Christian art—accompanied by two genii as infants. Near these are the following epitaphs of a pagan priest and his wife: [Pg 215]

NVMENIS ANTISTES SEBASIS VINCENTIVS HIC [EST]
QVI SACRA SANCTA DEVM PIA MENTE CO[LVIT].

Here lies Vincentius, a priest of the deity Sebasis, who with pious mind has observed the sacred rites of the gods.

VINCENTI HOC OLIM FREQVENTES QVOD VIDES[343]
PLVRES ME ANTECESSERVNT OMNES EXPECTO
MANDVCA BIBE LVDE ET VENI AD ME
CVM VIVES BENEFAC HOC TECVM FERES.

O Vincentius, many formerly in crowds, as you here see, have gone before me; I await all. Eat, drink, play, and come to me. While thou livest act well: this thou shalt bear with thee.

The *arcosolium* to which this is attached contains the remarkable paintings represented in the accompanying engraving.[344] The first picture to the left represents the death of Vibia, wife of Vincentius, and is labeled ABREPTIO · VIBIES · ET · DESCENSIO. She is depicted as being borne off by Pluto, to indicate that her death was premature. The god is standing upright in his *quadriga*, conducted by Mercury and holding in his arms the form of Vibia. In the original picture, issuing from an urn at the foot of Mercury, is seen the river Acheron, by which Pluto is about to descend to the infernal regions, as indicated by the word DESCENSIO.

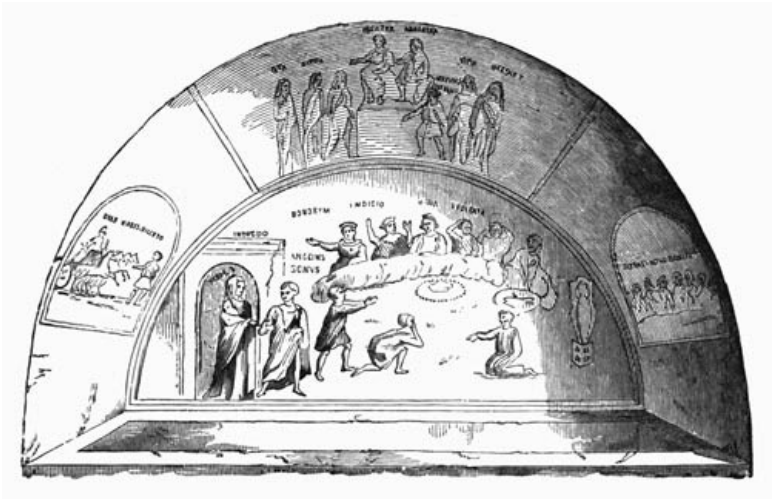

Fig. 31.—Perspective of Interior of Vault, with Pagan Paintings.

At the top of the vault is represented the judgment of Vibia at the tribunal of Pluto. The god is seated on his throne, with his wife Proserpine, and over their heads are written the words DISPATER and ABRACVRA—titles of the deities. To the right of the throne we see three fates —FATA · DIVINA—and to the left Vibia preceded by Mercury—MERCVRIVS · NVNTIVS—and accompanied by Alcestis, the heroine of conjugal love. The figures all have their names written above their heads. [Pg 216]

The principal painting of the series, that in the tympanum of the arch, represents the introduction of Vibia to the banquet of the blessed. This is shown in the left hand corner of the picture, and is designated INDVCTIO · VIBIES. She is introduced by a youthful figure crowned with flowers, and holding in his hand a floral wreath. His name—ANGELVS · BONVS —the good messenger—is perhaps less an indication of Christian influence than of the Greek and Oriental ideas which have presided over the whole of these scenes. Vibia next appears seated at the banquet in the midst of those who have been judged worthy of the recompense of the good—BONORVM · IVDICIO · IVDICATI. They are ranged around a crescent-shaped table

formed of cushions, and wear festive crowns upon their heads. In the foreground are seen the servants.

The fourth scene, to the extreme right of the vault, represents the funeral banquet in honor of Vibia. It is given by her husband Vincentius, who is designated by name, to the priests of Sebasis, over whose heads are written the words, SEPTE · PII · SACERDOTES. All these paintings, not only by their inscriptions, but by their conception and treatment, demonstrate their pagan origin. They are not in any sense or degree Christian; nor is there any reason to infer, as has been asserted, that they are of Gnostic execution, but decidedly the reverse.

But how are we to account for the presence of this pagan monument within the limits of a Christian cemetery? There are two things to be observed, says M. Perret, in explanation of this circumstance. First, the *arcosolium* is not exclusively Christian in character. M. de Saulcy has given examples of several Jewish and pagan tombs in the form of *arcosolia*.[345] In the second place, there is nothing strange in a family practising an oriental rite, like the worship of Mithras—which with the Phrygian and Isiac mysteries were widely prevalent in Rome in the early Christian centuries—having a private place of sepulture, as this seems to have been. It is situated near the Appian Way, from which there was probably a separate entrance. Near by is a pagan *columbarium* which now forms one of the entrances of the Catacomb, of which it seems part equally with the gallery containing this tomb. This space may possibly have been originally usurped from the Christian cemetery; but it is more probable that the gallery and tomb were independently constructed, and that the fossors came unexpectedly upon it in their excavations. This conjecture is confirmed by the indications of its having been subsequently shut off, but the obstructions have long since been removed. It is impossible to admit that the Christians, in contempt of the sacred usages of the primitive ages, have commingled their sepulchres with those of the pagans.[346]

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But Christian art, though affected by pagan influence, did not servilely follow pagan types. It introduced new forms to express new ideas, or employed existing forms with a new significance; just as Christianity itself introduced new words, or gave new meanings to old ones, not only in the classic tongues but in every language which it has adopted as the vehicle of its sublime truths. It created a cycle of symbolical types of especial Christian significance; and became more enriched and enlarged in its scope by allegorical representations of religious doctrine, and by illustrations of Old and New Testament history and miracles. But Christian art soon lost that freedom of treatment which it inherited from its classic parentage, and fell into fixed and conventional forms, which were endlessly reiterated. “Before many years,” says Maitland, “the empire of imagination passed away, and the genius of art, with ‘torch extinct and swimming eye,’ had to mourn over the introduction of the hieratic style which, wherever it has appeared throughout the world, has cramped and almost annihilated the inventive faculty.” Like the hieroglyphs of Egypt and of India, or like the picture-writing of the lost races of Central America, though in a less degree, the objects of Christian art became not so much representative as symbolic. Individual genius can only struggle hopelessly with the shackles of a conventional system. From the freedom of nature it sinks into a servile copyism which can hardly be called art at all.

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Yet the symbols of the Catacombs, though often rude and uncouth, must not provoke our contempt. They fulfilled their purpose no less fully than the triumphs of art in the *Camera Raphaele* or the Sistine Chapel. They were addressed not to the external sense, nor to the critical taste, but to the inner eye of the soul and to the sublime faculty of faith. They were not mere representations of the outward semblances of things, but suggestions of eternal verities which transcend the limits of time and space. The rudely scratched anchor told of a hope that reached forward beyond this world and laid hold on the great realities of the world to come; the dove spoke of the brooding peace of God, which kept the heart and the mind amid persecution and affliction with the power of an everlasting life; and the palm was the symbol of the final victory over death and hell.

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When the age of persecution passed away, this childlike and touching simplicity of Christian art gave place to a more ornate character. Called from the gloomy vaults of the Catacombs to adorn the churches erected by Constantine and his successors, it gradually developed into the many-coloured splendour of the magnificent frescoes and mosaics of the basilicas. It became now more personal and historical, and less abstract and doctrinal. The technical manipulation became less understood, and the artistic conception of form more and more feeble, till it gradually stiffened into the immobile and rigid types which characterize Byzantine painting. It exhibited the weakness not of infancy but of decrepitude, and might almost be called the last sigh of art till its revival after the long slumber of the Middle Ages. It is of importance, however, as enabling us to trace the development of religious error, and the introduction of unorthodox additions to Christian belief, and as showing the slow progress toward image worship. It demonstrates the non-apostolicity of certain Romish doctrines, the beginning of which can be here detected. It utters its voiceless protest against certain others which are sought for in vain in the places where, according to the Roman theory, they should certainly be found. Where still employed in the Catacombs, art shared the corruption and degradation above described.

It is to this period that most of the condemnations of art, or rather of its abuse, in the writings of the primitive Fathers must be referred. Toward the close of the fourth century Augustine inveighs against the superstitious reverence for pictures, as well as the growing

devotion to the sepulchres, which he says the church condemned and endeavoured to correct.[347] His contemporary, Epiphanius, stigmatizes the employment of painting as contrary to the authority of Scripture.[348] About the same time Paulinus of Nola made use of biblical pictures for the instruction of the rude and illiterate multitude who visited the shrine of Felix. “Perhaps it may be asked,” he says, “for what reason, contrary to the common usage, I have painted this sacred dwelling with personal representations?... Here is a crowd of rustics of imperfect faith, who cannot read, who before they were converted to Christ used profane rites, and obeyed their senses as gods. I have, therefore, thought it expedient to enliven with paintings the whole habitation of the saint. Pictures thus traced with colours will perhaps inspire those rude minds with astonishment. Inscriptions are placed above the paintings in order that the letter may explain what the hand has depicted.”[349] [Pg 221]

The feeblest intelligence might rise through the material to the conception of spiritual truth.[350] But this ecclesiastical employment of art speedily became the source of religious corruption and the object of superstitious worship. At length it provoked the stern iconoclasm of the Isaurian Leo and his successors, and was formally prohibited by the general Council of Constantinople in the eighth century. Even early in the fourth century the Council of Elvira, as if with a prescience of the dire result that would follow, prohibited the use of pictures in the churches, “lest that which was worshipped and adored should be painted on the walls.”[351] [Pg 222]

The iconoclastic spirit, however, was principally directed against *graven* images, which were regarded as the special objects of idolatry. The earliest examples of these have been attributed to the Gnostics, who so strangely blended the doctrines of Christianity with pagan superstition. They claimed to possess contemporary images of Christ from the collection of Pontius Pilate! But doubtless, like the alleged statue of Christ at Cæsarea Philippi, mentioned by Eusebius,[352] even if they had any reference to Our Lord at all, they were of much later date. According to Augustine,[353] the Carpocratian heretics had similar images; and Marcellina, who belonged to that sect, exhibited in the Gnostic church at Rome figures of Christ, Paul, Homer, and Pythagoras. In a similarly eclectic spirit the emperor Alexander Severus placed among his lares the images of Our Lord and Abraham, with those of Orpheus and Apollonius.[354] [Pg 223]

Mosaic, which in classic times was used only for the decoration of floors, was employed in Christian art in the more honourable task of adorning the walls of the stately basilicas and churches. This intractable material was not adapted for the delineation of objects requiring delicacy of expression, but was admirably suited for representing strongly pronounced types and solemn figures of Christ and the saints, analogous to those in the stained-glass windows of gothic cathedrals and minsters. Hence the mosaics, and gradually all Byzantine art, stiffened into an expression of severity and gloom, filling the mind of the beholder with solemnity and awe.[355] This character is still strikingly seen in the art of the Greek church, especially in Russia, where there is an intense and superstitious reverence for pictures, known nowhere else. Many of the churches are completely covered with paintings, which are valued, not for their execution, for they are often hideously ugly, but as a sort of talismans on account of their supposed religious sanctity.[356] Thus art, which is the daughter of paganism, relapsing into the service of superstition, has corrupted, and often paganized, Christianity, as Solomon’s heathen wives turned his heart from the worship of the true God to the practice of idolatry. Lecky attributes this degradation of style to the latent Manicheism of the dark ages, to the monkish fear of beauty as a deadly temptation, and to the terrible pictures of Dante, which opened up such an abyss of horrors to the imagination. But by means of this mediæval art, imperfect, and even grotesque as it often was, would be brought vividly before the minds of the people of a rude and barbarous age an intense conception of the scenes of Christ’s passion, and a realistic sense of the punishment of the lost. [Pg 224]

It will be convenient to treat the art of the Catacombs under the two heads of symbolical and biblical paintings, and to discuss separately the gilt glasses and other objects of interest found in these crypts. De Rossi divides the subject into symbolical, allegorical, biblical, and liturgical paintings; but some of these divisions, as for instance, the last, assumes the whole question of the purport and interpretation of these pictures.

[325] M. Didron’s *Iconographie Chrétienne* is a valuable contribution on this important subject.

[326] In the beautiful figure of Pressensé, all art is an Æolian harp, shivering with the breezes that pass over it.

[327] *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte*, p. xii.

[328] One of the earliest indications of human existence on the planet is a sepulchral cave in the post-pliocene drift at Aurignac, in France, in which are evidences of the celebration of the funeral banquet and other sepulchral rites. “The artificially closed Catacomb,” says Dr. Wilson, “the sepulchred dead, the gifts within, the ashes and *débris* of the last funeral feast without, ... all tell the ever-recurring story of reverent piety, unavailing sorrow, and the instinctive faith in a future life which dwells in the breast of the rudest savage.”—“Prehistoric Man,” by Daniel Wilson, LL.D., Toronto University, p. 84.

[329] “History of Art,” by Dr. Wilhelm Lübke, vol. i, p. 275.

[330] “History of Christian Art,” vol. i, p. 39.

[331] *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte*, p. 14.

[332] Mr. J. H. Parker refers to the fifth or sixth century many paintings which De Rossi ascribes to the second or third. These eminent authorities represent two extremes of opinion. Probably the truth lies between them.

[333] No example of the former is known before A. D. 312. The nimbus is given to Our Lord in the fourth century, to angels in the fifth, but did not reach its widest application till the seventh. (Martigny, *Dict. des Antiqs. Chrét.*) It was employed in ante-Christian pagan art, both Egyptian and classical. In Byzantine art it is a symbol of power and of office, and was therefore given alike to Pharaoh, Saul, Herod, Constantine, Judas, the apocalyptic Dragon, and Satan. Sometimes that of Judas is *black*. (Didron, *Iconog. Chrét.* in *loco*.)

[334] Certain Gnostic images will be hereafter mentioned.

[335] Ex. xx, 4. פֶּסֶל is a *carved* image, from the root פָּסַל, to cut, or carve.

[336] These pictures were generally on smooth white plaster, and in beautiful bright colours, for the most part in spaces limited by lines of vivid blue, yellow, or red, or by bands of Egyptian-like lotus or lily pattern. If on the ceiling, they were in *lunettes* similarly divided. These bands frequently run around the *loculi* and *arcosolia*, and divide the walls into panels. Occasionally the latter are covered with a reticulated or lattice-like pattern in bright opaque colors. The paintings are now often much faded and defaced.

[337] 1 Pet. iii, 19.

[338] The Mediæval conception of Christ's "Harrowing of Hell" and delivery of our first parents, ruined through the guile of the serpent, is a striking analogue of this myth. Compare also Bacon's rather fantastic explanation of this legend by the principles of natural and moral philosophy. See his "Wisdom of the Ancients," chap. xi.

[339] Hom. i, *De Cruce Domini*.

[340] "La physionomie presque payenne qui offre le décoration des Catacombes de Rome."—*Discours Sur l'origine des types imitatifs de l'Art du Christianisme.* Paris, 1834, p. 96.

[341] *Sculture e pitture sagre*, etc., t. iii, pp. 193, 218.

[342] *Le Mystère de Syncrétisme Phrygien dans les Catacombes Roman de Prétextat.* (*Nouvelle Interprétation.*) Paris, 1854.

[343] Another reading is:

HIC ORO NE INQVETES QVOT VIDES.

[344] Fig. 31, from Perret, tom. i, planche lx. The description in the text is translated from his account, founded on Garrucci. See also *Tre sepolcri con pitture ed iscrizioni appartenenti alle superstizioni pagane del Bacco Sabazio e del Persidico Mitra*. Napoli, 1852.

[345] *Voyage dans les terres bibliques*, pl. 5.

[346] *Perret*, i, p. 44.

[347] Novi multos esse sepulchrorum et picturarum adoratores ... quos et ipsa ecclesia condemnat, et tanquam malos filios corrigere studet.—Aug., *de Morib. Eccl. Cathol.*, lib. i, c. 34.

[348] Contra auetoritatem Scripturarum.—Epiphan., *ad Johan. Hierosol.*

[349] Forte requiratur, quanam ratione gerendi
Sederit hæc nobis sententia, pingere sanctas
Raro more domos animantibus adsimulatis.
Turba frequentia his est
Rusticitas non casta fide, neque docta legendi.
Hæc adsueta diu sacris servire profanis,
Ventre Deo, tandem convertitur advena Christo.
Propterea visum nobis opus utile, totis
Felicis domibus picturâ illudere sanctâ:
Si forte attonitas hæc per spectacula mentes
Agrestes caperet fucata coloribus umbra,
Quæ super exprimitur titulis, ut litera monstret
Quod manus explicuit.
—Paulin., *De Felice Natal. Carm.*, ix, vv, 541, *et seq.*

[350] Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.
—Hor., *de Arte Poeticâ*.

Mens hebes ad verum per materialia surgit
Et, demersa prius, hac visa luce resurgit.
—*On doorway of St. Denis, Paris.*

During the Middle Ages much religious truth was doubtless conveyed by these storied basilicas or "gospels in stone." Of St. Mark's, Venice, Dr. Guthrie says, "It is not more remarkable for its oriental splendour than for the flood of gospel truth set forth to all eyes in the mosaics that cover and adorn its domes and walls.... Here the grand central, saving doctrine, the glory of Paul and hope of sinners, 'Jesus Christ, and him crucified,' is exhibited with wonderful fulness and fidelity." In A. D. 483, Pope Sixtus dedicated to the people of God—*plebi Dei*—the mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore at Rome, executed for their instruction.

[351] Placuit picturas in ecclesia esse non debere, ne quod colitur aut adoratur in parietibus depingatur.—*Concil. Eliber.*, A. D. 305, c. 36.

[352] Τοῦτον δὲ τὸν ἀνδριάντα εἰκόνα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ φέρειν ἔλεγον.—*Hist. Eccles.*, vii, 18.

[353] Sectae ipsius (Carpocratis) fuisse traditur socia quædam Marcellina, quæ colebat imagines Jesu et Pauli, et Homeri et Pythagoræ, adorando incensumque ponendo.—Aug., *de Hæresib.*, c. vii; cf. Iren., *advers Hæres.*, i, c. xxv, § 6. Rochette figures one of these Gnostic tessaræ or amulets with a head of Christ and the word ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ, accompanied by the symbolic fish.

[354] In larario suo ... Christum, Abraham et Orpheum, et hujusmodi ceteros, habebat ac majorum effigies, rem divinam faciebat.—Lamprid., *in Alex. Sever.*, c. xxix.

[355] Lübke, vol. i, p. 316.

[356] Stanley's *Eastern Churches*, *passim*.

CHAPTER II.

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE CATACOMBS.

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PRIMITIVE Christianity was eminently congenial to religious symbolism. Born in the East, and in the bosom of Judaism, which had long been familiar with this universal oriental language, it adopted types and figures as its natural mode of expression. These formed the warp and woof of the symbolic drapery of the tabernacle and temple service, prefiguring the great truths of the Gospel. The Old Testament sparkles with mysterious imagery. In the sublime visions of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, move strange creatures of wondrous form and prophetic significance. In the New Testament the Divine Teacher conveys the loftiest lessons in parables of inimitable beauty. In the apocalyptic visions of St. John the language of imagery is exhausted to represent the overthrow of Satan, the triumph of Christ, and the glories of the New Jerusalem.

The primitive Christians, therefore, naturally adopted a similar mode of art expression for conveying religious instruction. They also, as a necessary precaution in times of persecution, concealed from the profane gaze of their enemies the mysteries of the faith under a veil of symbolism, which yet revealed their profoundest truths to the hearts of the initiated. That such disguise was not superfluous is shown by the recent discovery of a pagan caricature of the Crucifixion on a wall beneath the Palatine, and by the recorded desecration of the [Pg 226] eucharistic vessels by the Apostate Julian.[357] To those who possessed the key to the "Christian hieroglyphs," as Raoul-Rochette has called them,[358] they spoke a language that the most unlettered as well as the learned could understand. What to the haughty heathen was an unmeaning scrawl, to the lowly believer was eloquent of loftiest truths and tenderest consolation.

Although occasionally fantastic and far-fetched, this symbolism is generally of a profoundly religious significance, and often of extreme poetic beauty. In perpetual canticle of love it finds resemblances of the Divine Object of its devotion throughout all nature. It beholds beyond the shadows of time the eternal verities of the world to come. It is not of the earth earthy, but is entirely supersensual in its character, and employs material forms only as suggestions of the unseen and spiritual. It addresses the inner vision of the soul, and not the mere outer sense. Its merit consists, therefore, not in artistic beauty of execution, but in appositeness of religious significance—a test lying far too deep for the apprehension of the uninitiate. It is perhaps also influenced, as Kugler remarks, in the avoidance of realistic representation, by the fear which pervaded the primitive church of the least approach to idolatry.

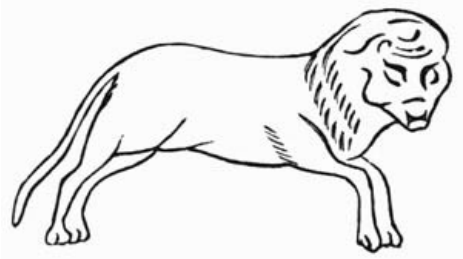
Great care must be observed, however, in the interpretation of this religious symbolism, not to strain it beyond its capacity or intention. It should be withdrawn from the sphere of theological controversy, too often the battleground of religious rancour and bitterness, and [Pg 227] relegated to that of scientific archæology and dispassionate criticism. An allegorizing mind, if it has any theological dogma to maintain, will discover symbolical evidence in its support where it can be detected by no one else.[359]

One of the most striking circumstances which impresses an observer in traversing these silent chambers of the dead is the complete avoidance of all images of suffering and woe, or of tragic awfulness, such as abound in sacred art above ground. There are no representations of the sevenfold sorrows of the *Mater Dolorosa*, nor cadaverous Magdalens accompanied by eyeless skulls as a perpetual *memento mori*. There are no pictures of Christ's agony and bloody sweat, of his cross and passion, his death and burial; nor of flagellations, tortures, and fiery pangs of martyrdom, such as those that harrow the soul in [Pg 228] many of the churches and picture-galleries of Rome.[360] Only images of joy and peace abound on every side. These gloomy crypts are a school of Christian love and gentle charity, of ennobling thoughts and elevating impulses. The primitive believers, in the midst of their manifold persecutions, rejoiced even in tribulation. "There is no sign of mourning," says d'Agincourt, "no token of resentment, no expression of vengeance; all breathes of gentleness, benevolence, and love." "To look at the Catacombs alone," says Rochette, "it might be supposed that persecution had no victims, since Christianity has made no allusion to suffering." There are no symbols of sorrow, no appeals to the morbid sympathies of the soul, nothing that could cause vindictive feelings even toward the persecutors of the church; only sweet pastoral scenes, fruits, flowers, palm branches and laurel crowns, lambs and doves; nothing but what suggests a feeling of joyous innocence, as of the world's golden age.

The use of pictorial representations appears often to have been a matter of necessity. Many of the Christians could understand no other written language. Numerous inscriptions, by the extreme ignorance manifested—the wretched execution, grammar, and spelling—show the [Pg 229] lowly and unlettered condition of those who affixed them to the walls.[361] The relatives of the deceased would naturally desire some token by which they might recognize, in that vast and monotonous labyrinth of graves, the tomb of their departed friend. To those ignorant of letters an inscription would but ill subserve this purpose. Hence we often find some pictorial representation, either with or without an accompanying inscription, on the tomb. These were sometimes rude figures having a phonetic correspondence to the name of the deceased, and sometimes the emblems of his trade. Of the former kind are the following

examples copied from the walls of the Lapidarian Gallery:

PONTIVS · LEO · SE · BIVO · FECIT · SIBI
ET PONTIA · MAZA · COZVS · VZVS. (*sic.*)
FECERVNT · FILIO · SVO · APOLLINARI · BENE
MERENTI ·



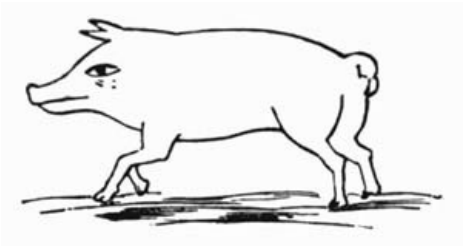
"Pontius Leo made this for himself while living. He and his wife Pontia Maxima made this for their well-deserving son, Apollinaris."

Fig. 33.—Phonetic Symbol.

The friends of Leo were probably unable to read this inscription, whose atrocious latinity betrays the ignorance of the mason by whom it was executed, and therefore had engraved upon the stone the rude outline of a lion, the symbol of his proper name.

Another slab bears the outline of a little pig, the pictorial translation of the somewhat singular name Porcella. It was, perhaps, a term of endearment, like the obsolete English "Pigsney." [Pg 230]

PORCELLA HIC DORMIT IN P ·
Q · VIXIT ANN · III · M · X · D · XIII ·



"Here sleeps Porcella in peace. She lived three years, ten months, and thirteen days."

Fig. 34.—Phonetic Symbol.

In like manner the tombs of Dracontius, Vitulus, and Onager, bear respectively a dragon, a steer, and an ass, the phonetic synonymes of these names. These figures may in some cases be a mere pictorial paronomasia, but the explanation above suggested is the more probable one. In the following example this is almost asserted:

NABIRA IN PACE ANIMA DVLCIS
QVI VIXIT ANOS XVI · M · V ·
ANIMA MELEIEA
TITVLV FACTV
APARENTES SIGNVM NABE. [*sic.*]

"Navira in peace; a sweet soul, who lived sixteen years and five months; a soul sweet as honey; this epitaph was made by her parents. The sign, a ship."

Fig. 35.—Phonetic Symbol.

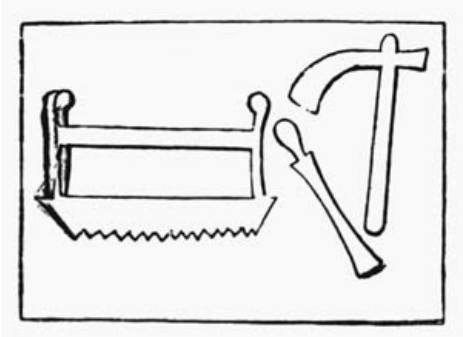
More frequently the figures had reference to the trade or occupation of the deceased, as in the following epitaph, probably of a wool-comber, found by Dr. Maitland built into the wall of the Piazzo di Spagna, in Rome. Many important funeral tablets, both Christian and pagan, have been thus employed for the commonest purposes. The objects in the engraving are probably the shears, comb, ladle, and an unknown instrument used for cleansing wool. [Pg 231]

“To Veneria, in peace.”

Fig. 36.—Wool-Comber’s Implements.

The following, from the Lapidarian Gallery, indicates the trade of a carpenter. The saw and adz are very like those now employed:

BAVTO ET MAXIMA SE VIVI
FECERVNT.



“To Bautus and Maxima. They made this during their lifetime.”

Fig. 37.—Carpenter’s Tools.

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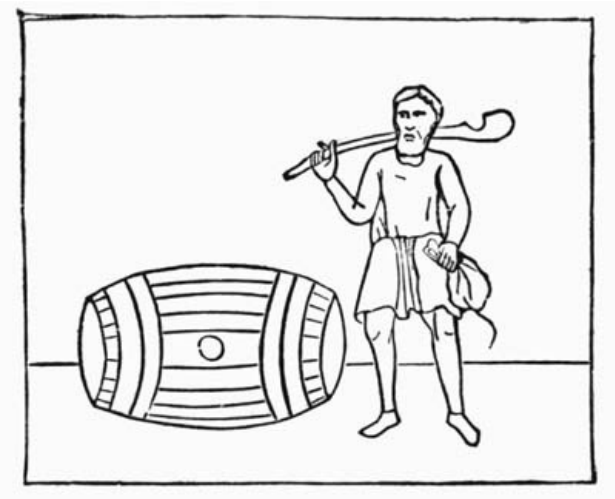
On another slab is a figure, probably of a vine-dresser, in a short Roman tunic, standing near a wine cask, the symbol of his occupation. He appears to be starting to the field with his mattock on his shoulder, and in his hand is a wallet containing, perhaps, the provision for the day.

GAVDENTIO FECERVM FRATRI
QVI VICSIC ANNIS XXVIII · M · VIII · D · XVII



“To Gaudentius. His brothers made this. He lived twenty-eight years, eight months, seventeen days.”

Fig. 38.—A Vine-Dresser’s Tomb.

In the Catacomb of St. Agnes is a fresco of husbandmen carrying a wine butt on their shoulders, the meaning of which is probably the same. Mr. Hemans rather fantastically

interprets this symbol as implying concord, or the union of the faithful bound together by sacred ties, as the staves of the cask are by its hoops.[362] Maitland translates it as standing for a proper name. We have seen examples representing fossors at work,[363] and Fabretti figures the slab of a sculptor, exhibiting the manufacture of sarcophagi. Other examples occur, in which the fuller's tomb is indicated by mallets, the shoemaker's by shoes or lasts, the baker's by loaves, the wood-feller's by an axe, the grocer's by scales, and the like, although the meaning of some of these figures is questioned. Didron, however, presses this interpretation of these symbols much too far, making the dove, fish, anchor, and sheep, only the emblems of the occupation of the fowler, fisherman, sailor, and shepherd, respectively, thus doing violence to the acknowledged canons of epigraphic criticism to be presently indicated.[364]

[Pg 233]

But by far the larger proportion of these symbols have a religious significance, and refer to the peace and joy of the Christian, and to the holy hopes of a life beyond the grave; and many of them were derived directly from the language of Scripture. They were often of a very simple and rudimentary character, such as could be easily scratched with a trowel on the moist plaster, or traced upon the stone. They were sometimes, however, elaborately represented in excellent frescoes or sculpture.

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The beautiful allusion of St. Paul to the Christian's hope as the anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, is frequently represented in the Catacombs by the outline of an anchor, often rudely drawn, but eloquent with profoundest meaning to the mind of the believer. It assured the storm-tossed voyager on life's rough sea that, while the anchor of his hope was cast "within the veil," his life-bark would outride the fiercest blasts and wildest waves of persecution, and at last glide safely into the haven of everlasting rest. This allusion is made more apparent when it is observed how often it is found on the tombstones of those who bear the name Hope, in its Greek or Latin form, as ΕΛΠΙC, ΕΛΠΙΔΙOC, SPES etc. In the accompanying example it is displayed on a Christian patera. This symbol is not unknown in classic art. It occurs on a ring from Pompeii, in the Museum of Naples, with the word ΕΛΠΙC, Hope.

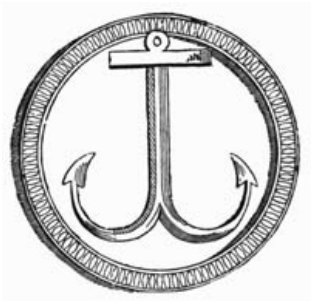

Fig. 39.—Symbolical Anchor.

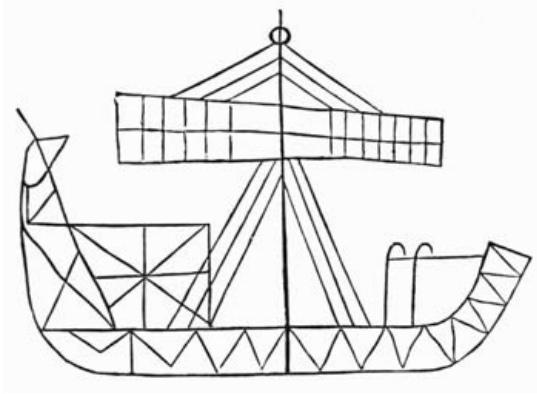

Fig. 40.—Symbolical Ship.

Of kindred significance with this is the symbol of a ship, which may also refer to the soul seeking a country out of sight, as the ship steers to a land beyond the horizon. Sometimes it may be regarded as a type of the church; and in later times it is represented as steered by St. Peter and St. Paul.[365] The symbol of "the heaven-bound ship"—ἡ ναῦς οὐραοδραμοῦσα—is mentioned by Clement of Alexandria as being in vogue in the second century. This figure was used also in pagan art as an emblem of the close of life, and may still be seen carved on a tomb near the Neapolitan Gate of Pompeii. In the Catacombs the execution of the symbol is often exceedingly rude, the design being apparently copied from the clumsy barges of the Tiber. The mast and yard sometimes present a vague imitation of the cross.[366] The accompanying figure is from the Lapidarian Gallery of the Vatican.[367]

[Pg 235]

The palm and crown are symbols that frequently occur, often in a very rude form. Although common also to Jewish[368] and pagan art, they have received in Christian symbolism a loftier significance than they ever possessed before. They call to mind that great multitude whom no man can number, with whom Faith sees the dear departed walk in white, bearing palms in their hands. The crown is not the wreath of ivy or of laurel, of parsley or of bay, the coveted reward of the ancient games; nor the chaplet of earthly revelry, which, placed upon the heated brow, soon fell in withered garlands to the feet; but the crown of life, starry and unwithering, the immortal wreath of glory which the saints shall wear forever at the marriage supper of the Lamb. They are the emblems of victory over the latest foe, the assurance that

[Pg 236]

The struggle and grief are all past;
The glory and worth live on.

The palm and crown conjoined, the latter encircling the sacred monogram, are represented in the accompanying example from a slab in the Vatican Library.

Fig. 41.—Symbolical Palm and Crown.

The palm has also been claimed, but, as we shall see, without any warrant whatever, as the emblem of the martyrs and the designation of their tombs.

One of the most beautiful symbols of the Catacombs is the dove, the perpetual synonym of peace. Indeed, that word is frequently annexed to the figure as if to show more distinctly its meaning, as in Figs. 42 and 43.[369] The innocence and purity of the dove make it an appropriate emblem of the souls of departed Christians, soaring beyond the defilements of earth to the peaceful blessedness of heaven.[370] It is, therefore, in allusion to this thought [Pg 237] sometimes accompanied by the words, *anima innocens, anima simplex*—"innocent soul," "simple soul." Perhaps there may be also a reference to the admonition of Our Lord, "Be ye, therefore, ... harmless as doves." The gentleness and tender affection of these beautiful birds make them an emblem of endearment in every age, as is strikingly seen in the frequent allusions of the matchless Song of Songs. It may, therefore, be often employed in the Catacombs with reference to the domestic virtues of the deceased, and to the mutual constancy of husband and wife. The expression, *palumbus sine felle*—"a dove without gall"—is often applied in Christian epitaphs to the departed, especially in its diminutive form —*palumbulus sine felle*—on the tombs of little children, as if the bereaved parents presented their babes to the Lord, like the turtle-doves and young pigeons of the ancient Jewish offering of infant consecration.

"In the Peace of God."

Fig. 42.—Symbolical Doves.

The dove generally bears in its beak or claws an olive branch, the sign of the assuaging of the waters of Divine vengeance from the face of the earth. (See Fig. 43.) It is, then, as [Pg 238] Tertullian expresses it, "the herald of the peace of God."

Fig. 43.—Symbolical Dove.

Fig. 44.—Doves and Vase.

"The place of Primus."

Fig. 45.—Dove Eating Olive Berries.

Sometimes it is seen drinking out of a vase, or pecking at grapes or olive berries, a symbol of the soul's enjoyment of the fruits and refreshing draughts of paradise.[371] (See Figs. 44 and 45.) As seen sitting on the arms of the cross,[372] the dove is an appropriate symbol of the peace with God purchased by the death of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The dove in a cage may imply the faithful under persecution, or the soul imprisoned in the body. [Pg 239]

The dove was also used in the Catacombs as the symbol of the Holy Spirit in representations of the baptism of Our Lord, and is described by Paulinus as similarly employed in the church of Nola.[373] Tertullian[374] applies toward the ecclesiastical edifice the expression, *columbæ domus*—"house of the dove"—possibly, however, with reference to the dove-like religion and character of the Christians. In Mediæval art the Holy Spirit, under the form of a dove wearing a cruciform nimbus, the symbol of divinity, is represented brooding over the face of the waters of primeval chaos, inspiring the prophets and saints, and even nailed to the cross above the crucified body of Our Lord. This sacred emblem of the Paraclete, the Divine Comforter, by a monstrous violation of propriety was emblazoned upon battle-flags, and the Holy Name given to a military order and to ships of war.[375]

This emblem was also used in pagan art. The light-winged coursers who drew the airy chariot of Venus were doves. From the oaks of Dodona doves uttered oracles of the future. A dove was also the celestial messenger of Mahomet. The olive, too, was sacred to Minerva, and as the symbol of peace was woven into the victor's crown. [Pg 240]

Other pagan types were employed, but with a new and nobler Christian significance. Thus the peacock, the proud bird of Juno, frequently appears in the Catacombs, not as the symbol of the all-seeing eye of God, in imitation of the pagan myth of the hundred eyes of Argus, but as the emblem of immortality.[376] Associated in meaning and frequently confounded in form with the peacock was the phœnix, the marvellous story of whose rejuvenescence from the ashes of its funeral pyre Clement of Rome recounts with unfaltering faith.[377] Lactantius makes it the theme of an elaborate poem,[378] and Tertullian cites it as a striking illustration of the resurrection of the dead.[379] It was also considered a type of the new birth and of eternal felicity. The cock, generally associated with St. Peter,[380] is interpreted as the symbol of unsleeping vigilance; it is, perhaps, also an emblem or suggestion of the remorse of the apostle for his denial of his Lord. [Pg 241]

Fig. 46.—Symbolical Peacock.

Another adaptation of classic symbolism is the employment of the stag, the attribute of Diana, as the emblem of the Christian thirsting after the living waters. It is generally represented drinking at a stream, probably in allusion to the Psalmist's panting after God as the hart after the water-brooks.[381] The hare sometimes occurs, an appropriate type of the persecution of the Christians, hunted amid those secret burrows in the earth like rabbits in their warrens. The horse is interpreted as symbolizing eagerness or speed in running the Christian race, or, perhaps, the course of life happily accomplished;[382] and the lion, fortitude of soul, or, from the notion that he slept with open eyes, vigilance against the snares of sin.[383] It is remarkable that the dog, a pagan symbol of fidelity, never occurs except as accessory in hunting scenes of manifestly heathen type; probably on account of the abhorrence of this, to them, unclean beast, by the Jews, who so largely impressed their characteristics on Christian thought and feeling.[384] The serpent, a common pagan symbol, and with the cock the attribute of Æsculapius, nowhere appears but in the scene of the temptation of Eve by the "Old Serpent, the Devil." [Pg 242]

The vine is an appropriate symbol of the intimate union of the believer and Christ, and the olive tree of a life fruitful in good deeds, or of the church, in whose sheltering arms all souls may find rest, as the fowls of the air in the boughs of a tree. Flowers and fruits may be the emblems of future beatitude; and a loaf, of the bread of life or of the holy eucharist. The fountain is a type of the living waters, and the lyre, of the influence of the Divine Orpheus. The lamp and the light-house are the emblems of spiritual illumination through the gospel. The balance may refer to the just dealing of the deceased, or perhaps to the final judgment and the Eastern notion of psychostasy.[385] The house probably indicates the tabernacle of the body, or perhaps the last long home of the grave, or the house not made with hands on high. Most of the symbols, however, refer to the person and work of Christ, as the central and dominating idea of the church of the Catacombs. Some of these are of such importance and of so frequent occurrence as to demand a more detailed examination. [Pg 243]

One of the most striking and beautiful of these symbols is that which represents Christ as the Good Shepherd, and believers as the sheep of his fold. While the doves, as we have seen, may be regarded as emblematic of the beatified spirits of the departed, the sheep more appropriately symbolize those who, still in the flesh, go in and out and find pasture. Suggesting the thought of that sweet Hebrew idyl[386] of which the world will never grow tired; which, lisped by the pallid lips of the dying throughout the ages, has strengthened

their hearts as they entered the dark valley; and to which Our Lord lent a deeper pathos by the tender parable of the lost sheep—small wonder that it was a favourite type of that unwearying love that sought the erring and the outcast and brought them to his fold again. With reiterated and manifold treatment the tender story is repeated over and over again, making the gloomy crypts bright with scenes of idyllic beauty, and hallowed with sacred associations.

This symbol very happily sets forth the entire scope of Christian doctrine. It illustrates the sweet pastoral representations of man's relationship to the Shepherd of Israel who leadeth Joseph like a flock,[387] and his individual dependence upon him who is the Shepherd and Bishop of all souls.[388] But it especially illustrates the character and office of Our Lord, and the many passages of Scripture in which he represents himself as the Good Shepherd, who forsook his eternal throne to seek through this wilderness-world the lost and wandering [Pg 244] sheep, to save whom he gave his life that he might bring them to the evergreen pastures of heaven.

This subject undergoes every possible variety of treatment and is endlessly repeated—rudely scratched on funeral slabs, elaborately sculptured on sarcophagi, moulded on lamps and vases, graven on seals and rings, traced in gold on glass, and painted in fresco, generally in the most prominent and honourable position, in the vaulting of the chambers and tympana of the *arcosolia*.[389] The Good Shepherd is generally represented as a youthful beardless figure in a short Roman tunic and buskins, bearing tenderly the lost sheep which he has found and laid upon his shoulders with rejoicing. This is evidently not a personal image, but an allegorical representation of the "Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep." He is generally surrounded, as in Fig. 47, by a group of fleecy followers, whose action and attitude indicate the disposition of soul and manner of hearing the word. Some are listening earnestly; others are more intent on cropping the herbage at their feet, the types of those occupied with the cares and pleasures and riches of this world. A truant ram is turning heedlessly away, as if refusing to listen; and often a gentle ewe nestles fondly at the shepherd's feet or tenderly caresses his hand. An early Christian writer, contemporary with this primitive art, furnishes an interpretation of these pictures. He compares the poor of this world to sheep in a barren desert; finding no allurements here below, they seek after those things which are above. The rich, on the contrary, are like sheep in a pleasant pasture, with heads and hearts always intent on the things of earth. Frequently a shower of rain, or of water from a rock—the emblem of the dews of grace or the waters of salvation—falls, [Pg 245] abundantly on the listening sheep, scantily on those that are feeding, not at all on the one that is turning away.

Fig. 47.—The Good Shepherd.

Sometimes the sheep appears to nestle with an expression of human tenderness and love on the shepherd's shoulders; in other examples it is more or less firmly held with one or both hands, as if to prevent its escape. In a few instances the fold is seen in the background, which seems to complete the allegory. Frequently the shepherd carries a staff or crook in his hand, on which he sometimes leans, as if weary beneath his burden. He is sometimes even represented sitting on a mound, as if overcome with fatigue, thus recalling the pathetic words of the *Dies Iræ*:

Quærens me sedisti lassus.

Occasionally he is represented with a musical instrument, like the classical syrinx or Pan's-pipe, in his hand, as in Fig. 48, as if to indicate the sweet persuasive influence of his word. In allusion to this thought Gregory Nazianzen remarks, "The Good Shepherd will at one time give his sheep rest, and at another time lead and direct them, with his staff seldom, more [Pg 246] generally with his pipe." In a fresco in the Catacomb of St. Agnes the shepherd's tenderness and pity are contrasted with the mercenary harshness of the hireling who careth not for the sheep, and who rudely seizes by the leg one that struggles to get free, while the Good Shepherd merely calls his sheep, and they hear his voice and follow him. Sometimes an Orpheus, to whose lyre the sheep seem to listen with pleased attention, takes the place of the Good Shepherd.

Fig. 48.—Good Shepherd with Syrinx.

Sometimes the shepherd is represented as leading or bearing on his shoulders a kid or goat instead of a sheep or lamb. This apparent solecism has been thought a careless imitation of pagan figures of the sylvan deity Pan, who frequently appears in art in this manner. It is more probable, however, that it was an intentional departure from the usual type, as if to illustrate the words of Our Lord, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to [Pg 247] repentance," and to indicate his tenderness toward the fallen, rejoicing more over the lost sheep that was found than over the ninety and nine that went not astray. It was also, probably, designed as a protest against the rigour of the Novatians in refusing reconciliation to penitent apostates. Sometimes Our Lord, thus symbolically represented, is accompanied by one or more of his disciples, as under-shepherds to whom is given command to feed the flock of Christ, over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers.

In the Catacomb of St. Agnes is a remarkable fresco of a lamb between two wolves, over which is written the word SENIORES, evidently an allegorical representation of the story of Susanna and the elders, and in mystic form an image of the church surrounded by persecution, or an illustration of the words of Our Lord, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves."

The figure of the Good Shepherd has been a favourite symbol in every age, and was common in pagan art. Mercury was worshipped under the name Criophorus, or the Ram-bearer, and was thus represented in painting and statuary.[390] More frequently the god Pan appears under that figure, generally bearing in his hand the simple instrument to which he has given his name. The Roman poets employ this sweet pastoral image in their beautiful eclogues[391] to illustrate the shepherd's tender care for his flock, gently bearing the lambs in his arms or on his shoulders, recalling the inspired language in which Isaiah depicts the Almighty's loving-kindness toward his people.[392] From this outward resemblance between the pagan [Pg 248] and Christian themes, Raoul-Rochette has imagined that the frescoes of the Catacombs were careless imitations of the heathen type, overlooking their distinctively Christian interpretation. But the naked fauns dancing with the nymphs of pagan art, as in the tomb of the Nasos, are infinitely removed from the sweet and tender grace of the Christian "Pastor Bonus." Tertullian, in the second century, speaks of chalices on which were paintings of the Good Shepherd and the lost sheep.[393] Eusebius says that Constantine placed a statue of this subject in the forum of Constantinople. It also appears in mosaic at Ravenna, A. D. 440, and in a Catacomb at Cyrene in Africa.[394]

But Our Lord is sometimes represented as a lamb instead of a shepherd.[395] Indeed, this symbol is no less appropriate than the one just considered, and has equally the sanction of [Pg 249] Scripture. The manifold sacrifices of the tabernacle and temple all pointed to the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, the true Passover of mankind. The immaculate purity, gentleness, and divine affection of the Redeemer, and his patience under affliction and persecution, make this beautiful symbol an appropriate type of his innocence and sufferings as he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and, as a sheep dumb before its shearers, opened not his mouth.[396] In the devout recognition of Our Lord by John the Baptist,[397] and in the sublime visions of the Apocalypse,[398] he is thus figuratively represented; and to this divine Lamb is chanted evermore the song of praise and honour and thanksgiving.[399]

In the accompanying engraving from a sarcophagus in the Lateran, of the fourth or fifth century, the lamb, wearing the nimbus in which are inscribed the sacred monogram and the letters Alpha and Omega, the emblems of divinity, is standing upon a hillock, perhaps intended for Mount Zion,[400] from which flow four streams, probably the "river of water of [Pg 250] life,... proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," and dividing toward the four quarters of the earth. These streams are also variously interpreted as signifying the four evangelists, and the four rivers of paradise.[401] On a sarcophagus of later date Our Lord is represented in human

form with a scroll in his hand, standing on a mound from which the four mystical rivers flow, and by his side a lamb bearing a Latin cross on its head. On either side are lambs, personifications of the apostles, to whom he is giving the final commission to preach in all lands the gospel contained in the scroll which he holds, and to baptize with the sacred waters at their feet. Sometimes twelve lambs are represented approaching one in the centre, as in frescoes in St. Clement's at Rome, and at Ravenna. On a gilt glass patera in the Vatican Library the lambs are seen to issue from Jerusalem and Bethlehem, as indicated by their names written above, and to approach Mount Zion, from which flow the four evangelical streams united in the mystical Jordan. This is perhaps emblematic of the twelve tribes, or of the gentiles coming from the east and west to drink of the water of life. Paulinus describes a mosaic in his basilica of Fondi, where a cross symbolical of Christ was placed on the rock, and two flocks, of sheep and goats respectively, stood around it. "The shepherd turns away," he says, "the goats on the left, and embraces with his right hand the well-deserving lambs."[402] This was perhaps the first of that series of art-presentations of the last judgment which culminates in the tragic terrors of the Sistine Chapel.

Fig. 49.—Lamb as Symbol of Christ.

Sometimes a milk-pail is represented near a lamb, or hanging on a crook by its side, or even resting on its back. Sometimes also it is carried by the Good Shepherd. This has been magnified without due evidence into a symbol of the eucharist. It might more naturally be regarded as an emblem of the blessings of salvation, set forth by Isaiah under the figure of wine and milk, or it may refer to the soul's being fed with the sincere milk of the word.

On the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus in the crypts of St. Peter's, of date A. D. 359, are exhibited several scenes from scripture history, which will be hereafter described. In the spandrels of the arches over these is a series of bas reliefs, in which lambs are naively shown as enacting other scriptural scenes. In one a lamb, the personification of Moses, strikes a rock from which the water bursts forth, and another receives the law from the hand of God. Three lambs in a fiery furnace represent the three Hebrew children in the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar. Our Lord is symbolized by a lamb on whose head another, personifying John the Baptist, is pouring the waters of baptism, while the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove breathes divine grace. A lamb, the personification of Christ, multiplies the loaves, and brings forth Lazarus from the grave.

One of the most remarkable and important, in its theological significance, of the symbols of the Catacombs is that of the fish. It is one of the oldest in the entire hieratic cycle. It is found accompanying the first dated inscription which bears any emblem whatever,[403] and nearly a hundred examples occur which are attributed to the first three centuries. It was also one of the first to be discontinued. During the fourth century it rapidly fell into disuse, and by the beginning of the fifth had almost entirely disappeared from religious art.[404]

The abandonment of this remarkable figure may be explained by its mysterious and anagrammatic character. It is a striking illustration of that *disciplina arcana* of the primitive church which employed signs whose secret meaning its heathen foes could not understand. When the age of persecution passed away there was no longer the necessity to conceal under allusions and emblems, known only to the initiated, religious truths which were openly proclaimed on every hand. Hence this purely conventional sign fell into disuse.

This symbol probably derived its origin from the fact that the initial letters of the names and titles of Our Lord in Greek—Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς, Θεοῦ Υἱὸς, Σωτήρ, Jesus Christ, Son of God, the Saviour—make up the word ΙΧΘΥΣ, a fish. "This single word," says Optatus, "contains a host of sacred names."[405] The same word also occurs acrostically in the initial letters of certain so-called Sibylline verses quoted by Eusebius[406] and Augustine,[407] which were doubtless of Christian origin. The symbol is first mentioned by Clement of Alexandria,[408] and probably had its origin in the allegorizing school of Christianity which sprang up in that city.[409]

There appears also to have been an allusion in this figure to the ordinance of baptism. "We are little fishes," says Tertullian, "in Christ our great fish. For we are born in water, and can only be saved by continuing therein,"[410] that is, through the spiritual grace of which baptism is the visible sign. "This sign," says Clement, "will prevent men from forgetting their origin." "He (that is, Christ) is that fish," says Optatus, "which in baptism descends in answer to prayer into the baptismal font, so that what was before water is now called, from the fish, (*a pisce*,) *piscina*."[411] Even the mythical fish mentioned in the apocryphal book of Tobit,[412] occasional pictures of which occur in the Catacombs, is interpreted by some of the Fathers as typifying Our Lord. "That fish which came alive out of the river to Tobias," says Augustine, "whose heart, (liver,) consumed by passion, put the demon to flight, was Christ."[413]

This sacred sign was also regarded as an emblem of the sufferings of Our Lord and the benefits of his atonement. "The Saviour, the Son of God," says Prosper of Aquitania, "is a

fish prepared in his passion, by whose interior remedies we are daily enlightened and fed."[414] "ΙΧΘΥΣ is the mystical name of Christ," says Augustine, "because he descended alive into the depths of this mortal life as into the abyss of waters."[415] "The fish in whose mouth was the coin paid as the tribute money," says Jerome, "was Christ, at the cost of whose blood all sinners were redeemed." Origen merely speaks of him as "figuratively called the fish."[416] "Thus this symbol became," says Dr. Northcote, "a sacred *tessera*, embodying with wonderful brevity and distinctness a complete abridgment of the creed—a profession of faith, as it were, both in the two natures and unity of person, and in the redemptorial office, of Our Blessed Lord."[417]

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Fig. 50.—Symbolical Fish.

Few symbols, if any, were more common than this. It occurs rudely scratched on funeral slabs, painted in the *cubicula*, sculptured on the sarcophagi, moulded on lamps,[418] engraven on rings and seals,[419] carved in ivory, mother-of-pearl, and precious stones, and cast in bronze or glass. These last, often pierced in order to be worn like an amulet, were frequently given to the neophyte at baptism to remind him of the privileges and obligations which it conferred, and they are often found buried with the dead. One of these has engraved upon it the word ΣΩΣΑΙΣ —"Mayest thou save us;" and a sepulchral lamp, besides representations of fishes, bears the word ΙΧΘΥΣ, and, as if in explanation, the cyphers Α. Ω., ΙΗ. ΧΘ. ΣΩΤΗΡ—that is, The First and the Last, Jesus Christ, the Saviour. A slab, on which are engraved two fishes and an anchor, bears the inscription, ΙΧΘΥΣ ΖΩΝΤΩΝ—"The fish of the living." Sometimes this sacred sign is inscribed on pagan tombstones used to close the *loculi* of the Catacombs, in order to give them a Christian character. Frequently the execution is exceedingly rude, as in Fig. 50; occasionally it is of a more artistic form, as in Fig. 51. It seldom occurs alone, however, but associated with other Christian emblems, as the anchor or dove, (see Figs. 52 and 53,) as if to indicate that the deceased rests in Christ, in hope and in peace. Sometimes the fish bears a wreath in its mouth, perhaps in allusion to the crown which Christ will give to all his saints. Didron objects to applying these symbols to Christ, because the fish does not wear the nimbus. But the nimbus was not worn at all at this early period; such a criterion is therefore inadmissible.

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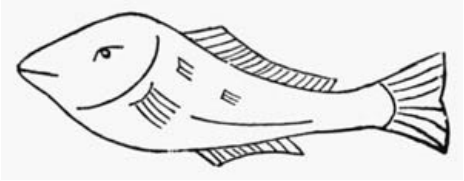

Fig. 51.—Symbolical Fish.

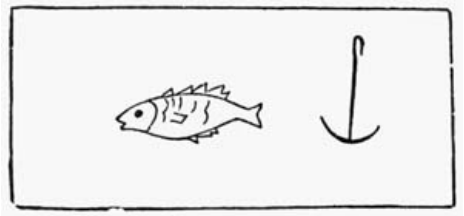

Fig. 52.—Fish and Anchor.

From the Catacomb of Hermes. Earliest dated example, A. D. 234.

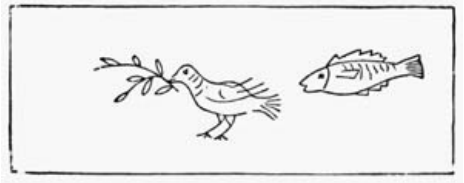

Fig. 53.—Fish and Dove.

From the Catacomb of St. Priscilla.

This sacred fish is sometimes represented, as in Fig. 54, from the crypt of St. Lucina, bearing what seems to be a basket of bread and a flagon of wine on its back, or occasionally a loaf of bread in its mouth. In these cases there is probably a reference to the bread of life which Christ breaks to his disciples, or possibly to the holy eucharist. Sometimes a bird is pictured as deriving nourishment from the mouth of a fish, the symbol of a soul receiving refreshment from Christ. The eucharist is also thought to be indicated by frequent representations of a fish and bread on a table, sometimes with a figure in prayer standing by; and also by a picture of seven persons eating a repast of bread and fish together, probably Christ dining with the disciples by the sea-shore after his resurrection.

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Melito of Sardis speaks of Our Lord under the figure of a fish broiled on the fire of tribulation.[420] A mystical interpretation was also given to the loaves and fishes multiplied by Christ for the feeding of the multitude, as indicating the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit and the dispensations of the law and the gospel.[421]

A remarkable Greek inscription, found about thirty years ago in an ancient Christian cemetery at Autun, in France, throws much light on the profound religious significance of the symbol of the fish.[422] Its date, as indicated by the character of the epigraphy, in the opinion of the most eminent critics, is about the year 400.[423] The language is of Homeric purity and vigour, which is accounted for by the fact that Autun was, during the fourth and fifth centuries, a sort of "French Eton," where Greek, the tongue "of Homer and the gods," was sedulously cultivated. The following is the text as restored and translated by Marriott. It will be perceived that the word ΙΧΘΥΣ occurs acrostically in the initial letters of the first five lines, and is found four times in the body of the inscription. It is conjectured that the figure of a fish was also

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Fig. 54.—Eucharistic Symbol.

engraved, though now unhappily obliterated, at both the lower corners, where spaces for it seem to have been left.

ΙΧΘΥΟC οὐρανίου ἄγιον γένος, ἤτορι σεμνῷ
Χρῆσε, λαβὼν ζωὴν ἄμβροτον ἐν βροτέοις
Θεσπεσίων ὑδάτων· τὴν σὴν, φίλε, θάλπεο ψυχὴν
Ὕδασιν ἀενάοις πλουτοδότου Σοφίης,
Σωτῆρος δ'ἁγίων μελιηδέα λάμβανε βρῶσιν.
Ἔσθιε πεινάων ΙΧΘΥΝ ἔχων παλάμαις.
ΙΧΘΥΙ χεῖρας ἄραρα· λιλαίεο δέσποτα Σῶτερ
Εὐθύ μοι ἡγητήρ, σε λιτάζομε, φῶς τὸ θανόντων.
Ἀσχανδῖε πάτερ, τῷ 'μῷ κεχαρισμένε θυμῷ,
Σὺν μητρὶ γλυκερῇ καὶ πὰσιν τοῖσιν ἐμοῖσιν
ΙΧΘΥΝ ἰδὼν υἵου μνήσεο Πεκτορίου.

"Offspring of the heavenly Ichthus, [Christ,] see that a heart of holy reverence be thine, now that from divine waters thou hast received, while yet among mortals, a spring of life that is to immortality. Quicken thy soul, beloved one, to ever fuller life, with the unfailing waters of wealth-giving wisdom, and receive the honey-sweet food of the Saviour of the saints. Eat with longing hunger, holding Ichthus [the Divine Food] in thy hands. On Ichthus [Christ] my hands are clasped; in thy love draw nigh unto me and be my guide, my Lord, and Saviour; I entreat thee, thou Light of them for whom the hour of death is past. My father, Aschandeius, dear unto my heart, and thou, sweet mother, and all I love on earth, oft as you look on Ichthus [the holy sign of Christ] so often think of me, Pectorius, your son."[424]

In this beautiful expression of primitive faith and hope Romish interpretation has discovered [Pg 259] evidence of prayers for the dead, of the invocation of the Virgin Mary, the doctrine of transubstantiation and communion in one kind, and mention of the "sacred heart of Jesus." Marriott has well shown the grammatical and other difficulties which these forced interpretations create, and the absurdity of importing into antiquity "controversial phrases of comparatively modern theology, utterly unknown to the early church."

Sometimes, by a confusion of metaphor common to both pictorial and literary figurative expression, the symbol of the fish is applied to men as well as to Our Lord. Indeed, this may have been its primary application, and has the sanction of the scriptural designation of the apostles as "fishers of men." The Greek liturgy adopts the same figure, and, in pursuance of the metaphor, speaks of the rod of the cross, the hook of preaching, and the bait of charity.[425] There are also frequent representations on the sarcophagi and in the frescoes of the Catacombs, doubtless in allusion to this function of the Christian ministry, of men drawing fish out of the water. These, however, must not be confounded with the occasional fishing scenes copied from pagan art; and the symbolical fish must be carefully discriminated from the dolphins which frequently occur on the sarcophagi, and from the "great fish" which swallowed Jonah. It is remarkable that a bronze image with a chalice and fish was found at [Pg 260] Autun, in the neighbourhood of the inscription above given. The figure occurs also on certain ancient coins, and in representations of the Phœnician Dagon or fish-god.

It is noteworthy that there are in the Catacombs comparatively few representations of the cross, that sacred sign of salvation which in after years became perverted to such superstitious uses; and when it does occur it is generally in some disguised form, and not in that by which it is now generally indicated, familiarly known as the Latin cross. There is probably a twofold reason for this. The very sanctity of the symbol, and the detestation in which it was held by the heathen, conspired to prevent the early Christians from exposing it to their profane gaze. It is almost impossible to conceive the abhorrence in which the cross was held in the early centuries by the Greek and Roman mind. It has for ages been hallowed by the most sacred and venerable associations, and invested with the most sublime and solemn interest as the emblem of the world's redemption. It has waved on consecrated banners, and been quartered on the arms of earth's proudest monarchs. It has shone on cathedral spire and dome, and, emblazoned with gold and costly gems, has gleamed on many a sacred shrine. It has been marked on the infant brow in baptism, and held before the filming eyes of the dying; and has been associated with the deepest emotions and holiest hopes of the soul.

Not so in the earliest ages of the church. It was then the badge of infamy and sign of shame —the punishment of the basest of slaves and the vilest of malefactors. It was regarded with a loathing and abhorrence more intense than that in which the felon's gibbet is held to-day. Its [Pg 261] very name was an abomination to Roman ears,[426] and it was denounced by the prince of Roman orators as a most foul and brutal punishment, an infamous and unhappy tree.[427] Hence this Christian emblem became the object of scoffing and derision by the persecuting heathen. An illustration of this is seen in the blasphemous caricature of the Crucifixion, found upon the walls of the palace of the Cæsars and attributed to the time of Septimius Severus.[428] It represents a figure with an ass's head attached to a cross, which another figure, standing near, salutes by kissing the hand, or adores in the classical sense of the word. Beneath is a rude scrawl which has been interpreted thus: Ἀλεξόμενος σέβετε (*sic*) Θεὸν—"Alexomenos worships his god," probably the sneer of some Roman legionary at a Christian soldier of Cæsar's household. Lucian also contemptuously speaks of Our Lord as a "crucified impostor."[429]

The Christians, therefore, reverently veiled this sacred sign from the multitude; but they cherished it in their hearts, and in times of persecution gladly bore its reproach. The early [Pg 262] Fathers, both Greek and Latin, recognize the occurrence of this symbol everywhere throughout the universe, and expatiate with fervent eloquence on its mystical meaning. The points of the compass, says Jerome, and the fourfold dimensions of space as mentioned by the apostle,[430] set it forth. Its form was assumed by birds in their flight, by men in the act of swimming and in the attitude of prayer, and is seen in the masts and yards of vessels.[431] "The cross," says Justin Martyr,[432] "is impressed on all nature; there is scarcely a craftsman but employs the figure of it among the implements of his industry." It was seen in the beam and share of the plough, and in the forms of flowers and leaves. It was typified in countless analogies of Scripture, in the measurement of the ark, the number of Abraham's servants, the shape of Jacob's staff, and the roasting of the paschal lamb; in the rod of Moses, the seven-branched candlestick, and the wave-offerings of the temple service; and it was the hallowed sign marked in blood on the lintels of the Hebrews' houses. It healed the envenomed wounds of the serpent-bitten Israelites in the desert, routed the Amalekites in battle, and restored to life the son of the widow who gave bread to the prophet. It was the mark of God on the saints of Jerusalem, and was to be the sign of the Son of man in the heavens. The Christians wore the sacred token like a banner on their foreheads,[433] and the [Pg 263] form at which men once shuddered, says Chrysostom, became the badge of highest honour, so that even emperors laid aside the diadem to assume the cross. "Let him bear the cross," says Paulinus, "who would wear the crown."[434] Christians were known as "devotees of the cross,"[435] and this sign of Christ[436] was employed to hallow every act of their lives, their down-sitting and up-rising, their going out and coming in.[437] It was especially adopted, as several of the Fathers remark,[438] as the attitude of prayer, and Chrysostom quotes in explanation the words of the Psalmist, "Let the lifting up of my hands be as the evening sacrifice."[439] Tertullian and Asterius Amasenus[440] expressly declare that thus is set forth the passion of Our Lord.

This symbol acquired at length in popular apprehension the power of a sacred talisman to [Pg 264] banish demons, vanquish Satan, avert evil, protect in time of danger or temptation, and to shut the mouths of lions about to devour the intrepid confessors of the faith.[441] The sign of the cross on the forehead and heart, says Prudentius, banishes all evil.[442] Another poet of the fifth century recommends the mystical charm as an antidote to diseases of cattle. Into such superstition had Christianity already degenerated.[443]

More common than any other Christian symbol in the Catacombs is the so-called [Pg 265] Constantinian monogram, ☧. The first certain example of this is the following, which bears the date A. D. 331:[444]

ASELLVS ET LEA PRISCO PATRI BENEMERENTI IN PACE QVI BIXIT ANNIS LXIIII MENSIBVS III DIES N XII.

IN SIGNO

Asellus and Lea to Priscus, their well-deserving father, in peace, who lived sixty-four years, three months, twelve days. In the sign of Christ.

Fig. 55.—Earliest dated Constantinian Monogram.

A somewhat similar form occurs with the date A. D. 291, but De Rossi thinks it is only an ornamental point.[445] The following fragment may possibly belong to the year 298, when one of the consuls was named Gallus; but it cannot be proved that he is the one mentioned in the inscription: [VI]XIT ... ☧ ... GAL . CONSS.—"He lived in Christ ... and Gallus being consuls."[446]

In the year 339 the second dated example occurs, enclosed in a circle. In A. D. 341 three examples are found, and in A. D. 343 it occurs four times in one inscription. After this it becomes exceedingly common, and is even employed as a mark of punctuation between the [Pg 266] words.

This monogram is formed, as will be perceived, by the combination of the Greek characters X and P, the first two letters of the word ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ, or Christ. It may, indeed, be regarded rather as a contracted form of writing that word than as a proper symbol, just as we sometimes write Xt. and Xmas. for Christ and Christmas. Indeed, it most probably originated in the prevalent practice of contracted and monogrammatic writing, of which we have so many examples in these inscriptions. That the monogram stands for the name of Our Lord will be apparent from an examination of a few of the inscriptions in which it occurs, as, for instance, the very first dated example, above given. See also the following: IN PACE ET IN ☧ DEO—"In peace and in Christ God;" BIBAS IN ☧—"May you live in Christ;" IN ☧ VICTRIX,

which probably meant “Victrix (a woman’s name) victorious in Christ.” Marangoni gives the accompanying impression of a seal on the plaster of a grave. See figure 56.

“Hope in Him,” *i. e.*, in Christ.

Fig. 56.—Christian Seal.

This monogram soon became almost universal in the Catacombs, on sepulchral slabs, lamps, vases, rings, seals, weights, gems, etc., and in every conceivable modification of form, some of which are shown in the illustration on next page. See also the vignette on title page, copied from an alabaster slab in the Collegio Romano, originally from the Catacombs.

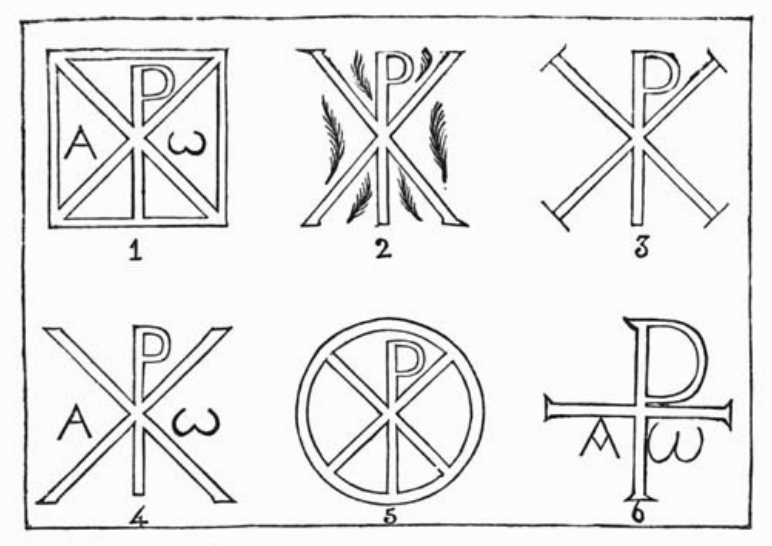

Fig. 57.—Various Forms of the Constantinian Monogram.

Frequently the Greek letters Alpha and Omega accompany the monogram, as in numbers 1, 4, and 6 of Fig. 57, in allusion to the sublime passage in the Revelation descriptive of the eternity of Christ.[447] Sometimes the order of the letters is reversed, probably through the ignorance of the artist, as in the accompanying rude example, Fig. 58. The whole was sometimes placed obliquely, or even turned upside down, doubtless for the same reason. Even in its simplest form it was considered sufficient to give a Christian character to a tombstone which had been originally pagan. Such inscriptions are called *opisthographæ*, that is, written behind. In the following example from Aringhi the letters D. M., for the heathen formula DIS MANIBVS,—“To the Divine Manes,” are partially obliterated, and the consecrating sign substituted instead.

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Fig. 58.—“Tasaris in Christ, the First and the Last.”

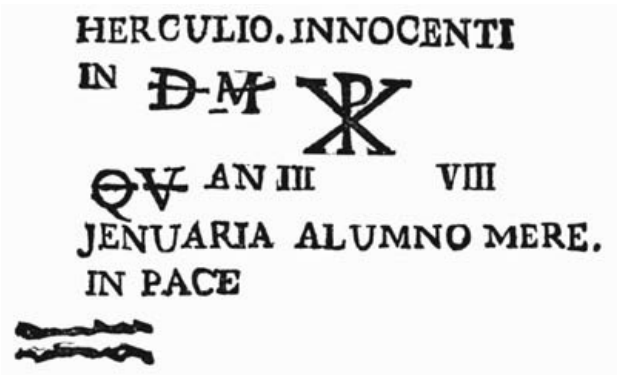

Fig. 59.—Opisthographic Inscription.

This monogram has been supposed to have been adopted from the celebrated Labarum, or battle-standard of Constantine, which bore this sacred figure. This was derived in turn, it was feigned, from the image which the imperial convert saw, or thought he saw, traced in the sky in characters of fire brighter than the noon-day sun, before the battle of the Milvian Bridge. Probably a solar halo of unusual splendour was magnified by the eager imagination of Constantine into a token of divine assistance, and the legend Ἐν τούτῳ νίκα was an after addition of the credulous historian. The Christian emblem, according to Prudentius,[448] was worn upon the shields and helmets of the whole army as well as on the imperial standard; “and so,” says Milman, “for the first time the meek and peaceful Jesus became a God of battle; and the cross, the holy sign of Christian redemption, a banner of bloody strife.”[449]

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Probably there is allusion to the above mentioned legend in the following inscription from Bosio:

IN HOC VINCES

SINFONIA ET FILIIS.
In this thou shalt conquer. In Christ. Sinfonia, also for her sons.

On a remarkable sarcophagus in the Lateran Museum is a representation of the monogram[450] supported on a cross and surrounded by a wreath, at which doves are pecking; probably a symbol of the souls of the blessed feeding on the hope of an immortal crown and the sweetness of eternal bliss. Beneath are crouched two soldiers, types, it is thought, of the Christian warriors not yet entered into rest, whose only place of safety is at the foot of the cross; or they may refer to the Draconii, or imperial guard of the Labarum, who, according to Eusebius, passed unhurt amid showers of javelins.

The following enlarged copy of an early Christian seal exhibits the triumph of the cross over the Old Serpent, the Devil, while it is the symbol of salvation to the saints represented by the doves at its foot. In later art the figures of lions, eagles, falcons, peacocks, doves, and lambs, grouped around the cross, seem to signify its power to subdue evil passions and to inspire holy virtues.

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Fig. 60.—Early Christian Seal.

The change of the monogram into the cross was very gradual. First one stroke of the X became coincident with the vertical part of the P, and the other at right angles to it, as in No. 6, Fig. 57. At length the loop of the P disappears and the Greek cross results. In the other examples of Fig. 57 the cross, if cross it was at all, was neither in the Greek nor Latin form, but in that known as St. Andrew's. Finally the lower arm was lengthened till it assumes the form shown in the accompanying engraving, which was found on the grave of a neophyte four years old. The first dated example of a simple undisguised cross in the Catacombs does not occur till A. D. 407;[451] but during the latter part of the fifth century it became quite common. It also became more ornate in form, and was frequently adorned with gems and wreathed with flowers, especially in the later bas reliefs. In the fourth century it had already become an object of such superstitious veneration as to call forth the reproaches of Julian and the extravagant laudation of many of the Christian fathers.[452] In the time of Chrysostom the alleged discovery of the true cross by the Empress Helena was universally received, and "materialized at once," says Milman, "the spiritual worship of Christianity."[453] Its position was revealed in a vision and its genuineness proved by the miraculous cures which it performed, as recorded by St. Cyril, afterward bishop of Jerusalem, a reputed eye-witness of the event. The precious relic, distributed throughout Christendom[454] and in minute portions worn as sacred talismans, did much to cultivate a spirit of superstition which culminated in the Romish festivals of the Invention and Exaltation of the Cross, and in the hymns and offices of the church, often bordering, at least, upon idolatrous homage.[455] It also led to the conception of the marvelous legend of the cross in the apocryphal gospels and ancient traditions.[456]

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[Pg 272]

Fig. 61.—Monogram, united with the Cross.

The cross thus gradually assumed the form in which it is now generally represented; but it was a sign of joy and gladness, crowned with flowers, adorned with precious stones, "a pledge of the resurrection rather than a memorial of the passion."[457] It was like the rainbow in the cloud to Noah after the flood—a promise of mercy, not a symbol of wrath. It was not the dead Christ but the glorified Redeemer that the primitive Church presented to the imagination. She lingered not by the empty sepulchre, but followed by faith the risen Lord. The persecuted saints shared the triumph of His victory over death and the grave, and felt that because He lived they should live also.

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The early believers carefully avoided, as though prevented by a sacred interdict, any attempt to depict the awful scenes of Christ's passion, the realistic treatment of which in Roman Catholic art so often shocks the sensibilities and harrows the soul. This solemn tragedy they felt to be the theme of devout and prayerful meditation rather than of portraiture in art. Hence we find no pictures of the agony and bloody sweat, the mocking and the shame, the death and burial of Our Lord. "The Catacombs of Rome," says Milman, "faithful to their general character, offer no instance of a crucifixion, nor does any allusion to such a subject

of art occur in any early writing."[458] "The passion is not represented literally," says Dr. Northcote, a strenuous advocate of Roman Catholic views, "but under the veil of secresy. It is not our Beloved Lord, but some other who bears his cross. The crown which is placed on his head is of flowers rather than of thorns, and corresponds better with the mystical language of the Spouse in the Canticles[459] than would a literal treatment."[460] With this agrees the assertion of the distinguished Prussian archæologist, Prof. Piper, of Berlin. Speaking of the series of art representations, belonging to the first five centuries, of scenes in the life of Our Lord, which extend from his nativity to his appearance before Pilate, he says, "Further, however, this series does not go: the death and resurrection of Christ have not at all been made the subject of representation in this period."[461] [Pg 274]

In the fifth century Paulinus of Nola speaks of Christ as represented by a snowy lamb standing at the foot of the cross.[462] Sometimes a lamb bore the cross, at others it was couchant in the midst of it; and, as if to bring the sacrificial emblem more vividly to mind, the lamb was represented as wounded and bleeding, an innocent victim given to an unjust death.[463] [Pg 275]

In A. D. 692 the Quinisextan Council decreed that the historic figure of Christ in human form should be substituted for paintings of the lamb[464] —an evidence that the earlier representations were purely allegorical. The lamb, however, still continued to be employed, and it required the reiterated injunction of Pope Adrian, in the eighth century, to enforce uniformity of usage; and even after that time a reversion to the former practice sometimes occurred.

The oldest extant representation of the crucifixion is a miniature in a Syrian evangelarium, of date A. D. 586, now in the Laurentian Library at Florence. The treatment of the subject is exceedingly rude, bordering on the grotesque. The figure of Our Lord is crowned with a nimbus and clothed with a long purple robe The soldiers on the ground are casting lots for his garments, and the sun and moon look down upon the scene. A companion picture represents the ascension of Christ and the effusion of the Holy Spirit. "These are the oldest pictorial representations," says Prof. Piper, "of the earthly life of Jesus and of his exaltation.... At a somewhat later period," he continues, "they appear also in the west."[465]

Gregory of Tours, about the end of the sixth century, mentions, apparently as an unusual innovation, a picture in the church at Narbonne which represented the crucifixion of Our Lord.[466] About the same time Venantius Fortunatus mentions what seems to have been a metallic cross bearing the image of Christ.[467] [Pg 276]

The figure of Jesus first appeared standing at the foot of the cross, frequently with outstretched arms as if in prayer, which type was common in the eighth century. Sometimes the bust only was exhibited at the top of the cross, or even hovering over it, as in a reliquary presented to Theodelinda by Gregory the Great, the head being crowned with a nimbus, but without any expression of pain.

In the ninth century the form of Christ is raised to the centre of the cross; but he is still alive, with open eyes and head erect, as if to indicate that the divine nature was not subject to death. The hands are not nailed, but extended in prayer; the darkened sun and moon look down upon the awful tragedy; but still a feeling of reverence prevented the depicting of any expression of suffering on the countenance of the Redeemer. It was not till the eleventh century that art attempted to represent either the agony or death of the Son of God.[468] From this time he is exhibited lifeless upon the cross, his hands and feet transpierced with nails and a spear wound in his side, from which the flowing blood sometimes falls on the head of the spectators, as if indicating the efficacy of the atonement; and in the thirteenth century the head drops heavily to one side.[469] [Pg 277]

The arrangement of the drapery differs greatly in these paintings. In the tenth century the form of the divine victim is entirely clothed with a long robe with sleeves, the hands and feet alone being uncovered. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the robe becomes shorter and the sleeves disappear; in the thirteenth it is reduced to a short tunic; and in the fourteenth it is little more than a narrow girdle about the loins, at which stage it has since remained. The *suppedaneum*, or support for the feet, is generally represented. It is frequently in the form of a globe, or of a chalice. The support for the body is never shown in art. Sometimes the sepulchre, with the angel and the two Marys, is seen in the background. One example, in St. John's Lateran, exhibits the gate of paradise and the tree of life.

The expression of the face also underwent a change—a dire eclipse of woe—no less painful to behold. In the earlier pictures of the crucifixion the countenance of the Redeemer is still gentle and benign, the type of tenderness and truth; but it gradually becomes more and more strongly marked with the expression of sorrow and physical anguish, till all the divine fades away, and only the human agony of the wan and furrowed face remains. The serene and joyous aspect which, as we shall see, the representations of Our Lord always wore in the Catacombs, vanishes, and he is depicted as the "man of sorrows," crushed with hopeless grief, crowned with thorns, transpierced with nails, and stained with dropping blood from the ghastly spear-wound in his side. Art exhausted its power in delineating the intensest forms of anguished suffering, sinking lower and lower in the depths of a brutal materiality and ferocity of treatment of this sacred theme. Even the genius of Michael Angelo only renders more painful the contrast between the tender and pitiful Good Shepherd of the [Pg 278]

Catacombs and the relentless Judge of the Sistine Chapel, menacing the guilty with the thunderbolts of wrath—a pagan Zeus rather than the Christian God of Mercy. This striking change but too faithfully represents the corresponding degradation and materialization of religious belief.

The crucified Christ was not only depicted in his dying agonies on earth, but this human anguish is even introduced into representations of heaven, bringing gloom upon its glory and sadness amid its joy. The Divine Father is frequently portrayed as sitting on the throne of his majesty, and holding in his hand a cross on which hangs the agonized body of his Son. [470]

In the East the development of image worship seems to have been earlier than in the West. [471] During the eighth century its corruptions provoked the iconoclastic zeal of the Isaurian Leo; and a general council condemned as idolatrous all symbols of Christ except the holy Eucharist.[472] Their destruction was rigorously prosecuted in the Eastern Empire; but [Pg 279] Gregory II. became the champion of image worship in the West, and Italy, adhering to her ancient pagan instincts, substituted this new idolatry for that which she had abandoned.

The development of the graven representation of the passion was more gradual than its treatment in graphic art. This was the work of the sculptors. At first the figure of Our Lord was merely painted on a flat surface of wood or metal. This was afterward incised in outline, and exhibited in low relief, as on an ivory diptych of date A. D. 888 in the Vatican Museum. In this the sun and moon, as genii, hold torches above the cross; and by a singular association of ideas, Romulus and Remus, suckled by the wolf, appear at its foot, probably in allusion to Christ's spiritual subjugation of the Roman Empire.[473] The treatment of this sacred theme passed gradually through the stages of *basso*, *mezzo*, and *alto relievo*, becoming more and more detached, till, in the fourteenth century, the figure of Our Lord upon the cross stood out, the completed and portable crucifix.[474] From this, through rapid stages, we arrive at the gross and ghastly images which abound throughout Roman Catholic Christendom; in every church and at every shrine; in the homes alike of prince and peasant; at the street corners and by the way side; often in popular apprehension endowed with the power of weeping, motion, speech, and working miracles.[475] By such gradations between [Pg 280] the soul of man and the living Saviour came the image of the dead Christ, diverting the thoughts from the faith in a living Lord to an idolatrous veneration of a lifeless symbol.

Thus, as Dr. Maitland remarks, in painting sight superseded faith, and in sculpture touch superseded sight. But still another resource of sensuousness was to be discovered; and in the year 1223, "when the world was growing cold,"[476] as the Roman Church, with a deeper meaning than it knew, asserted, Saint Francis of Assis is feigned to have received the stigmata of the five wounds of Christ, and thenceforth to have borne about in his body—a living crucifix—the marks of the Lord Jesus. This miracle was afterwards frequently repeated; but the Church, seeking amid the growing darkness of the times to walk by sight and not by faith, wandered ever further and further from the central source of light and power, and lost all ability to communicate to a cold and dying world any spiritual life and warmth.

The sad lesson of the history we have been tracing is but too plain. In the early ages, and in the fervent glow of primitive faith, no outward symbol was necessary to reveal to the soul the presence of the Divine, or to interpret the profound meaning of the atonement. The Church required no sensuous image of Him, whom having not seen she loved, to prevent that love from growing cold. As the fervour of faith failed she relied more on the visible sign to quicken her languid devotion; but not till six centuries of gathering gloom had passed [Pg 281] over her head after her fatal alliance with imperial power did degenerate art dare to portray to the eye of sense the death pangs and throes of mortal agony of the suffering Son of God. In the church of the Catacombs these images of sadness and gloom have no place. All is bright, cheerful, and hope-inspiring. In the following chapter we shall see that these characteristics are strikingly manifested in all the representations of Our Lord that there occur.

NOTE.—We have made no reference in the foregoing remarks to the pre-Christian crosses, of which so many examples occur. It is not remarkable that this perhaps simplest of all geometrical figures should have attracted the notice of many diverse and ancient races, and even have been regarded as a sign of potent mystical meaning. This subject has been treated with a good deal of fantastic theory by S. Baring-Gould, M.A., (*Curious Myths of the Middle Ages*, pp. 341, *et seq.*;) more philosophically by Creuzer, (*Symbolek*, pp. 168 *et seq.*,) and by various travellers and observers of ancient remains in many lands. Sir Robert Ker Porter mentions the hieroglyph of a cross, accompanied by cuneiform inscriptions, which he saw on a stone among the ruins of Susa. (*Travels*, vol. ii, p. 414.) Prescott mentions its occurrence among the objects of worship in the idol temples of Anahuac, (*Conquest of Mexico*, vol. iii, pp. 338-340.) It was found on the temple of Serapis at Alexandria, which fact was urged by the pagan priests to induce Theodosius not to destroy that building. (Socrates, *Eccl. Hist.*, v, 17.) It was probably a Nilometer, or perhaps the so-called "Key of the Nile," frequently held in the hand of Egyptian deities as the emblem of life, or the symbol of Venus, probably of phallic significance. (Tertul., *Apol.*, c. 16.) It is found also on Babylonian cylinders, on Phœnician and Etruscan remains, and among the Brahminical and Buddhist antiquities of India and China. (Medhurst's *China*, p. 217.) It was also the sign of the Hammer of Thor, by which he smote the great serpent of the Scandinavian mythology. On rather slender evidence S. Baring-Gould attributes its use to

the pre-historic lake-dwellers of Switzerland. It was also found, he asserts, combined with certain ichthyic representations in a mosaic floor of pre-Christian date, near Pau in France, in 1850. This example was probably post-Christian.

[357] When persecution ceased, this veil of mystery was thrown off and a less esoteric art employed; but even when Christianity came forth victorious from the Catacombs, symbolical paintings celebrated its triumph upon the walls of the basilicas and baptisteries which rose in the great centres of population.

[358] *Mémoire sur les antiquités Chrétiennes des Catacombes.* (*Mém. de l'Acad. des Inscr., XIII.*)

[359] Sometimes this superzealous interpretation leads to absurd mistakes. Aringhi devotes two folio pages to the explanation of certain figures which occur in the inscriptions of the Catacombs, which he calls representations of the human heart. He illustrates the subject with much sacred and profane learning, and with many quotations from the Scriptures, the Fathers, and classic authors. Another archæologist, Boldoni, suggests that the figures signify the bitterest sorrow of heart—*dolorem cordi intimum*; and another believes them to be representations of a heart transpierced with a thorn, the symbol of profoundest grief. These mysterious figures, whose hidden meaning was sought with such empty toil—*arcanam significationem inani labore investigarint*, says De Rossi—were, however, nothing more than the leaf-decorations employed in both pagan and Christian inscriptions by way of punctuation! See the following example:

Fig. 32.—To Berpius, (or Verpius,) in Peace.

[360] See especially the church of S. Stefano Rotondo, where is a chronological series of martyrdoms, represented in all their direst horrors, from the crucifixion of Our Lord to the reign of Julian. Among other *grotesqueries* is a picture of St. Dionysius walking in full episcopal robes at the head of a procession, holding his head, streaming with blood, in his hands!

The desire to find martyrs has led over-zealous antiquarians to discover instruments of torture in the implements of trade commonly represented on the gravestones of the Catacombs. The adz and saw of the carpenter are made to do duty in some sensational tale of chopping and sawing of a Christian sufferer, and the baker's corn measure is transformed into a martyr's fiery furnace.

[361] See Figs. 122 to 128, and context.

[362] *Sac. Art*, p. 43.

[363] Figs. 23, 24.

[364] Such symbols were not peculiar to Christian tombs. There were many pagan examples of a similar character. Thus a *cultrarius*, or cutler, has knives; a *pullarius*, or poulterer, a cage or coop of chickens; a *tabellarius*, and postman, a writing case; and a *marmorarius*, or mason, a mallet and chisel, on his tomb. Sometimes a shop, with customers bargaining, is shown. A bag or purse signifies an agent; money, a banker; and the like. The *ascia* or axe, so common on Roman tombs, probably represents a sacrificial instrument. Analogous to these are the sphere and cylinder engraven on the tomb of Archimedes, and the square and compasses on modern masonic monuments. In the Armenian cemeteries a hammer, trowel, last, scales, and shears, indicate the grave of a carpenter, mason, shoemaker, grocer, or tailor. In the Cemetery de l'Est, at Paris, animals acting mark the tomb of the French fabulist, La Fontaine; masks, that of Molière; a palette or brushes, that of a painter. See also the naval and military trophies on the tombs of many distinguished sailors and soldiers.

[365] Fig. 112. This symbol is designated by modern Italians La Navicella di San Pietro—the Bark of St. Peter. From the fancied resemblance of the body of the church to a ship, or from the above allusion, the word *nave*, applied to that part, has been derived as if from *navis*, a ship. May it not possibly be from ναός, a temple?

[366] "Arbor quædam in navi," says St. Ambrose, "est crux in ecclesia."

[367] Compare the following beautiful passage from Tertullian, in which the metaphor is elaborately carried out: "Amid the reefs and inlets, amid the shallows and straits of idolatry, Faith, her sails filled with the Spirit of God, navigates; safe, if cautious, secure, if intently watchful. But to such as are washed overboard is a deep, whence is no outswimming; to such as run aground is inextricable shipwreck; to such as are engulfed is a whirlpool, where there is no breathing in idolatry. All its waves suffocate; every eddy drags down to Hades."—*De Idol.*, c. 24.

[368] Compare 2 Esdras ii, 44, 45. See *ante*, Fig. 18. The palm appears on the coins of Simon Barchocab.

[369] See also Figs. 15, 77, and 82. The figures are often very conventional, and look more like geese or ducks than doves.

[370] See Psa. lxviii, 13. In Mediæval art the soul is represented issuing from the mouth of the dying or flying through the air in the form of a dove. One example bears the inscription—*animæ interfectorum*—the souls of the slain.

[371] See the common epigraphic expression, ΠΙΕ ΕΝ ΘΕΩ—"Drink in God," and the language of Augustine concerning a deceased friend—"Jam ponit spirituale os ad fontem tuum, Domine, et bibit quantum potest."—*Con.*, ix, 3.

[372] See Figs. 60 and 106. “The doves which perch upon the cross,” says Paulinus, “show that the kingdom of God is open to the simple”—

Quæque super signum resident cæleste columbæ
Simplicibus produnt regna patere Dei.

[373] Per columbam Spiritus Sanctus fluit.—*Ep. ad Sever.*

[374] *Contra Valentin.*, c. iii. Sometimes a gold or silver dove was placed over the altar, (Bing., viii, 6, § 19,) as is still occasionally seen even in Protestant churches. In the Middle Ages churches and abbeys were named from this symbol, as *Santa Columba* and Sainte Colombe, the church of the Holy Dove. They were also dedicated to the Holy Ghost under the title of Saint Paraclete, Santo Spirito, and Saint Esprit.

[375] According to an apocryphal Gospel, the Holy Ghost under the form of a dove designated Joseph as the spouse of the Virgin Mary by lighting on his head; and in the same manner, says Eusebius, (vi. 29,) was Fabian indicated as the divinely appointed bishop of Rome. According to a singular legend, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove was present at the Council of Nice, and *signed the creed* that was there framed. In the Arthurian legend a snowy dove accompanied the apparition of the Holy Grail. In the fifteenth century a pigeon which lighted on the tent of Edward III., at Calais, was thought to be a manifestation of the Holy Ghost. (*Mémoires de Phil. de Commines*, iv, 10.) Seven doves hovering around the head of Our Lord or the Virgin Mary symbolize, in Mediæval art, the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit.

[376] See Figs. 46, 89.

[377] *Ep. ad Corinth.*, § 25.

[378] *De Phœnice.*

[379] *De Resurrec. Carn.*, c. 13.

[380] See Fig. 102.

[381] Psa. xlii, 1. See Fig. 132.

[382] See Fig. 115.

[383] In later art this figure is used as an emblem of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and is sometimes represented as opening the apocalyptic book with seven seals. The four living creatures of John’s vision, (chap. iv, 6, 7,) the lion, calf or ox, eagle, and man or angel, and the tetramorph figure of that of Ezekiel, (chap. i, ver. 10,) became symbols of the four evangelists, and also of Christ.

In mediæval art uncouth and grotesque figures—“Gorgons and hydras and chimeras dire”—took the place of the bright and genial symbols of the Catacombs. To the terrified imagination of the age all nature swarmed with malignant and demoniac beings, which were bodied forth in the dragons and griffins, and monstrous forms and faces that haunt the gothic minsters and abbeys, especially in the northern countries of Europe, where the savageness of nature is reflected in the weirdness of art. Yet even in its distorted grotesqueness, this art proved its moral superiority to the gay and joyous spirit of heathenism. The intense consciousness of sin and evil, and of the mortal struggle of the human soul with the powers of darkness which it manifested, is essentially nobler than the frivolous sensualism of ancient art and life, without hope or fear of the future.

[384] See Job xxx, 1; Psa. xxii, 16; Matt. vii, 6; Phil. iii, 2; Rev. xxii, 15.

[385] Compare the prophecy of Belshazzar’s doom—Dan. v, 27. To this the weighing of the fates of Achilles and Hector in the Iliad is analogous. (McCaul, 49.) Several of these symbols are often associated together. Thus, on a slab bearing date A. D. 400, are crowded the Constantinian monogram, the balance, mummy, candelabrum with seven lights, a house, and fish. On a marble ambo at Ravenna are six series, ten in each, of sheep, peacocks, doves, stags, ducks, and fishes. Whether symbolical or not, the selection is a remarkable parallel to many of the figures of the Catacombs.

[386] Psa. xxiii.

[387] Psa. lxxx, 1.

[388] 1 Pet. ii, 25.

[389] See Fig. 105.

[390] Pausanias, lib. x.

[391] Tibullus, *Eleg.*, ii, 11, 12; Calpurn., *Eclog.*, v, 39.

[392] Isa. xl, 11.

[393] Patrocinabitur Pastor, quem in calice depingitis. A parabolis licebit incipias, ubi est ovis perdita, a Domino requisita et humeris ejus revecta.—*De Pudicit.*, ii and x.

[394] The later Christian poets also celebrated this tender theme. In lines whose lyric cadence charm the ear like a shepherd’s pipe Thomas Aquinas sings:

Bone Pastor, panis vere,
Jesu, nostri miserere,
Tu nos pasce, nos tuere;
Tu nos bona fac videre,
  In terra viventium.

Tu qui cuncta scis et vales,
Qui nos pascis hic mortales
Tuos ibi commensales

Cohæredes et sodales
Fac sanctorum civium.

Another Mediæval hymn runs sweetly thus:

Jesu dulcissime, e throno gloriæ
Ovem deperditam venisti quærere!
Jesu suavissime, pastor fidissime,
Ad te O trahe me, ut semper sequar te!

[395] In a distich accompanying an *Agnus Dei* in the church of St. Pudentiana at Rome, both characters are ascribed to Our Lord:

Hic agnus mundum restaurat sanguine lapsum,
Mortuus et vivus idem sum, pastor et agnus.

"This Lamb restores the lost world with his blood. Dead and living, I am but one; I am at once the Shepherd and the Lamb."

Paulinus beautifully says: "The same Lamb and Shepherd rules us in the world who from wolves has made us lambs. He is now the Shepherd of those sheep for whom he was once the victim Lamb."—*Epis.* iii, *ad Florent.*

[396] Isa. liii, 7.

[397] John i, 19.

[398] Rev. v, 6.

[399] *Ibid.*, v, 12.

[400] "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion."—Rev. xiv, 1.

[401] Paulinus thus describes a mosaic of this subject at Fondi, (*Epis.* xii, *ad Severum*:)

Petram superstat, ipse petra ecclesiæ,
Ex qua sonori quatuor fontes meant,
Evangelistæ, viva Christi flumina.

"Standing upon a rock is He who is himself the Rock of the church, and from this go forth four voiceful streams, evangelists, the living rivers of Christ."

The *Agnus Dei* is still often seen on altar cloths and tombstones.

[402] Et quia celsa (crux) quasi judex de rupe superstat,
Bis geminæ pecudis discors agnis genus hædi
Circumstant solium; lævos avertitur hædos
Pastor et emeritos dextra complectitur agnos.

—*Epis.* xii, *ad Sulpic. Sever.*

[403] A. D. 234. De Rossi, *Inscript. Christ.*, No. 6. (See Fig. 52.) Of course, there may have been many earlier whose precise date we cannot determine.

[404] In later art, indeed, the figure sometimes occurs on baptismal fonts, in mosaics, and in architecture, but probably as a mere ornament, without any religious meaning. In Byzantine art it is unknown except as a natural representation, for example, of fish swimming in the water, or, in frescoes of the last judgment, as restoring human limbs which they had devoured, illustrative of the passage, "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it."—Rev. xx, 13.

[405] Piscis nomen, secundum appellationem Græcam, in uno nomine per singulas literas turbam sanctorum nominum continet 'ΙΧΘΥΣ,' quod est Latinè, Jesus Christus, Dei Filius, Salvator.—Optat., *Cont. Parmen.*, lib. iii.

[406] *Orat. Const. ad Cœt. Sanct.*, § 18.

[407] *De Civ. Dei*, xviii, 23.

[408] *Pædag.*, lib. iii, cap. ii. The symbol also occurs in a Christian Catacomb at Alexandria, and at Cyrene, in Upper Egypt.

[409] The Jewish Christians of that city would be already familiar with this mode of coining significant titles, which is illustrated in the name of their national heroes, the Maccabees, said to be made up of the initial letters, מִי כָמֹכָה בָּאֵלִם יְהוָה of their battle cry, מִי כָמֹכָה בָּאֵלִם יְהוָה Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods?"

[410] Nos, pisciculi secundum ΙΧΘΥΝ nostrum Jesum Christum, in aqua nascimur, nec aliter quam in aqua permanendo salvi sumus.—*De Baptismo*, cap. i.

[411] Hic (sc. Christus) est piscis qui in baptismate per invocationem fontalibus undis inseritur ut quæ aqua fuerat a pisce etiam piscina vocitetur.—*Epis. Milevitanus.* The *piscina* is now the basin in which the sacred vessels are washed.

[412] See chaps. vi and xi.

[413] Est Christus piscis ille qui ad Tobiam ascendit de flumine vivus, cujus jecore per passionem assato fugatus est diabolus.

[414] Dei Filius, Salvator, piscis in sua passione decoctus, cujus ex interioribus remediis quotidie illuminamur et pascimur.—*De Promis. et Prædic. Dei*, ii, 39.

[415] ΙΧΘΥΣ, in quo nomine mystice intelligitur Christus, eo quod in hujus mortalitatis abysso, velut in aquarum profunditate vivus.—*De Civ. Dei.*

[416] Χριστὸς ὁ τροπικῶς λεγόμενος Ἰχθύς.—*Opp.* ed. Bened., tom. iii, p. 584.

[417] *Rom. Sott.*, p. 210. Probably the aureole of Mediæval art derived its name of *vesica piscis* from this symbol.

[418] See Fig. 113.

[419] See Fig. 118.

[420] Piscis ... Christus tribulationis igne assatus. Compare the phrase of Augustine—Piscis assus Christus passus.

[421] Plerique septiformis Spiritus gratiam in panibus definitam, in piscibus quoque duplicis testamenti figuram intelligendam putant.—Ambrose, *in Luc.* ix.

[422] This has been minutely examined by Cardinal Pitra—its discoverer—Kirchoff, Garrucci, Le Blant, and other eminent scholars. The monograph of Marriott, its latest editor, is a masterpiece of epigraphical criticism.

[423] Cardinal Pitra places it about A. D. 250, but the elongated form of the letters, of which there is no early example, forbids the supposition.

[424] The epitaph of Abercius, a Phrygian bishop of the second century, also contains an allusion to the heavenly Ichthus, and probably to the eucharist, in the lines which we quote:

> ... Πίστις δὲ προσῆγε
> Καὶ παρέθηκε τροφὴν, Ἰχθὺν θείας ἀπὸ πηγῆς,
> Παμμεγέθη, καθαρὸν, ὃν ἐδράξατο παρθένος ἁγνή·
> Καὶ τοῦτον ἐπέδωκε φίλοις ἔσθειν διὰ παντὸς,
> Οἶνον χρηστὸν ἔχουσα, κέρασμα διδοῦσα μετ'ἄρτου.

"Faith brought to us and set before us food, a fish from a divine fount, great and clean, which the holy maiden took in her hand and gave it to her friends, that they should always eat thereof, holding goodly wine, giving with bread a mingled drink."

The "holy maiden" is evidently, from the context, as Marriott remarks, Faith personified, although Padre Garrucci and Dr. Northcote regard her as no other than the Virgin Mary.

[425] We have seen how Tertullian designates believers as little fishes—*pisciculi*.

[426] Nomen ipsum crucis absit non modo a corpore civium Romanorum, sed etiam a cogitatione, oculis, auribus.—Cicero, *pro Rabirio*.

[427] Crudelissimum et teterrimum ... arbor infelix, infame lignum.—Cic., *pro Rabirio*.

[428] Now in the Museum of the Collegio Romano.

[429] Τὸν ἀνεσκολοπισμένον ἐκεῖνον σοφιστήν.—*De Morte Peregr.*

Tertullian mentions as a common heathen delusion the idea that the God of the Christians had an ass's head. He also speaks of a heathen picture of a figure having the ears of an ass, hoofed in one foot, carrying a book and wearing a toga, to which was affixed the inscription, "The God of the Christians, born of an ass."—*Apol.*, c. 16.

Probably such caricatures were common. On a slab recently discovered in the Vigna Nussiner is a representation of an ass with the inscription, "Hic est Deus Hadriani," apparently a satirical allusion to that emperor's favourable disposition to Christianity.

[430] Eph. iii, 18.

[431] Ipsa species crucis quid est nisi forma quadrata mundi?... Aves quando volant in æthera, formam crucis assumunt; homo natans per aquas, vel orans, forma crucis vehitur. Navis per maria antenna cruci similata sufflatur.—Hieronym. *in Mark* xv.

[432] *Apol.*, i, 72. See also Minuc. Felix, cap. 29.

[433] Ego Christianus ... et vexillum crucis in mea fronte portans.—Hieron., *Ep.* 113.

[434] Tolle crucem qui vis auferre coronam.

[435] Crucis religiosi.—Tertul., *Apol.*, 16.

[436] Signum Christi, τὸ κυριακὸν σημεῖον.—Clem. Alex., *Strom.*, vi, 11.

[437] Ad omnem progressum atque promotum, ad omnem aditum et exitum, ad vestitum, ad calceatum, ad lavacra, ad mensas, ad lumina, ad cubilia, ad sedilia, quæcunque nos conversatio exercet, frontem crucis signaculo tenemus.—Tertul., *de Coron. Mil.*, c. iii.

[438] Crucis signum est, cum homo porrectis manibus Deum pura mente veneratur.—Minuc., *Dial.*, p. 90. Expansis manibus in modum crucis orabat.—Paulin., *Vit. Ambros.*, p. 12. Hic habitus orantium est, ut manibus in cœlum extensis precemur.—Apuleius.—According to Eusebius, Constantine was thus represented on the coins of the empire.—Ὡς ἄνω βλέπειν δοκεῖν ἀνατεταμένος πρὸς Θεὸν, τρόπον εὐχομένου.—*Vit. Const.*, l. iv, c. 15.

[439] Chrys. in Psa. cxli, 2. Compare Paul's expression about "lifting up holy hands" in prayer.—1 Tim. ii, 8.

[440] Nos vero non attoleimus tantum, sed etiam expandimus, et Dominica passione modulantes, et orantes Christo confitemur.—Tertul., *de Orat.*, c. 11. Τὸ τοῦ σταύρου πάθος ἐν τῷ σχήματι ἐξεικονίζει.—Aster., *ap. Phot.*, cod. 271. This attitude of prayer was also common to the pagans in their addresses to the *Dii Superi*, or celestial gods. Hence Virgil represents Æneas as praying with his hands stretched out to heaven—Duplices tendens ad sidera palmas.

[441] See an instance of this miracle recorded in Eusebius.—*Hist. Eccles.*, viii, 7.

[442] Fac cum vocante somno

Castum petes cubile,
Frontem locumque cordis,
Crucis figura signet.
Crux pellit omne noxium.—*Hymn* VI.

[443] Endelechius, *De mortibus Bovium*. In later times the sign of the cross was used in both Greek and Latin benedictions, which were given with many puerile distinctions, and with much supposed spiritual benefit.—See Didron, *Iconog. Chrét.*, pp. 406-410. The cross has also given the name to many famous churches, which were frequently cruciform in shape. In France are over a score of cathedrals or abbeys named Sainte Croix, and in Italy many named Santa Croce. In Great Britain we have Saint Cross at Winchester, and Holyrood in Edinburgh. The cross was also used to mark boundaries, parishes, cross roads; hence the phrase, "to beg like a cripple at a cross." Of three hundred and sixty wayside crosses once existing in Iona only one remains. This sign was used to mark the beginning and end of books, and as a mark of punctuation. It gave validity to legal documents, and still accompanies the sign manual of ecclesiastical dignitaries.

Crucifixion was abolished by Constantine out of reverence for the manner of Our Lord's death.

The cross would scarcely have been publicly employed while this shameful mode of punishment was practiced. The earlier examples had probably a baptismal signification as a sign of the faith. Of this character seem to have been those erected or inlaid by Constantine in his baptisteries and elsewhere. Only by slow degrees did it become the symbol of the sufferings of Christ.

[444] De Rossi, *Inscript. Christ.*, No. 39.

[445] *Ibid.*, No. 17.

[446] *Ibid.*, No. 26. With true archæological enthusiasm, De Rossi exclaims, "Scarcely any monument in this whole class is worthy of such observation as this sepulchral fragment. For if indeed this name is that of Gallus, the colleague of Faustus, behold, what I have ever intensely desired, I have at length with joy obtained—to see with my own eyes a certain dated monument which exhibits the celebrated monogram ☧ before the year 312. Would that I could find the part of the inscription that is lost," he adds, "which, if it bore the name of Faustus, I would esteem more precious than gold and gems—auro contra et gemmis cariorem æstimarem." But he was not permitted to be so happy, and it is probable that the Gallus referred to is another of much later date.

[447] Rev. i, 8. Prudentius in his ninth hymn paraphrases the same thought:

Alpha et Ω cognominatus; ipse fons et clausula
Omnium quæ sunt, fuerunt, quæque post futura sunt.

In Mediæval art the letters ὁ ὤν are often inscribed on the cruciform nimbus indicating Our Lord, in allusion to the scripture, ἐγὼ εἰμὶ ὁ ὤν—"I am that I am."

[448] Christus purpureum gemmanti textus in auro,
Signabat labarum, clypeorum insignia Christus
Scripserat: ardebat summis crux addita cristis.
—*In Symmachum*, vv. 487-489.

[449] *Hist. of Christianity*, bk. iii, chap. i. From the time of Constantine the monogram became common on the coins of the Empire. Valentinian III. and his wife Eudoxia first wore it on the imperial crown. In later Greek art the cross is generally accompanied by the letters IC-XC NIKA, that is, "Jesus Christ is conqueror." Eusebius describes a statue of Constantine at Rome bearing this monogram. (*Hist. Eccles.*, ix, 9.)

[450] See Fig. 104, chap. iv. Paulinus refers to the bitter cross surrounded by a flowery crown:

Ardua floriferæ Crux cingitur orbe coronæ.
—Epis. xii, *ad Severum*.

[451] De Rossi, *Inscrip. Christ.*, No. 576. Of course there may be earlier examples which are undated.

[452] In later art ingenuity was exhausted in multiplying varieties of the form of the cross. Besides the ordinary Greek and Latin types, there was the Resurrection cross, a reed-like shaft with a small crosslet, generally bearing a banneret; the Calvary cross, with steps at its foot; the *crux gammata*, or fourfold repetition of the Greek letter Γ, the *crux gemmata, stellata, florida*, etc. There were also innumerable minor varieties for which distinguishing names are provided in the jargon of heraldry.

[453] *Hist. Christianity*, iii, 3. Eusebius is silent concerning this event.

[454] Helena calmed the Adriatic with one of the nails; of another Constantine made a bit for his horse; a portion is annually exhibited at Rome bearing the threefold title of Our Lord in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, the first undecipherable.

[455] Witness the following from the *Vexilla Regis*, addressed to the material cross: "Hail, O cross, our only hope! give grace to the pious, blot out the sins of the wicked"—

O crux, ave, spes unica!
Piis adauge gratiam;
Reisque dele crimina.

Compare also the following, from the Office of the Invention of the Cross: "O cross, more splendid than all the stars,... which alone wast worthy to bear the ransom of the world! sweet wood, sacred nails, bearing so precious a burden, save this people assembled to-day to sing thy praises."—O Crux, splendidior cunctis astris,... quæ sola fuisti digna portare talentum mundi! dulce lignum, dulces clavos, dulcia ferens pondera, salva præsentem catervam in tuis hodie laudibus congregatam.

This sacred theme has also been the subject of some of the noblest lyrics of the church, none of which, however, surpass the impassioned devotion of the following lines of Savonarola, the Luther of Italy, whose reform, alas! was quenched in his own blood.

O croce, fammi loco!
E le mie membre prendi!
Che del tuo dolce foco
Il cor e l'alma accendi!
La croce e l' crocifisso,
Sia nel mio cor scolpito,
Ed io sia sempre affisso
In gloria ov'egli è ito!

Cross of my Lord, give room! give room!
To thee my flesh be given!
Cleansed in thy fires of love and praise,
My soul, rise pure to heaven!
Ah! vanish each unworthy trace
Of earthly care or pride;
Leave only graven on my heart
The Cross, the Crucified.

[456] According to this legend Adam when sick sent Seth to the gate of Eden to ask for the healing balm of the tree of life, but the guarding angel replied that ages must pass before that boon could be conferred on man. Seth received, however, three seeds, which he planted by his father's grave, situated on the site of Golgotha. From these sprang the rod of Aaron, and the tree which gave its mysterious virtue to the Pool of Bethesda, and rising to the surface at the hour of the passion, became the instrument of the crucifixion of Our Lord. After that momentous event it was thrown into the town ditch with the crosses of the two thieves, and covered with rubbish; but at the intercession of Helena the earth opened, divine odours breathed forth, the three crosses were discovered, and that of Our Lord was revealed by its curing an inveterate disease and raising a dead man to life. See also *Legenda Aurea, De Inventione et Exaltatione Sanctæ Crucis*.

The material of the cross is described in the following distich:

Pes crucis est cedrus, corpus tenet alta cupressus,
Palma manus retinet titulo lætabor oliva—

"The foot is cedar, a lofty cypress bears the body, the arms are palm, the title olive bears."

[457] Milman, *Hist. Christianity*, bk. iv, c. 4.

[458] *Hist. Christianity*, bk. iv, c. 4. One or two apparent exceptions, as in the semi-subterranean chapel annexed to the church of St. Sebastian, by their internal evidence—the drooping head, severe expression, and degraded art—indicate their late origin, Perret thinks of the twelfth or thirteenth century. Bottari figures one (Tav. 190) which may possibly belong to the seventh or eighth century.

[459] Cant. iii, 11.

[460] Northcote's "*Catacombs*," p. 130.

[461] Weiter aber geht diese Reihe nicht; Tod und Auferstehung Christi sind in diesem Bereich gar nicht zur Darstellung gekommen.—*Ueber den Christlichen Bilderkreis*, p. 7. Berlin, 1852. Bishop Münter, indeed, asserts that, although it is impossible precisely to determine the first appearance of the crucifix, before the end of the seventh century the church knew nothing of them—Es ist unmöglich das alter der crucifixe genau zu bestimmen. Vor dem Ende des siebenten Jahrhunderts kannte die Kirche sie nicht.—*Sinnbilder*, etc., p. 77.

[462] Sub cruce sanguineâ niveo stat Christus in agno.—*Epis.* xxxii.

[463] Agnus ut innocua injusto datur hostia letho.—Paulin., *Epis.* xxxii.

[464] Christi Dei nostri humana forma characterem etiam in imaginibus deinceps pro veteri agno erigi ac depingi jubemus.—*Concilium Quinisextum*, Canon 82.

[465] Das sind die ältesten Bilder von dem Ende des irdischen Lebens Jesu und seiner Erhöhung.... Bald darauf kommen sie hin und wieder auch in Abendlande vor.—*Ueber den Christlichen Bilderkreis*, pp. 26, 27.

[466] Est et apud Narbonensem urbem pictura quæ Dominum nostrum quasi præcinctum linteo indicat crucifixum.—*De Glor. Mar.*, i, 23.

[467] Crux benedicta nitet Dominus qua carne pependit.—*Carm.*, lib. ii, 3.

[468] The earliest example of a dead Christ is in a MS. of date A. D. 1059. The oldest mural picture of this awful theme, now so common throughout Roman Catholic Christendom, and which was prescribed as necessary for every altar by Benedict XIV, 1754, is the Church of Urban at Rome, and bears the date A. X. R. I. MXI.—Anno Christi 1011. Few of those in the Italian churches are older than the fourteenth century.

[469] The inclination of the apse from the axial line in some churches is said to represent this drooping of the head.

[470] Didron, *Iconog. Chrét.*, pp. 226, 505.

[471] Die also dem Morgenlande entstammen, says Professor Piper.—*Ueber den Christlichen Bilderkreis*, p. 27.

[472] The Council of Constantinople, A. D. 754.

[473] Hemans, *Sacred Art in Italy*, p. 534.

[474] See the reliefs upon the marble pulpits of Pisa and Sienna.

[475] See one at Lucca, ascribed by tradition to the workmanship of Nicodemus, which was so famous as to be sworn by in the oath, a favourite one with the Plantagenet kings, “by Saint Vult of Lucca.” Hemans, *Sac. Art*, p. 534. Another at Naples is said to have spoken in approval to St. Thomas Aquinas. Perhaps the most revolting extant representation of Our Lord is one in the Cathedral of Burgos, in Spain. It is a stuffed human skin, with a wig of false hair and a crown of real thorns. Elsewhere are Ecce Homos in wax with enamel eyes, and other puerile and unartistic modes of treatment of this solemn theme.

[476] Refrigerante mundo, says the Roman office for St. Francis’ day.

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CHAPTER III.

THE BIBLICAL CYCLE OF THE CATACOMBS.

THE "Circlo Biblico," or Biblical Cycle, of the Catacombs, as De Rossi has called it, partakes of the same symbolical character as their other art-creations. It has, for the most part, a twofold object: first, the literal presentation of certain historical events; and, second, a typical or allegorical reference to the spiritual truths of Christianity, especially to the cardinal doctrines of the sacrifice, resurrection, and ascension of Our Lord. The range of this art cycle comprehends the grand drama of redemption, from the fall of man to his restoration through the greater Man, Christ Jesus; with the careful avoidance, however, of the scenes of the passion, which are nowhere exhibited except under the veil of allegory or symbol. These numerous and varied biblical representations imply a remarkable familiarity of the primitive Christians with the holy scriptures, in striking contrast with the prevalent ignorance of these sacred books in the papal Rome of to-day. Indeed, these storied crypts must have been a grand illustrated gospel, impressing upon the mind of the believer the lessons of holy writ, and probably furnishing to the catechumens of the faith and recent converts from paganism a means of instruction in these sacred themes. The execution may often be coarse, and the drawing uncouth; but to the devout mind this primitive Christian art is invested with a profounder interest than all the triumphs of genius in the galleries of the Vatican.[477]

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In consequence of its symbolical purpose this hieratic series is rather eclectic than cyclopædic in its character. Of the great variety of available topics, the number selected for art-presentation was comparatively limited; and the artist, in the treatment of these, frequently contented himself with the constant and unvaried reiteration of the same types, which were often of the rudest and most conventional form. "The incidents that exemplified the leading doctrines of the faith," says Kugler,[478] "were chosen in preference to others." Hence the very fixedness of these doctrines imparted somewhat of their own character to the pictorial representations employed.

Subjects from the Old Testament are more numerous in proportion to the whole than would have been anticipated. This is also a result and illustration of the allegorical nature of the series. "Rome," says Lord Lindsay, "seems to have adopted from the first, and steadily adhered to, a system of typical parallelism—of veiling the great incidents of redemption, and the sufferings, faith, and hopes of the church under the parallel and typical events of the patriarchal and Jewish dispensations."[479] We can refer in detail to only the more striking of these biblical scenes. For convenience of treatment we will include here those sculptured on the sarcophagi as well as those painted on the walls. The temptation and fall of our first parents is a frequent subject, and meets with considerable variety of treatment.[480] They are generally shown as standing by the tree of knowledge, around which the serpent coils, and receiving from him the fruit

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> "Whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world and all our woe."

In the following example from the Catacomb of Callixtus, the fig-leaf aprons with which they try to hide their guilty shame indicate that the act of disobedience has been already consummated.

Fig. 62.—The Temptation and Fall.

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On a sarcophagus in the Lateran Museum is a bas relief in which Our Lord, as the representative of the Eternal Father, is seen standing between Adam and Eve, and giving to the former a sheaf of grain, the symbol that by the sweat of his brow he should eat bread, and to the latter a lamb, that she may work diligently with her hands in the domestic employment of spinning—the allotted labour of woman in every age. Perhaps, also, as Dr. Northcote suggests, the lamb was a symbol and mute prophecy of "the Lamb of God whom the second Eve was to bring forth to atone for all the evil that the first Eve had brought upon mankind."

Fig. 63.—Adam and Eve Receiving their Sentence.

On another sarcophagus in the same museum is a bas relief of Cain and Abel offering their respective sacrifices of the fruits of the ground and the firstlings of the flock. This subject, however, is exceedingly rare in the Catacombs.

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One of the most frequently recurring figures in this series is that of Noah in the ark. This is always repeated in one unvarying phase of the most jejune and meagre character. There is no attempt at historical representation of the actual scenes of the deluge. Instead of a huge vessel riding upon the waves, with its vast and varied living freight, there is only a small pulpit-like enclosure,[481] in which Noah stands and receives in his hand the returning dove with the olive branch in its mouth. The following engraving, which, although apparently out of perspective, is an accurate copy of a painting in the Catacomb of Callixtus, is a characteristic example.

Fig. 64.—Noah in the Ark.

Occasionally the position of the patriarch is slightly altered, as in Fig. 65, from the Catacomb of St. Priscilla; but this is all the variety of treatment of which the artistic genius of the age seemed capable.

In the bas reliefs the treatment of this subject exhibits a still greater degree of degradation and constraint, as in the following examples from Christian sarcophagi of the fourth century.

Sometimes the figure ludicrously resembles the toy called “Jack in a box,” which resemblance is heightened by the lid being half open and a lock being carved on the front.

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Fig. 65.—Noah in the Ark.

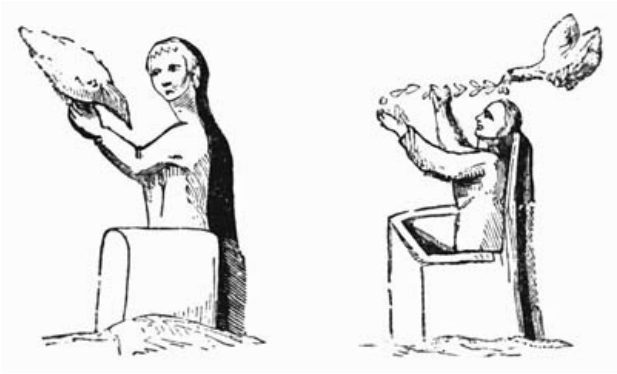

Fig. 66.—Noah in the Ark.

This rude representation, however, was regarded, in accordance with the exposition of St. Peter,[482] as a symbol of Christian baptism; while the ark was the figure of Christ’s church, in which believers “may so pass the waves of this troublesome world that finally they may come to the land of everlasting life.” The dove and olive branch may further imply, that the weary soul, being justified by faith, found peace with God and entered into endless rest.[483]

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Another favourite subject of the early Christian artists was the sacrifice of Isaac, an appropriate type of the greater sacrifice to be offered up when, in the fulness of the time, God should provide himself a lamb for an offering. From this theme the persecuted Christians doubtless often derived spiritual comfort amid the fiery trials of their faith to which they were exposed. It taught also the duty of self-consecration. “May I, like the youthful Isaac,” says Paulinus, “be offered to God a living sacrifice, and, bearing my wood, follow my Holy Father beneath the cross.”[484] This subject is repeated, with considerable variety of treatment, both in frescoes and in sculpture. In Fig. 68, from the cemetery of St. Priscilla, Isaac is seen bearing the wood for the sacrifice. In Fig. 69, from the Catacomb of Marcellinus, he is already bound, and Abraham has stretched forth his hand to slay his son, while the divinely substituted lamb appears from behind the altar.

Fig. 67.—Apamean Medal.

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Fig. 68.—The Sacrifice of Isaac.

Fig. 69.—The Sacrifice of Isaac.

In several examples a hand stretched forth from on high seizes the knife to prevent the consummation of the sacrifice. (See Fig. 107.) It is recorded that Gregory of Nyssa frequently shed tears on reading this pathetic story.

Joseph, sold by his brethren and afterward saving them alive, was a striking type of Him who redeemed with his own blood the guilty race which caused his death. It is, therefore, a subject that appears with peculiar propriety among the tombs of the primitive Christians. [Pg 290]

Several scenes from the life of Moses are delineated in this biblical cycle. One of these, as sometimes treated, for classic grace and dignity reminds one of some noble antique. It is Moses on Mount Horeb putting off his shoes from his feet. This act is interpreted by some of the Christian Fathers[485] as an emblem of the renunciation of the world, the flesh, and the devil demanded of the servants of Christ. The accompanying example, Fig. 70, is from the cemetery of Callixtus.

Fig. 70.—Moses on Mount Horeb.

Fig. 71, from a sarcophagus in the Lateran, represents Moses on Mount Sinai receiving from the hand of God the law, which was to be the schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. Moses is sometimes exhibited, also, as breaking the tables of the law on his descent from the mount.

Fig. 71.—Moses Receiving the Law.

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In the Catacomb of St. Cyriaca is a unique picture of the descent of the manna—the emblem of the "True Bread which came down from heaven." It is seen falling in a copious shower, and gathered in the vestments of four Israelites. According to Martigny the accompanying engraving, Fig. 72, from the Catacomb of St. Priscilla, and another in the Callixtan Catacomb, represent Moses standing among the baskets of manna gathered in the wilderness. But for the severe and aged expression of countenance, so different from the youthful aspect of Our Lord in the frescoes of the Catacombs, they might be taken for pictures of Christ and the seven baskets of fragments left after feeding the multitude.

More frequently recurring than any other scene in the history of Moses is that of his striking water from the rock, an emblem of the spiritual blessings flowing to the church through the sufferings of the Messiah, "For they drank of that spiritual Rock which followed them; and that Rock was Christ."[486] The illustration in Fig. 73 is taken from a sarcophagus found in the cemetery of St. Agnes. That in Fig. 74 is from a fresco of earlier date in the Catacomb of Marcellinus. [Pg 292]

Fig. 72.—Moses and the Baskets of Manna.

Fig. 73.—Moses Striking the Rock.

Fig. 74.—Moses Striking the Rock.

In two or three of the gilded glasses to be hereafter mentioned, which are of comparatively late date, this scene is rudely indicated, and over the head or at the side of the figure is the word PETRVS or Peter. From this circumstance Roman Catholic writers have asserted that in many of the sarcophagal and other representations of this event it is no longer Moses but Peter, "the leader of the new Israel of God," who is striking the rock with the emblem of divine power—a conclusion for which there is absolutely no evidence except the very trivial fact above mentioned.[487]

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The sufferings of the patriarch Job form the subject of a few of these scriptural illustrations. In the accompanying illustration, taken from the cemetery of Marcellinus, he is seen sitting in his sorrow and bemoaning the day that gave him birth. Amid their fiery trials of persecution the primitive Christians doubtless often found comfort in contrasting their sufferings with the still more terrible afflictions of the patriarch of Uz.

The sarcophagus of Junius Bassus exhibits a bas relief of Job comforted by his friends. The complaint of the patriarch that even his wife had abhorred his breath—so reads the Vulgate translation of Jerome, which was in use at this period—is grotesquely illustrated by a female figure, who holds a handkerchief to her nose.[488]

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The victory of the stripling David over the great champion of the enemies of Israel seemed strikingly to prefigure the triumph of primitive Christianity over the colossal paganism to which it was opposed. It was also the symbol of the victory of Our Lord over a mightier foe than the insolent Philistine; and by some of the Fathers the stones and sling of the Jewish shepherd-lad were likened to the cross of Christ, by which Satan is vanquished and his kingdom overthrown. The devout monarch of Israel was also a recognized type of Him who was the root and the offspring of David, who should inherit his throne, and reign over the house of Jacob forever.

Fig. 75.—The Sufferings of Job.

The translation of Elijah was frequently depicted as being typical of the ascension of Our Lord, which was regarded as too sacred a theme for direct presentment in art. The chariot generally resembles the classic *quadriga*. In a sarcophagal example in the Lateran Museum Elisha is represented as reverently receiving the mantle of Elijah, the emblem of the double measure of his spirit that rested upon him. In the background two sons of the prophets gaze with apparent astonishment on the scene. Two bears, which are also indicated, are probably intended for those that devoured the children who mocked the prophet Elisha on his way to Bethel.

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Fig. 76—The Translation of Elijah.

In Fig. 76, from a fresco of earlier date in the Catacomb of Callixtus, it will be seen that graves have been made in the back of the *arcosolium*, cutting off the head of Elijah and the feet of the two lower figures.

According to the strained mode of interpretation of Roman Catholic writers on this subject, the gift of the mantle of Elijah to his successor in office is a type of Christ's bestowment of authority upon St. Peter as the "Prince of the Apostles," and his especial representative on earth. "It would certainly," says Dr. Northcote, "have reminded the Roman Christians of the *pallium*, the symbol of jurisdiction worn by the bishops of Rome, and given by them to metropolitans as from the very body of St. Peter—*De Corpore Sancti Petri*."[489] A more improbable assumption it would be difficult to imagine. Nobler in conception, which, as well as more scriptural, is the interpretation of this type given by St. Chrysostom: "Elias, in ascending into heaven, let his mantle fall on Elisha: Jesus, when he, too, ascended thither, left the gift of his graces to his disciples—graces which constitute not merely a single prophet, but an infinite number of Elishas, much greater and more illustrious than that one."[490]

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Fig. 77.—The Three Hebrew Children.

The persecuted saints who dared to encounter death and danger in their most dreadful forms rather than deny their faith, found great consolation in the remembrance of God's deliverance of his servants in the days of old. With the bloodthirsty cry of the ribald plebs of Rome—*Christiani ad leones*—still ringing in their ears, and, it may be, with the roar of the savage beasts of prey crashing on their shuddering nerves, they were sustained by the thought of the fidelity of those ancient worthies who, for their integrity to God, braved the flames of the fiery furnace and the perils of the lions' den. The three Hebrew children are generally exhibited with the oriental *tiara* and tunics. In the foregoing example from the cemetery of St. Priscilla, a dove is shown bringing an olive branch, the pledge of victory and peace.

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Fig. 78.—The Three Hebrew Children.

In Fig. 78, from the cemetery of Hermes, they are shown as standing in a “burning fiery furnace,” whose flames, though heated seven times hotter than their wont, play lambently around them without even singeing their garments.

In the following example from the Catacomb of St. Agnes the furnace is reduced to a shallow vessel in which the Hebrews stand unhurt. This has been incorrectly interpreted as a representation of martyrdom by boiling in oil. Its association, however, with the figure of Daniel in the lions’ den, and its general resemblance to other groups of the same subject, unquestionably indicate its true character.

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Fig. 79.—The Three Hebrew Children.

In all these the expression of countenance and attitude of the immortal three—more dauntless than even the brave Horatii of classic story—as they stand calmly amid the flames, indicates the presence with them in their fiery trial of the Almighty Deliverer of his saints. It is noteworthy, however, that the fourth figure, “like the Son of God,” is never shown in these groups. It was reserved, as will be hereafter seen, for mediæval art to attempt the representation of the Divine.

The faith and heroism of many of the primitive Christians in refusing to burn incense on the heathen altars, or to salute the statues of the Cæsars, was no unworthy imitation of the fidelity of these Hebrew youths in refusing to worship the great golden image set up on the plains of Dura.

Daniel in the den is generally represented by a nude figure standing between two lions, with his hands stretched out as if in supplication, and thereby, says St. Gregory, conquering the lions by prayer. While, generally, the type of the deliverance of God’s people, it may sometimes by association have been a memorial of the Christian martyrs devoured by wild beasts in the neighbouring Coliseum, whose sands were so often drenched with their gore. The following fresco from the Catacomb of St. Priscilla is a characteristic example. See Fig. 80.

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Sometimes another figure, interpreted as “the prophet Habaccuc,” is depicted as borne by an angel by the hair of the head and offering food to Daniel, as described in the apocryphal story of Bel and the Dragon. Another fresco represents Daniel as giving to the monster the cake which he had prepared for its destruction. The story of Tobias and the fish, and of Susanna and the elders, are also illustrated in this remarkable series of paintings. These last are of interest as indicating a familiar acquaintance with the apocryphal books in the early centuries. Figures interpreted as Isaiah, who seems, like the Magi, to come from afar to lay his gifts at the feet of Christ, and as Ezekiel in the valley of dry bones, also occur in the Catacombs.

Fig. 80.—Daniel in the Lions' Den.

One of the most common, and, if we may judge from the style of execution, one of the favourite subjects of mural and sarcophagal presentation in this biblical cycle, is the history of Jonah. It is repeated over and over again with a high degree of picturesqueness, and with greater variety of treatment than, perhaps, any other. It appears also on lamps, vases, medals, gilt glasses, and funeral slabs. The story is generally represented in a series of four [Pg 300] scenes: the storm, and the monster of the deep swallowing the prophet; his deliverance from its horrid jaws, and restoration to land; his reclining under the shadow of the gourd for refreshment and rest; and his gloom and anger when the gourd has withered away and he lies in his misery beneath the burning sun. Sometimes the four scenes occupy the four walls of the *cubiculum*, or the compartments of a vaulted ceiling; or only two may be exhibited, as in the engraving on the opposite page, from the cemetery of St. Priscilla, in which Jonah is portrayed as a child issuing from the mouth of the sea-monster, and afterward reclining under the booth.

Sometimes the whole history is compressed into one crowded scene, as in the following example. (Fig. 81.) The character of the little bark is much like that seen in pagan frescoes.

Fig. 81.—The History of Jonah.

[Pg 301]

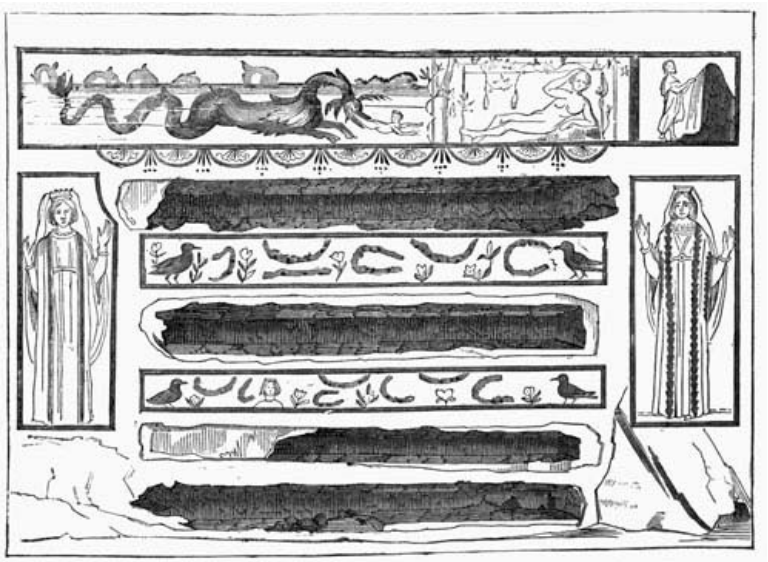

Fig. 82.—Jonah, Moses, and Oranti.

In some instances the “ship” is reduced to a mere boat, and the “mariners” to a single individual, as in Fig. 83, from the cemetery of St. Priscilla. [Pg 302]

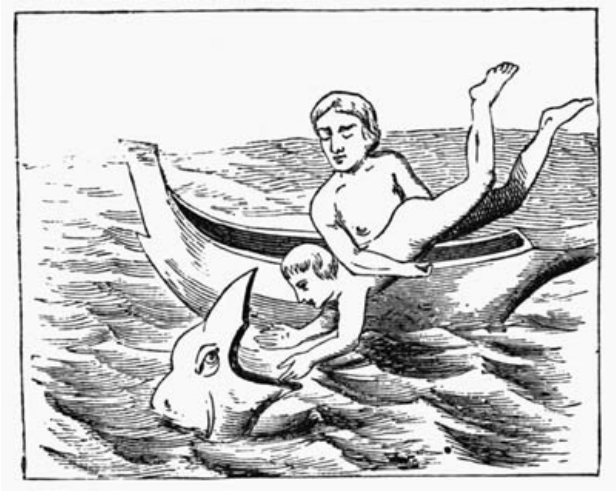

Fig. 83.—Jonah Swallowed by the “Great Fish.”

In the following sarcophagal example, (Fig. 84,) the somewhat startling anachronism of Noah receiving the dove from the prow of Jonah’s vessel appears in the background. The “sea” is here a narrow stream; and the “fish,” a monster with the head and paws of a quadruped, on one side of the boat is swallowing the disobedient prophet, and on the other is casting him forth upon the rocky shores. Such solecisms are by no means uncommon in these groups. [Pg 303]

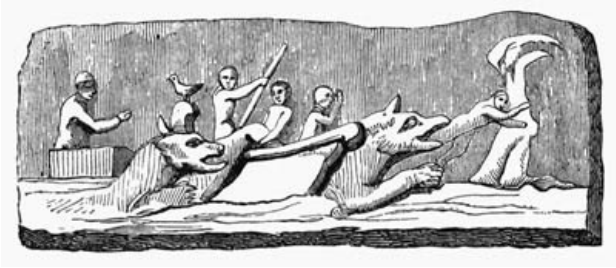

Fig. 84.—Noah and Jonah.

On another sarcophagus in the Lateran Museum the influence of pagan thought may be observed. The storm is personified by a triton blowing through a convoluted shell, and Iris, hovering with floating scarf above the vessel, indicates the calm which followed the casting out of the prophet.

The “great fish” in these scenes bears no resemblance to any living thing. It is generally a monster with contorted body, a long neck and large head, sometimes armed with horns, (see Figs. 81, 82,) probably to distinguish it from the symbolical fish, the emblem of Our Lord, or as a type of “the old serpent, the devil.” The form may have been derived from the mythological representations of the marine monster from whose jaws Andromeda was

rescued by Perseus. The latter story, like that of Deucalion and many others in the Greek mythology, probably had its origin in holy scripture.

This subject was naturally dear to the early Christians, inasmuch as it was set forth by Our Lord himself as a type of his own resurrection and that of his disciples. Therefore as the persecuted believers met in those solemn and silent chambers of the dead, they inscribed on the sepulchral slabs which hid the mouldering dust of the departed from their view, or on the walls of the *cubicula* in which they worshipped, this symbol of faith and hope in the glorious resurrection. It also conveyed a lesson of sublimest meaning to the primitive Christians, called to be witnesses for God in a city greater and more wicked and idolatrous than even Nineveh. It was a potent incentive to fidelity even unto death. The storm-tossed bark, the ravening monster, and the prophet's booth and gourd, were the types of life's rough voyage, the yawning grave, and the speedy transit to the bowers of everlasting bliss and the refreshing fruits of the tree of life. [Pg 304]

A long and acrimonious controversy was waged between Jerome and Augustine as to the nature of the plant which overshadowed the prophet. Jerome called it ivy; but Augustine retained the word gourd of the older Italic version, and excluded from his diocese of Hippo the Vulgate version of Jerome containing the obnoxious translation. It is a curious commentary on an ancient dispute in the church, and a proof of the antiquity of the Catacombs, that their frescoes seem to have followed the older version, and to have given their testimony against the *innovation* of Jerome. See Fig. 85, a copy of a broken sepulchral slab, in which the prophet's booth is reduced to a single branch of a gourd.

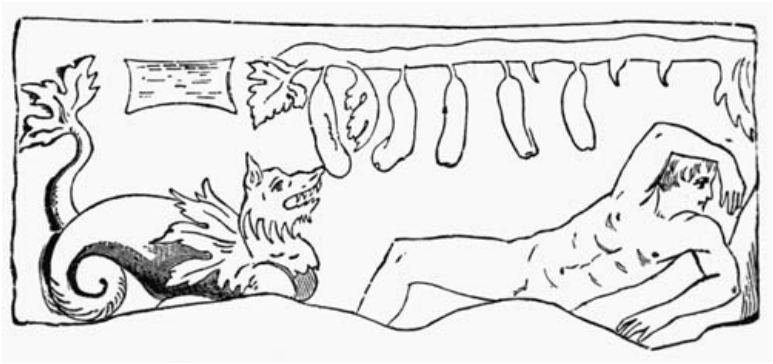

Fig. 85.—Jonah's Gourd.

Here ends this Old Testament cycle, so rich in holy teaching, all whose types and symbols point to the great Antitype of whom Moses and the prophets spake. The New Testament series will in like manner be found to cluster around the person and work of the Redeemer; to the exclusion, however, of the solemn scenes of the transfiguration, the passion, resurrection, and ascension, which are the principal themes of later religious art; and without the slightest indication of that idolatrous veneration of Mary which is the chief feature of modern Romanism, thus showing how far that church has departed from the usage of apostolic times. [Pg 305]

The first subject of this New Testament cycle is the manifestation of Our Lord to the Magi by the star in the east, the sign that the Bright and Morning Star had risen upon the world.[491] Over twenty repetitions of this scene are found in the Catacombs.

The following sarcophagal example, from the Catacomb of Callixtus, represents the Magi bearing their gifts, and led by the star to the place where the young child lay. The babe is seen wrapped in swaddling-clothes and lying in a manger. An ox and an ass stand near the divine child, probably in fanciful allusion to that scripture, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib;" as well as in historical illustration of the scene. Joseph and Mary appear in the background as mere accessories of the group. [Pg 306]

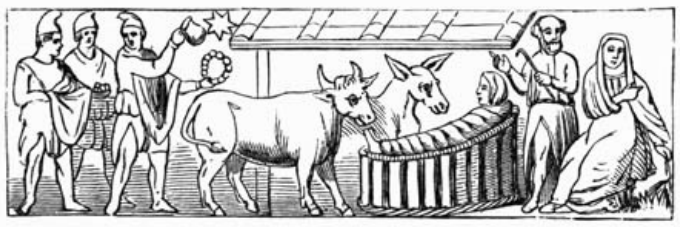

Fig. 86.—The Adoration of the Magi.

In the accompanying engraving of a fresco in the cemetery of St. Marcellinus the virgin mother is represented as seated in the calm attitude and dress of a Roman matron, holding the infant Christ in her arms, but not in the least suggesting the modern Madonna.[492] The Magi bring their offerings as the first-fruits of the homage of the world. Sometimes the number is increased to four or reduced to two, in

Fig. 87.—Adoration of the Magi.

which case they are arranged on either side of the Virgin, to preserve the balance and symmetry of the picture.[493] The figure of Joseph sometimes completes the group, but generally as a young and beardless man, in contradiction to the Romish tradition of his old age, derived from the apocryphal gospels. These legends supply the theme of much of the religious art of the fifth and following centuries; but Dr. Northcote admits that "before that time Christian artists seem strictly to have been kept within the limits of the canonical books of the holy scripture."[494]

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A fresco in the Catacomb of Nereus and Achilles, attributed to the second century, is supposed to be the oldest extant art-presentation of the Virgin Mary. In these early pictures she is generally exhibited as veiled, and expressing dignity and modesty in her attitude and dress, and only in her historical relation to the divine child. Not till later does she appear alone, or even as the principal figure. Dr. Northcote, indeed, cites one example apparently of Joseph,[495] Mary, and the infant Jesus, concerning which he says that the Virgin does not enter into the composition as a secondary personage, but herself supplies the motive to the whole painting.[496] In the engraving which he gives, this indeed appears to be the case; but in the original, and in the copy given by De Rossi,[497] which shows the entire painting, the figure of the Virgin is only a very small and subordinate portion of an elaborate decorative design, and its position is not upright, as if it were the principal object, but horizontal, as being only accessory to the main grouping. All these early presentations of the Virgin Mary, says Mr. Marriott,[498] occur only in such connexion as is directly suggested by holy scripture, and none of them would appear out of place in an illustrated English Bible, so different are they from the Madonnas of Roman Catholic art.

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There are numerous frescoes in the Catacombs of persons, both male and female, in the attitude of prayer, hence called *Oranti*, (see Fig. 82,) and the accompanying simpler example from the cemetery of Sts. Peter and Marcellinus. These are frequently found on sepulchral slabs, the sex and apparent age of the *Orante* always corresponding with that of the person named in the inscription. They are generally regarded, therefore, as portraits of the departed, and as probably indicating that they lived a life of prayer, and died in the faith. Thus the *oranti*, in Fig. 82, are thought by Perret to be intended for Priscilla, in whose cemetery it is found, and her companion.[499] It is at least most likely that they represented the deceased and not another, in the same manner as modern sepulchral effigies, and as the pictures of fossors, vine-dressers, and handicraftsmen in the Catacombs. Dr. Northcote at one time admitted this explanation of these figures. "We can scarcely err," he says, "in supposing them to be the persons, whoever they were, who were buried in these chambers."[500] But in his later work on the Catacombs he says, "Possibly this conjecture may sometimes be correct, but in the majority of instances we feel certain that it is inadmissible;"[501] and he claims them as representations of the Virgin Mary, or as symbols of the Church, the Bride of Christ, whose life on earth is a life of prayer. This is manifestly the intention, he asserts, when, as is frequently the case, the figure is found as a companion to that of the Good Shepherd; and he gives an engraving from Bosio of one such, which is catalogued as the "Good Shepherd and the Blessed Virgin."[502] But in referring to Bosio this figure is found to be not the Virgin Mary at all, but a Christian martyr, as is indicated by the attribute of a *plumbata*, or leaden scourge, painted beside her, which is omitted in Dr. Northcote's engraving, (inadvertently, as he explains;) and she is designated by Bosio, *Una Donna Orante*—a woman in the act of prayer. And this figure is the only one out of all figured by Bosio and Aringhi which at all agrees with Dr. Northcote's description. The others when associated with the Good Shepherd are either in groups of two or more, or are mixed with male *oranti*, the existence of which Dr. Northcote seems to ignore.

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Fig. 88.—Orante.

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But even if the Virgin Mary were referred to in these paintings it would prove nothing in favour of modern Mariolatry. Indeed, nothing could be more striking than the contrast between these simple praying figures, undistinguished by any attribute from others of the pious dead, and the crowned Queen of Heaven receiving the homage of mankind, of later Roman Catholic art. But that they are such is an entirely gratuitous and unwarranted assumption; and with equal propriety, or rather lack of it, they have been interpreted by the monkish ciceroni of the Catacombs as symbols of martyrdom, as portraits of living persons praying to the dead, and as saints in heaven praying for men on earth.[503]

In the gilded glasses, to be hereafter described, which belong to a period of very degraded art, probably from the fourth to the sixth century, representations of the Virgin mother sometimes occur, recognized by her name written above her head after the Byzantine manner. She appears either alone, or between figures of the apostles Peter and Paul. This honour, however, is shared by other female saints, especially by Saint Agnes. In one example Mary wears a nimbus, a proof of comparatively late date.

One fresco in the Catacomb of Sts. Thraso and Saturninus has been supposed to have some reference to the Virgin Mary. It is figured in the lunette of the vault in the accompanying engraving. (Fig. 89.)[504] It is interpreted, however, by Bottari, a distinguished Romanist antiquary, as not a painting of the Madonna at all, but simply of a family group.

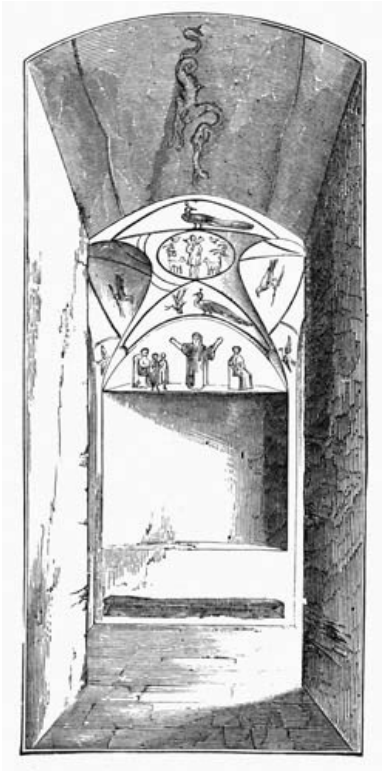

Fig. 89.—Supposed Madonna.

Fig. 90.—The Earliest Madonna.

The first art-presentation of the Virgin Mary bearing any resemblance to the conventional Madonna, which has been so endlessly reproduced and so idolatrously honoured throughout Roman Catholic Christendom, is one in an *arcosolium* in the Catacomb of St. Agnes. (See Fig. 90.) The head of the Virgin is veiled, a necklace of pearls adorns her person, and her hands are extended in prayer. The infant Christ is not seated, but standing before her, as is common in a favourite type of the Greek church, especially in Russia—an indication that this was probably painted by a Byzantine artist, as was most of the later work at Rome. But even in this picture the early Christians, unprescient of the Mariolatry of the future, would see the expression only of a loving regard for her who was pronounced the “blessed among women.” The sacred monogram on either side assigns a date not earlier than the fourth century to this painting; and Martigny, an eminent Romanist authority, thinks it is later than the Council of Ephesus, in the fifth century,—A. D. 431.

By this time a sad departure from primitive orthodoxy of belief had already taken place. The blasphemous title Theotokos, Mother of God, since so unhappily familiar,[505] had been applied to the Virgin Mary, at first in protest against the Arian heresy which denied the divinity of Our Lord, and not in exaltation of his virgin mother. Nestorius strongly objected to the unwarranted and antiscriptural title, and suggested that of the mother of Christ. An angry controversy resulted, to appease which Theodosius the younger assembled the Council of Ephesus. Nestorius was judged without being heard, degraded from the episcopal dignity, and sent into exile; and the obnoxious epithet was confirmed through the exercise of fraud and violence. Flavianus, a member of the Council, actually died of wounds received in that turbulent assembly; and amid these disgraceful scenes was first formulated this dogma, which has been fraught with such perilous consequences to both Greek and Latin Christianity.

The artistic embodiment of this doctrine underwent a rapid decline. The sweet and tender grace of the virgin mother disappears, the modest veil gives place to a crown, she becomes vulgarized in expression, jewels bedizen her person, the attitude becomes stiff and lifeless, the countenance darkens and assumes an expression of pain rather than that of gentleness and peace, and the innocent smile of the Divine Infant gives place to an unnatural severity and gloom. The beginning of this decline is seen in the Madonna already described, (Fig. 90), in which the person of Mary is adorned with a showy necklace of jewels. This type passes by rapid gradations, during the gathering gloom of the dark ages, into the anguished pictures of the *Mater Dolorosa*, bowed down with sevenfold sorrows, and the gross images of Our Lady of the Bleeding Heart, her bosom transpierced with a naked sword.[506] But even in this is seen the striking moral contrast between the spirit of Christian and that of pagan art. The loftiest ideal of the latter is the expression of mere corporeal beauty, while the former exhibits the noblest type of purity, sorrow, and love the world has ever seen. With the Renaissance this ideal became the inspiration of art, and gave birth to those triumphs of genius which kindle admiration in the coldest nature, and invest with a spell of pathos and power a dogma which the judgment rejects.

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The silence of the primitive Fathers concerning the worship of Mary is a striking evidence of its non-existence, and their language when they do speak of her still more strongly demonstrates that fact. Tertullian seems to infer her lack of faith in the mission of Our Lord, and compares her unfavourably with Martha and Mary.[507] Prudentius refuses to ascribe to her absolute sinlessness.[508] Augustine asserts the natural depravity of her flesh.[509] Chrysostom boldly accuses her of ambition and thoughtlessness,[510] and says, “She shall have no benefit from being the mother of Christ unless in all things she doeth what is right.”[511] Cyril of Alexandria, Basil of Cæsarea, and Hilary of Poitiers, speak in similar unequivocal terms, which Petavius, the Roman theologian, says are not fit to be uttered.[512] The Collyridian heretics, indeed, rendered idolatrous homage to Mary;[513] but Epiphanius vehemently denounces the practice as blasphemous and dangerous to the soul. “Let Mary be held in honour,” he says, “but let her not be worshipped.”[514] Irenæus first points out the fanciful antithesis between Mary and Eve, which was afterward so remarkably elaborated in Roman thought and diction.[515] Ephraem Syrus and Gregory Nazianzen, indeed, speak of her invocation in prayer, but this was an honour already bestowed on numerous other saints. The heathen writers, moreover, who accused the Christians of worshipping a mere man, as they considered Christ, would surely have brought a similar accusation on account of the worship of Mary if it were known; but we nowhere find that this was done. Indeed, it is probable that the contumely and opprobrium with which the heathen spoke of the mother of Our Lord may have intensified into superstitious veneration the loving reverence with which she was regarded in the primitive ages. Tertullian quotes the blasphemous pagan epithet, “the harlot’s son,” applied to Christ in allusion to his miraculous birth.[516] It has been reserved for a gifted modern poet, as pagan and skeptical in sentiment as Lucretius, to parallel, or even surpass, this revolting impiety.[517]

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The testimony of the early Christian inscriptions is not less strikingly opposed to the modern Mariolatry of the church of Rome. “In the Lapidarian Gallery,” says Maitland, “the name of the Virgin Mary does not once occur. Nor is it to be found in any truly ancient inscription contained in the works of Aringhi, Boldetti, or Bottari.”[518] No *Ave Maria* or *Ora pro nobis*, no *Theotokos* or *Mater Dei*, occurs in any of the subterranean crypts or corridors of the Catacombs. Even the name Maria, now so commonly applied in varying forms to both males and females throughout Roman Catholic countries, does not occur till the year 381, and only twice afterward, in 536 and 538—an evidence of the entire absence of that devotional regard now lavished upon the Virgin Mary.[519]

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This religious homage was only gradually developed to its present full-blown idolatry. Its traces in early Christian art are extremely infrequent and obscure. In the numerous mosaics of the fifth and sixth century at Rome and Ravenna, the figure of Mary very rarely occurs, and never but as accessory to the Divine Child in the Nativity or Adoration of the Magi. In these there was no attempt at literal portraiture, but only the expression of the virtues that adorned her character; “that,” as Ambrose expresses it, “the face might be the image of her mind, the model of uprightness.”[520] Indeed, Augustine expressly asserts that we are ignorant of her appearance.[521]

During the seventh century, along with a progressive barbarism of treatment may be observed a gradual exaltation of Mary in the Roman mosaics to those places previously devoted to the image of Christ.[522] In the eighth century, according to D’Agincourt, “the homage paid to her was no longer distinguished from that rendered to the Lord of all;”[523] and the Council of Constantinople decreed, “that whoever would not avail himself of the intercession of Mary should be accursed.”[524] In extant pictures of the ninth century she is exhibited in bejewelled purple robes as the crowned Queen of Heaven, receiving the homage of the four and twenty elders and of the celestial hosts.[525] In this century also the legend of her bodily assumption to the skies, which has since become such a prominent theme in Roman Catholic art and doctrine, is first represented in the crypts of St. Clement’s at Rome.[526]

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In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the apotheosis of Mary is complete. In a fresco at Rome, of date 1154 A. D., Popes Callixtus II. and Anastasius IV. are shown embracing her feet in adoration, and transferring to the human mother the homage due alone to the Divine

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Son. She is now worshipped co-ordinately with Christ, or, indeed, almost to his exclusion, her name being substituted for his in many of the collects of the church. Much of the language of Scripture was also blasphemously perverted from its proper application to her. The glowing images of the Song of Songs, addressed to the church as the spouse of Christ, were also applied to Mary as her right; and one of Rome's most common and popular books of devotion of this period, the psalter of her "Seraphic Doctor," St. Bonaventura, has a shocking parody on the book of Psalms, in which the name of God was every-where expunged and that of Mary substituted instead.[527] The *Ave Maria*, with its human additions, was regarded as of equal importance and value with the Lord's Prayer, and was made the basis of the vain repetitions of the rosary. Mary now shares the government of heaven and earth, "raised higher than cherubim and seraphim,"[528] throned in glory, sitting on a rainbow, enveloped in an aureole, clothed with the sun, the moon beneath her feet, a crown of stars upon her head,[529] and radiating from her person beams of light, the proper attribute of deity.[530] She is frequently represented, even in heaven, with the infant Christ in her arms, a mere accessory to indicate her personality, as if to show his relative inferiority. [531] She becomes, too, herself the object of prayer, having a special litany and numerous offices in the liturgy of the church; while her praises are chanted in some of its noblest lyrics. She is addressed as the gate of heaven,[532] the morning star,[533] and the refuge of sinners;[534] and is exhorted to succor the wretched,[535] protect from enemies, receive in the hour of death,[536] and intercede with God for men.[537] She is endowed with the faculty of omniscience and ubiquity, and is made almost to thrust the Eternal from his throne by her usurpation of his divine prerogatives.[538]

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But this impious blasphemy seems to have culminated in the Italian frescoes of the fifteenth century, in which the infamous Giulia Farnese is exhibited in the character of the Madonna, and Pope Alexander VI., the execrable Borgia, kneeling as a votary at her feet. The Florentine churches, too, were desecrated by portraits of well-known harlots, flaunting their meretricious beauty as the personations of the mother of Our Lord. For his denunciation of these profanations and of other impieties Savonarola perished at the stake.[539]

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The rapid development of Mariolatry, the great corruption of Christianity, as Hallam has justly called it, may to some extent be regarded as a reaction against the harsh and austere character which was given to Our Lord both in art and dogma. He was enthroned in awful majesty as the dreadful Judge of mankind. Removed from human sympathy, inspiring only terror to the soul, he was no longer Christ the Consoler, but Christ the Avenger.[540] Religion was darkened by dismal bodings of endless doom, and embittered by the fierceness of polemic strife; and the moral atmosphere seemed lurid with the hurtling anathemas of rival sects. To the yearning hearts of mankind; to the multitude of the weary and the heavy laden, to whom the Saviour's voice, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest," was inaudible amid the conflicts of the times; and especially to those bowed down with a sense of sin and sorrow, and trembling at the thought of the severe, inexorable Judge, the gentle gospel of Mary came with a sweet and winning grace that found its way into their inmost souls. All images of tenderness and ruth surrounded her. The blending

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> Of mother's love with maiden purity[541]

touched the hidden springs of feeling which exist in the rudest natures, and made the worship of Mary a religion of hope and consolation. She became the new Mediatrix between the sinful human soul and the Father in heaven. Those who shrank from God fled for succour to the virgin mother. The pitifulness of her human nature was esteemed a stronger ground of confidence than that infinite compassion and everlasting love which was manifested in the agony and bloody sweat of Gethsemane and the cross and passion of Calvary. Hence Mary has often been regarded as a sort of tutelar divinity by the ferocious brigand who stained with blood the scapular which he wore as a sacred talisman; and by the daughter of shame who, in strange blending profligacy and devotion, cherished her image in the very lair of vice.

But, as there is a soul of goodness in things evil, so even the antiscriptural perversions of Mariolatry were not without some moral benefit to mankind. In a coarse, rude age a new ideal of excellence was developed. A morose asceticism was spreading on every side, denouncing the sweet and gentle charities of hearth and home, and forbidding the love of wife and child to those who would attain to the heights of holiness. Woman was degraded as a being of inferior nature, regarded as "a necessary evil," and forbidden, as unworthy, to touch with her hand the sacred emblems of the passion of Christ. But this cultus of Mary raised woman to a loftier plane of being, invested her with a moral dignity and power infinitely superior to any thing known to pagan times, and called forth a deeper reverence and more chivalrous regard.

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> This example of all womanhood,
> So mild, so merciful, so strong, so good,
> So patient, peaceful, loyal, loving, pure,[542]

ennobled and dignified the entire sex, and therefore raised and purified the whole of society. The worship of sorrow softened savage natures to more human gentleness, and ameliorated the horrors of long dark centuries of cruelty and blood.

We have dwelt thus long on this development of Romanism on account of the remarkable prominence and enhanced dignity it has received by the bull of the Immaculate Conception,

issued on the individual authority of the present pontiff,[543] and by the decree of his personal infallibility imposed on all Roman Catholic Christendom. We have seen how alien it is to the entire spirit and teachings, both in art and literature, of the primitive church, and have traced its growth with the decline of Christianity, like a fungus on a dying tree, till it has sapped its very life, and concealed its early beauty and strength beneath deformity and decay.

The other groups of the New Testament cycle are chiefly scenes in the life of Our Lord, [Pg 324] together with representations of some of his principal miracles and two or three illustrations of the parables. This series, it must be confessed, is of exceedingly meagre character and limited range, being remarkable as much for what it omits as for what it contains. Out of the vast number of subjects which have been treated in later religious art, a comparatively few have been selected, which are over and over repeated with unvarying iteration of type.

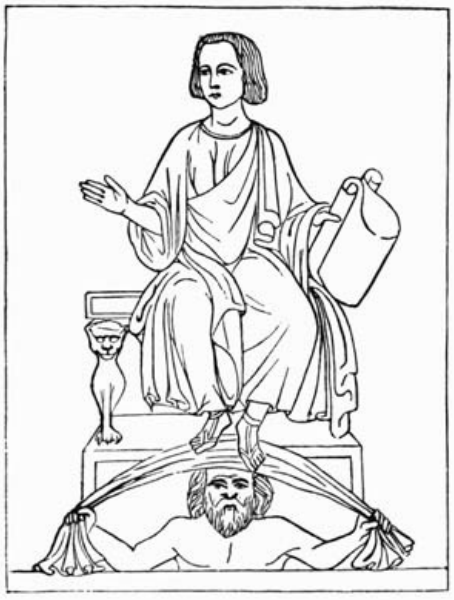

Fig. 91.—Christ with the Doctors.

The accompanying bas relief, from the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, (A. D. 359,) is probably intended for Christ "sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions."[544] He is here shown seated on a curule chair, wearing a Roman toga, and holding a half open scroll in his hand. His feet rest on a scarf held by an allegorical figure, probably a personification of the earth—a conception borrowed from Pagan art.

Frescoes of the baptism of Our Lord occasionally occur;[545] but the scenes of the temptation, the [Pg 325] subject of such grotesque treatment in mediæval art, nowhere appear in the Catacombs.

On a sarcophagus in the Lateran Museum is an illustration of Our Lord's first miracle at Cana of Galilee, in which he is touching the water-pots with his rod of power and turning the water into wine.

Christ talking with the woman of Samaria at the well of Sychar is a subject that is frequently repeated in fresco and relief. In the accompanying example from a sarcophagus in the Lateran, a windlass of primitive construction, like those still common in the Campagna, is shown.

Fig. 92.—Christ and the Woman of Samaria.

The healing of the paralytic has been regarded as a type of the restoration of the soul paralyzed by sin. Ingenious Romanists have discovered herein a symbol of "the Sacrament of Penance," and also of "Baptism and the Remission of Sins." In the frescoes of the Catacombs the man is represented in the act of obeying the command, "Take up thy bed and walk." Sometimes the bed is a mere reticulated frame-work. It is also shown as in the foregoing example from the Catacomb of Callixtus. See Fig. 93. [Pg 326]

Our Lord healing the infirmity of the woman with the issue of blood, who drew nigh and touched the hem of his garment, is a frequent subject of both sarcophagal and mural presentation. In the accompanying example from a bas relief of the fourth century the Saviour is apparently uttering the words, "Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath

Fig. 93.—The Healing of the

Fig. 94.—Christ Healing the Woman with the Issue of Blood.

Paralytic.

made thee whole." In the background is seen, in confused perspective, a Christian basilica of the period, with its semicircular *absis* and detached baptistery. The doors are hung with heavy curtains to exclude the noontide heat, as is still common in Italian churches.[546]

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The miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes is a theme of frequent treatment in early Christian painting and sculpture, and was regarded in the writings of the Fathers as a eucharistic type of Him who, as the true Bread from heaven, gave his body to be broken for the life of the world. Sometimes, as on a sarcophagus in the Lateran, Our Lord stands between two disciples blessing with either hand the food which they hold. Occasionally, as in the foregoing fresco from the cemetery of St. Priscilla, the scene is represented by a group of disciples kneeling on the ground as if they had just received the food so marvellously multiplied. At their feet are seen the loaves and fishes, and in the foreground stand the seven baskets full of fragments that remained.

Fig. 95.—The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes.

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The miracle of opening the eyes of the blind, which was at once a fulfillment of the ancient prophecies concerning the Messiah and a type of that moral illumination which he should impart, appropriately found a place on the tombs of those who had been called from darkness into God's marvellous light. The preceding example is from the Catacomb of Callixtus.

Fig. 96.—Christ Opening the Eyes of the Blind.

Figure 97.—Our Lord blessing a little Child.

Our Lord laying his hand in blessing on the head of a little child, or probably teaching humility and rebuking the ambition of his disciples by setting a child in their midst, is a frequently recurring subject in this primitive cycle. It was a lesson which the early Christians of Rome had often to learn: that he that would be greatest among them must be the servant of all; that exaltation of office was only pre-eminence of danger and of toil. The example above given is from the Catacomb of Callixtus.

A bas relief in the Kircherian Museum, of the parable of the sower and the seed, appropriately symbolized the sowing in the furrows of society of the good seed of the kingdom, from which should spring a harvest of righteousness. The frequent representations of fishing scenes may refer to the occupation of several of the first disciples of Our Lord, or to their spiritual vocation as fishers of men. In these, however, Roman Catholic writers have fancied an allusion to the sacrament of baptism. We have already seen in the ever-recurring figure of the Good Shepherd an illustration of the beautiful parable of the lost sheep, and a most appropriate symbol of the Shepherd and Bishop of all souls. In the Catacomb of St. Agnes is a fresco of the five wise virgins of the parable going forth to meet the bridegroom, and it is so designated by Bosio.[547] Each of the virgins bears in her hand the vessel of oil to replenish her lamp; the foremost holds a torch or candle of wax, anciently much used in Roman marriage processions,[548] as it still is; while the others bear branches of palm in token of festivity. A distinguished Roman theologian has, however, with perverted ingenuity, discovered in the vessels of oil the modern ecclesiastical *situlæ*, or holy-water vases, and in the radiant torch of the foremost figure the tufted aspergillum with which the holy water is sprinkled.[549]

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The story of Lazarus, as we may easily conceive, was an especial favourite of the early Christian artists. It spoke to the deepest feelings, and inspired the loftiest hopes of the primitive believers. Rescued from the darkness and despair of paganism as to the future state of the soul, they grasped with intensest fervour the glorious doctrine of its immortal existence and of the resurrection of the body. Amid the gloom of the Catacombs, and surrounded by the silent congregation of the dead, they heard with joy the thrilling words, "I am the Resurrection and the Life," and laid their loved ones to their rest, not with everlasting farewells and passionate complainings at the gods, but exulting in the hope of a

blessed immortality. Therefore they engraved on the funeral slab, or painted on the tomb, this record of Christ's triumph over death, as a symbol of that hope which kept their hearts strong in life's trial hour. These representations are of every degree of artistic merit, from the rudely scratched and scarcely intelligible outline, to the elaborately sculptured bas relief on the costly sarcophagus. Of the former the annexed is perhaps the simplest example to be found. It is of date A. D. 400. [Pg 330]

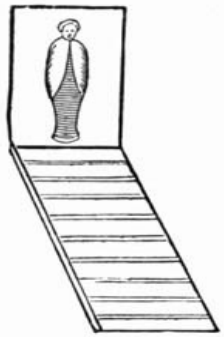

Fig. 98.—Lazarus.

Lazarus is generally exhibited as a mummy-like figure, "bound hand and foot with grave-clothes," standing in a temple-shaped tomb or *ædicula*, like those which line the Appian Way. This figure Our Lord, the Prince of Life, is touching with the rod of his power, as shown in the accompanying fresco from the Catacomb of Sts. Peter and Marcellinus.

The figure of Mary, frequently of very diminutive size, setting all proportion at defiance, is often depicted as crouching at the feet of Jesus, and sometimes as kissing his hand in gratitude for restoring her brother to life. Sometimes, also, Martha is seen standing by the tomb, and the disciples standing around Jesus. The following engraving, from a sarcophagus in the Lateran, is a characteristic example of the ordinary type.

A much less frequent subject of art-presentation was Mary Magdalene holding in her hands the "alabaster box of very precious ointment," wherewith she anointed Our Lord. [Pg 331]

Fig. 99.—The Raising of Lazarus.

Fig. 100.—Raising of Lazarus.[550]

Fig. 101.—Christ's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem.

Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, the presage and symbol of his final victory in the world and entrance as the King of Glory into the New Jerusalem on high, occurs with great frequency and considerable variety of treatment. Although dissociated from this scene in the

gospel narrative, Zacchæus is almost invariably connected therewith in this primitive art, and generally appears mounted in a a tree gazing at the procession. At times the scene is reduced to its simplest elements; at others, as in Fig. 101, from a sarcophagus in the Lateran, it is more elaborately treated, exhibiting the multitudes spreading their garments, and strewing branches of palm before the meek conqueror. [Pg 332]

Peter's denial of his Master is a theme that is frequently repeated. The cock, whose crowing awoke the disciple's late remorse, without which it would sometimes be impossible to discriminate the scene, is generally shown, as in the following sarcophagal example from the Lateran Museum.

Fig. 102.—Peter's Denial of Christ.

As we have already remarked, the tragic scenes of the passion of Our Lord find no place in this primitive cycle. These were felt to be subjects for devout meditation rather than for pictorial treatment. The early Christians preferred to contemplate Christ rather as the victor over death and hell, than as the victim of suffering and shame. "The agony, the crown of thorns, the nails, the spear," says a distinguished critic of this primitive art,[551] "seem all forgotten in the fullness of joy brought by his resurrection. This is the theme, Christ's resurrection, and that of the church in his person, on which, in their peculiar language, the artists of the Catacombs seem never weary of expatiating; death swallowed up in victory, and the victor crowned with the amaranth wreath of immortality, is a vision ever before their eyes, with a vividness of anticipation which we, who have been born to this belief, can but feebly realize." [Pg 333]

Fig. 103.—Pilate on the Judgment Seat Washing his Hands.

The only scenes connected with the passion, besides that of the denial, already given, are those which occurred in the judgment-hall of Pilate, and a unique example of Simon bearing the cross. One scene in particular seems to have been selected rather as a testimony of Christ's innocence than of his sufferings. It is that in which Pilate declares, "I have found no fault in this man;" and calling for water washes his hands, as if to blot out the damning guilt of that judicial murder. In the accompanying engraving, from a mutilated bas-relief in the Lateran Museum, this scene is exhibited. In the original the face of the irresolute governor seems to express compunction at this perversion of justice to which he is yielding. In the background is seen the profile of his wife, as though uttering her solemn admonition against the impending crime. The servant with the ewer and empty basin appears in conformity with the oriental ablutionary custom of pouring water upon the hands. [Pg 334]

In the last compartment to the right of the remarkable sarcophagus in the Lateran, represented in Fig. 104, this scene is repeated. Associated therewith in the next adjoining compartment are two figures interpreted as Christ, guarded by a Roman soldier, witnessing a good confession before Pontius Pilate. The crown above the head of the latter, if not a mere architectural decoration, may indicate the reward of those who confess Christ before men.

Fig. 104.—Sarcophagus in the Lateran Museum.

This sarcophagus exhibits, as Dr. Northcote admits, “the nearest resemblance to the later representations of Our Saviour’s Passion to be found in early Christian art.”[552] The Constantinian monogram in the central compartment has been already described.[553] To the left is seen the figure of Christ crowned, not with thorns, but, as if symbolizing his crown of rejoicing on high, with a garland of flowers. The last compartment exhibits Our Lord, or, more probably, Simon the Cyrenian, bearing the cross under the guard of a Roman soldier. “But there are none of the traces of suffering,” says Dr. Northcote, “with which later artists have familiarized our imagination, and the crown above points to the reward for bearing the cross after our suffering Master.”[554] In one instance the Roman soldiers are shown smiting Our Lord on the head with a reed;[555] but no nearer approach to the consummation of the supreme sacrifice of Calvary is ever attempted.

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Neither are the august themes of Christ’s resurrection and ascension historically treated in this biblical cycle, but only under the Old Testament types of Jonah and Elijah. One group, hypothetically interpreted as the *Noli me tangere*, or Our Lord saying to Mary on the morning of the resurrection, “Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father,” more probably represents the gratitude of Mary for the resurrection of her brother Lazarus. Numerous frescoes of seven men eating a repast of bread and fish may refer to Our Lord’s appearing to his disciples on the sea-shore, or to the celebration of the Agape.

We find only one event subsequent to the ascension occasionally represented on the early Christian sarcophagi, namely, the apprehension of Peter,[556] which was probably regarded as a type of his being finally bound for his crucifixion. He is to be discriminated from Our Lord arrested by the Roman soldiers by his bearded face, and by the Jewish caps, which mark the satellites of Herod Agrippa. It is remarkable that so little reference is made to St. Peter in this early Christian sculpture, and that little indicating no degree of superiority over the other apostles; and the fact is inexplicable on the Roman theory of his primacy in the so-called Apostolic College. In the still earlier frescoes of the Catacombs he is nowhere especially designated by name or attribute. The only apostle distinguished from the rest of the twelve is St. Paul, who, in a fresco in the Catacomb of St. Priscilla, is seen side by side with the Good Shepherd, and indicated by the inscription—PAVLVS PASTOR APOSTOLVS.[557] Indeed, this was the especial title of St. Paul as being “in labors more abundant” than any of the apostles.[558] Even on the sarcophagi St. Peter is only once or twice exhibited as bearing the symbolical rod of power, and these examples may be of the fifth or sixth century. In certain of the gilt glasses already mentioned he is allegorically portrayed, instead of Moses, as smiting the rock, implying the opinion that he was in some sense the representative of the latter in the New Testament economy. But these glasses are of comparatively late date, when the notion of the primacy of St. Peter was already partially developed; and even in these St. Peter and St. Paul are often found side by side, without any sign of the superiority of the former.

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It is easy to discriminate in early Christian art between the two apostles so highly honoured at Rome[559] by the strongly marked conventional types to which their portraits almost invariably conform. St. Paul is characterized by the nobler form of face, a high, bold forehead, aquiline Jewish nose, dark hair and eyes, a flowing and pointed beard, and a refined and thoughtful expression of countenance as became one brought up at the feet of Gamaliel and instructed in all the wisdom of Greek philosopher and Hebrew sage. The Galilæan fisherman is represented with strongly-knit frame, broad rustic features, short gray hair, a thick and closely curling beard, generally of silvery white, and an expression of much force and energy of character.[560] It is probable that these types were derived from authentic tradition if not from actual portraits.[561] Eusebius, Augustine, and others of the Fathers, claim to have seen representations of these apostles preserved in painting; and the reputed portraits alleged to have been sent by Pope Sylvester to the Emperor Constantine are annually exhibited at St. Peter’s for the veneration of the faithful.[562]

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Nowhere in the Catacombs do we find the least support for the notion that St. Peter is in any sense the founder of the church in Rome, much less the rock on which the church universal is built. That honour is assigned in early Christian art, as it is by the apostle himself, to Jesus Christ, the “chief corner-stone, elect, precious.”[563]

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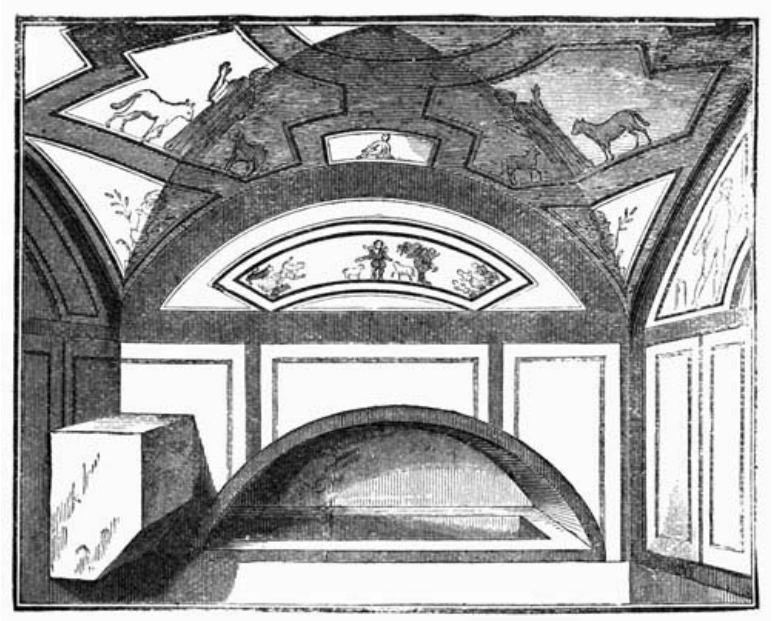

Fig. 105.—Painted Chamber in the Catacomb of St. Agnes.[564]

These biblical pictures, we may here remark, are not grouped indiscriminately, but are often arranged in a regular order having reference to their doctrinal signification. The walls and ceilings of the *cubicula* are frequently divided into compartments of geometrical design, as shown in the preceding engraving of a chamber in the Catacomb of St. Agnes. See also Figs. 82 and 89. [Pg 340]

Sometimes the paintings of a chamber are as closely related as the parts of a chapter in systematic theology. Thus on account of their common reference, as he conceives, to the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist, De Rossi designates as liturgical paintings certain pictures in the Catacomb of Callixtus.[565] An allegorizing spirit, however, will often discover a meaning in a fresco or relief altogether unthought of by the original artist. Thus Dr. Northcote interprets as personifications of the church or of the Virgin Mary, certain praying figures nowise differing from the ordinary *oranti*.

The sarcophagi are almost exclusively occupied with scenes from the biblical cycle, generally arranged in two rows in a continuous series, like the figures on the frieze of a Grecian temple. Frequently ten or twelve groups, embracing nearly forty figures, are found on the side of a sarcophagus. Sometimes the separate groups occupy a rhythmical arrangement of panel-like compartments, divided by columns of more or less ornamental character. (See Figs. 102, 103, and 104.) The busts of the deceased persons, man and wife, are often exhibited in bold relief in a concave recess in the centre, like the half of a bivalve shell. The table in the footnote on the following page exhibits the relative frequency of occurrence of the different subjects already described, as observed in fifty-five sarcophagi in the Lateran Museum by Mr. Burgon, and as shown in forty-eight examples copied by Bosio.[566] [Pg 341]

The massiveness of the sarcophagi would during the ages of persecution prevent their use even for the wealthy, as their preparation and conveyance from the city would involve an amount of publicity that would imperil the safety of the living. After the time of Constantine the increased riches and perfect immunity of the Christians permitted the adoption of this costly entombment. The sarcophagi were no longer hidden in the subterranean crypts, but were exposed to view in the vestibules of the stately basilicas erected above ground.[567]

Hence, Chrysostom speaks of Constantine being buried in the fisherman's porch,[568] and of emperors occupying the place of porters at the graves of the apostles. Numerous sarcophagi, however, have been found in the Catacombs, some even reputed to be of the first century. These were generally of simpler design, and adorned only with the series of doubly curving lines known as wave ornaments. They were frequently buried in the floor of the *cubicula*.[569] [Pg 342]

The reader, in examining the foregoing representations of the person of Our Lord,[570] must have been struck with their remarkably youthful and joyous character in this primitive cycle, as contrasted with the older aspect and more severe expression of the prevalent types of later art. This difference is indicative of a corresponding change of religious feeling, from the genial cheerfulness of the early centuries to the gloomy asceticism of the Middle Ages. In the art of the Catacombs Our Lord is represented, for the most part, in an ideal manner, and not in an historical sense; or, to use the language of Lord Lindsay, "as an abstraction, as the genius, so to speak, of Christianity."[571] He is almost invariably exhibited as a youthful, beardless figure, to signify—say the ancient writers—"the everlasting prime of eternity;" with, where any definite expression is attempted, a countenance of sweet and tender grace, full of mildness and benignity.

That there was in these primitive types no attempt at realistic portraiture is evident from the opinion of many of the early Fathers as to the personal appearance of Our Lord. This opinion was founded upon an erroneous interpretation of certain passages of Scripture, expressive of Christ's voluntary humiliation and abasement. Thus Justin Martyr speaks of his appearance as ignoble and uncomely.[572] Tertullian, with his usual vehemence, asserts Christ to have been devoid, not only of divine majesty, but even of human beauty,[573] to have lacked grace and dignity beyond all men.[574] "But however mean his aspect, however vulgar and dishonoured," he exclaims, "he shall be still *my* Christ whom I adore."[575] Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Basil agree in this opinion as to the outward appearance of Our Lord; and Cyril of Alexandria audaciously declares that he was the most ugly of the sons of men.[576]

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But a juster interpretation of Scripture, and a more worthy conception of the person of Christ, at length prevailed. The glowing imagery of the Song of Songs and of the prophetic Psalms was applied by several of the Fathers of the fourth century to the person, as well as to the character, of Our Lord. Jerome conjectures that there must have been something celestial in his countenance and look, or the apostles would not immediately have followed him;[577] and that the effulgence and majesty of the divinity within, which shone forth even in the human countenance, could not but attract at first sight all beholders.[578] Chrysostom and Gregory of Nyssa in the East adopted this nobler conception, as also did Ambrose and Augustine in the West. The latter exclaims, "He was beautiful on his mother's bosom, beautiful in the arms of his parents, beautiful upon the cross, and beautiful in the sepulchre;" although he admits that the countenance of Christ was entirely unknown, and was painted with innumerable diversities of expression.[579]

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There was therefore, as M. Rochette remarks,[580] and as Dr. Northcote admits,[581] no authentic portrait of Christ recognized by the early church; nor was any strictly uniform type adopted. Eusebius, indeed, mentions reputed portraits of Our Lord associated with those of St. Peter and St. Paul;[582] but they were apparently objects of mere local superstition, as was also the alleged statue of Christ at Cæsarea Philippi, in which he was supposed to be represented as healing the woman with the issue of blood.[583] The earliest acknowledged images of Christ were attributed to the Gnostic heretics, and were honoured with those of Homer, Pythagoras, Orpheus, and other heroes and sages by the eclectic philosophers of Rome.[584]

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The silence of early tradition, as well as of Scripture, concerning the outward form of the Saviour of mankind, seems providentially designed to turn the mind from a sensuous regard for his person to a spiritual apprehension of his saving grace. The spurious epistle of Publius Lentulus, an imaginary contemporary of Christ, which is of uncertain and probably late date, contains the first written portraiture of Our Lord, which already indicates a departure from the generally youthful type of the Catacombs. "His countenance," says this account, "is severe and expressive, so as to inspire beholders at once with love and fear.... In reproving or censuring, he is awe-inspiring; in exhorting and teaching, his speech is gentle and caressing. His expression is of wonderful sweetness and gravity. No one ever saw him laugh, though he has been often seen to weep."[585]

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The oldest extant picture of the head of Christ treated separately is a profile brought from the Catacomb of Callixtus, now in the Christian Museum of the Vatican, and figured in the engraving on the following page. It is in imitation of mosaic, about life-size, and of a different type from the figure of Our Lord in composition in the frescoes and sculptures of the Catacombs. He is portrayed as of adult age, his calm, smooth brow shaded by long brown hair which is parted in the middle and falls in masses on the shoulders. The eyes are large and thoughtful, the nose long and narrow, the beard soft and flowing, and the general expression of countenance serene and mild. This became the hieratic type of many of the noblest pictures of later Italian art, and, according to the Abbé Brivati, inspired the genius of Da Vinci, Raphael, and Caracci.

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In the Catacomb of Sts. Nereus and Achilles the head and bust of Christ form a medallion in the centre of a vaulted ceiling. The face is of a noble and dignified expression, mingled with benevolence; but it is older in aspect, and probably of considerably later date, than that here given. Kugler, however, claims for it priority of origin. Both of these were probably of the latter part of the fourth century, and were executed not by the Christians of the purest ages of the church, but by those who had begun to walk by sight and not by faith. The primitive Christians, we have seen, had no professed portraits of Christ, but only allegorical representations of the Good Shepherd, or a youthful figure regarded as the abstractions or genius of Christianity. "We must not," says a Father of the second century, "cling to the sensuous, but rise to the spiritual. The familiarity of daily sight lowers the dignity of the divine, and to pretend to worship a spiritual essence through earthly matter is to degrade

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that essence to the world of sense."[586]

Fig. 106.—The Oldest Extant Picture of Our Lord.

On a terra cotta medallion, found not in the Catacombs themselves, but in the rubbish near the mouth of the cemetery of St. Agnes, is a head of Our Lord of the same general type as Fig. 106, but of much superior execution. The face is of exquisite beauty, and is characterized by a sweet and tender grace of expression. But with the decline of art and the corruption of Christianity this beautiful type disappeared, and a more austere and solemn aspect was given to pictures of Christ. Although the technical means of execution were diminished, and the rendering of form became more and more incorrect, yet for powerful effect, strength of character, and depth of feeling, Christian art exhibited resources beyond any thing to be found in the Catacombs. It burst the narrow limits in which it was there confined, and found ample scope in the frescoes and mosaics of the stately basilicas which were everywhere rising. In those vast and shadowy interiors the principal figure was that of Christ, surrounded by saints and angels, looking down upon the worshippers with awe-inspiring power, holding in his left hand the book of life, and raising his right in solemn menace or warning.

The first example of the art-presentation of Christ under this stern and sullen aspect, according to that accomplished critic, Mr. Hemans, is a large mosaic composition of the fifth century in the Ostian basilica of St. Paul. The colossal figure of the Saviour dominates over every other object, with an effect at once startling and repulsive. "Nor can we help," says Mr. Hemans, "seeing in this strangely unworthy conception the evidence of deterioration in the religious ideal, even more than of decline in the technical treatment peculiar to the age."[587] Of this character is the head of Our Lord in the crypt of St. Cecilia. The expression is grave, the eyes large and solemn; the book of the gospels is in his hand, and his head is surrounded by a nimbus in the form of a Greek cross. [Pg 349]

This type became more and more rigid and austere as the gathering shadows of the Dark Ages mantled on the minds of men. The gloomy asceticism of the monastic orders also left its impress on the art of the period, especially in the East, where the Basilian monks too faithfully illustrated the stern, austere judgments of their founder concerning the person of Christ. The rudeness of execution of this Byzantine school was only equalled by the meanness of conception of the harsh, stiff and blackened portraits of Our Lord, in which he was exhibited as emphatically "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." [Pg 350]

Toward the close of the tenth century art sank into its deepest degradation as the long night of the Dark Ages reached its densest gloom. The year one thousand was regarded in popular apprehension as the date of the end of time, and of the final conflagration of the world so intensely realized in the sublime hymn,

> Dies iræ, dies illa,
> Solvet sæclum in favilla.

The excited imagination of mankind, brooding upon the approaching terrors of the Last Day, found expression in the sombre character of the art of the period. The tender grace of the Good Shepherd of the Catacombs gave place to the stern inexorable Judge, blasting the wicked with a glance and treading down the nations in his fury. Christ was no longer the Divine Orpheus, charming with the music of his lyre the souls of men, and breathing peace and benediction from his lips, but the "Rex tremendæ majestatis," a dread Avenger striking the imagination with awe, and awakening alarm and remorse in the soul. All the stern denunciations of the Hebrew prophets and the weird imagery of the Apocalypse found intensely realistic treatment in art. Christ smites the earth with a curse, and consumes the wicked like stubble. "A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about."[588] The great white throne is set, and from beneath it a flame bursts forth devouring the guilty objects of his wrath. Like an angry Jove,[589] he hurls the thunderbolts of his fury and blasts with the lightning of his power. The angels tremble in terror at his frown, and even the intercession of the Virgin Mother avails not to mitigate the dread displeasure of her Divine Son. Down to the period of the Renaissance the tragic scenes of the last judgment continue to be favourite subjects of art treatment, and exhibit some of its most remarkable achievements; but not all the genius of Orcagna or of Michael Angelo can reconcile our minds to the savage sternness and ferocity of the frescoes of the Campo Santo and the Sistine Chapel. [Pg 351]

Christ is also frequently depicted in Mediæval art with his staff and scrip, his "scallop hat and shoon," setting out upon his weary, mortal pilgrimage; returning to heaven as a toil-worn man leaning heavily upon his staff,[590] or showing to the Father sitting on his throne his wounded hands and side. He is also seen, as in the sublime vision of St. John, riding in majesty on his white horse, accompanied by the armies of the sky; as trampling beneath his feet the lion and dragon, and as chaining death and hell. In Greek art, especially, he is exhibited as a throned archbishop, arrayed in gorgeous vestments, receiving the homage of saints and angels, or offering the sacrifice of the mass as the great High Priest entered into the holiest of all. [Pg 352]

One of the most striking contrasts between the art of the Catacombs and that of later times is the entire absence in the former of those gross anthropomorphic images of the persons of the Holy Trinity, either together or separately—except Our Lord under his proper human form—of which the latter, in striking offence against piety and good taste, exhibits so many

painful examples. In the earlier ages a solemn reverence forbade the attempt to depict the Eternal Father or the Holy Spirit except by means of symbolical types. The universal testimony of Christian antiquity is opposed to this practice so common in Mediæval art. Origen, Ambrose, and Augustine unite in prohibiting the representation of the Deity by any material object. The latter declares it to be impious for any Christian to set up such an image in the church, and much more to do it in his heart,[591] or to conceive it possible that the Divine Being may be circumscribed by the limits of the human frame.[592] Paulinus of Nola, in his account of the symbolism of the Holy Trinity in the church of St. Felix, describes Christ as represented by a lamb, the Holy Spirit by a dove, but for the Father nothing but a [Pg 353] voice from heaven.[593] Gregory II., the champion of image-worship, denies that it is lawful to make any representation of the Divine nature, but only of Our Lord, his mother, and the saints.[594] Such figures were also condemned by the second Council of Nice.[595] John Damascenus, a zealous defender of the images of Christ and the saints, yet declares it is as great impiety as it is folly to make any image of the Divine nature, which is incorporeal, invisible, without material or form, incomprehensible, not to be circumscribed, nor to be figured by the art of man.[596] Urban VIII. ordered all representations of the Trinity to be burnt, and Benedict XIV. forbade the depicting of the Holy Ghost in human form. Dupin asserts that the most zealous defenders of images have condemned these;[597] and the learned and judicious Bingham declares that "in all ancient history we never meet with any one instance of picturing God the Father, because it was supposed that he never appeared in any visible shape, but only by a voice from heaven."[598]

[Pg 354] Some recent Roman Catholic writers, however, assert the contrary of this to be the case, and refer for proof of the assertion to one or two sarcophagal bas reliefs of the fourth or fifth century. One of these represents Cain and Abel bringing their gifts to an aged and bearded figure sitting on a stone, who is interpreted by the Romanists as the Omnipotent Jehovah. But that distinguished archæologist, Raoul Rochette, himself a Romanist, opposes this view. "I doubt," he says, "the reality of this explanation, contrary to all that we know of the Christian monuments of the first ages, where the intervention of the Eternal Father is only indicated in the abridged and symbolic manner proper to antiquity, by the image of a hand."

The other alleged sculpture of the Godhead requires more careful examination. "The Holy Trinity," says Dr. Northcote, "is nowhere represented, as far as I know, in the paintings of the Catacombs."[599] But he asserts that a sculptured example occurs on a sarcophagus of the fifth century, from the Ostian basilica of St. Paul's, now in the Lateran Museum. The group referred to consists of three bearded figures of advanced age, and of grave and strongly-marked features. One of these, whom Dr. Northcote designates "the Eternal Father, the source and fountain of Deity,"[600] is seated in a raised chair or sort of throne. Behind the chair stands another described as representing the Holy Ghost, and in front of it the third, identified as the "Eternal Word."[601] At the feet of the latter are two diminutive figures, one standing, the other prostrate, said to represent the creation of Eve from the side of the sleeping Adam. Padre Garrucci, who has published a monograph on this subject, identifies [Pg 355] none of the adult figures in the same manner as Dr. Northcote, but describes the one seated as the Son, the one behind him as the Father, and the third as the Holy Ghost.[602]

We can accept neither of these explanations, both of which are so strongly opposed to the entire spirit and character of early Christian art. The formulization of the doctrine of the Trinity by the Council of Nice, in that noble creed which still expresses the faith of Christendom, left, it is true, its impress on Christian art and literature. Both in pictorial representation, and, as we shall hearafter see, in inscriptions, is there a recorded protest against the Arian heresy which at this period convulsed and rent the church. De Rossi cites eight examples in early Christian art which he conceives to have reference to this doctrine; but in seven of these it is indicated by the association of the sacred monogram with the triangle, the symbol of tri-unity, and the eighth is the unique and anomalous bas relief under discussion.

We have seen that Christ is uniformly exhibited in this primitive art as youthful and beardless; and on this very sarcophagus, side by side with this so-called sculpture of the Trinity, he is thus seen as the representative of the Deity giving the wheat-sheaf to Adam and the lamb to Eve. Yet we are asked to believe that in the very next group he is shown, in defiance of the uniform practice, as heavily bearded and of advanced age; and that the Almighty Father, who is substitutionally represented by the Son in the adjoining scene, is here exhibited, as well as the Eternal Spirit, in human form. Another remarkable [Pg 356] discrepancy also occurs. The so-called figures of Adam and Eve are of most diminutive size, and not nearly as large as the infant Christ in his mother's arms in the scene of the adoration of the Magi immediately below;[603] and of these the prostrate figure supposed to represent the sleeping Adam is considerably the smaller of the two, and of the more feminine aspect. This incongruity is the more striking from the immediate proximity of the adult figures of Adam and Eve, to which the smaller ones bear no resemblance. The whole group seems to correspond better to Solomon's celebrated judgment concerning the living and the dead child than to the creation of Eve.

So careful, indeed, were the early Christian artists to avoid any representation of "the King eternal, immortal, invisible," that in the scenes where God spake from heaven to Abraham and to Moses he is only symbolically indicated by a hand stretched out to stay the knife of the patriarch, or surrounded by clouds, as if to show more

Fig. 107.—God Symbolized by a Hand appearing to Abraham.

strongly its figurative character, giving the tables of the law to the leader of Israel. The annexed suggestive example of this treatment, of which many others might be adduced, is from a sarcophagus in the Lateran. See also Fig. 71, p. 290.

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Throughout the whole range of sacred mosaics at Rome from the fourth to the fourteenth century, according to Mr. Hemans, the Supreme Being is never represented except symbolically by means of a hand, usually holding a crown over the head of Christ, the Virgin, or the saints. In later art the hand is sometimes surrounded by a cruciform nimbus, to indicate more clearly its divine character. It is also seen stretched out from heaven in pictures of Christ's baptism and transfiguration, of the agony in the garden, the passion, and ascension.[604]

It was long before the most audacious hand dared to represent in painting or sculpture the omnipotent Jehovah or the infinite Spirit, who sustain and pervade the universe. M. Emeric David says that the French artists of the ninth century had first the "happy boldness"—*heureuse hardiesse*—to depict the Eternal Father under human form.[605] M. Didron asserts that it was not till the twelfth century that the Divine Being was personally represented,[606] being previously invariably indicated by the symbol of a hand, or by the divine name written in a triangle surrounded by a circle. Previous at least to the earlier of these dates, the work of creation and other acts popularly regarded as proper to the Father are always represented as performed by the Son, "who is the image of the invisible God," "by whom also he made the worlds."[607] Christ is also painted as commanding Noah to build the ark, as conversing with Abraham, and as speaking to Moses out of the burning bush. He is frequently represented also in the gigantic frescoes of the Byzantine cupolas clothed with awful majesty and bearing the title Ο ΠΑΝΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ, the Almighty; but the addition of the letters $\overline{\text{IC}}$ $\overline{\text{XC}}$, the contraction for Jesus Christ, assure us that it is not the Father but the Son who is meant.

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But the literal conception of the age was not content with a symbolical indication of the Deity. By degrees the arm as well as the hand was portrayed, and art, gradually growing bolder, attempted the representation of that face which inspiration declares no man can see and live. But at first it is the face alone that is shown.[608] Then, with progressive daring, the bust and upper part of the body are painted as reaching forth from the clouds, and finally the entire figure appears under various aspects and in different characters. The Almighty is represented armed with sword and bow, as the God of battles; as crowned, like a king or emperor;[609] and finally, as Pope, wearing the pontifical tiara and vestments. In the following example from a stained-glass window of the sixteenth century, at Troyes, in France, the everlasting Father, throned in glory, crowned with a quintuple tiara and robed in alb and tunic, supports a cross on which hangs the lifeless body of the Divine Son.

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Fig. 108.—God the Father as Pope.

The omnipotent Jehovah is sometimes portrayed as "the Ancient of Days," under the form of a feeble old man bowed down by the weight of years, and fain to seek support by leaning heavily on a staff, or reposing on a couch after the labours of creation.[610] The treatment becomes more and more rude, even to the borders of the grotesque,[611] and the conception becomes mean, coarse, and vulgar, till all the Divine departs and only human feebleness and imbecility remain, indicating at once the degradation of taste, decline of piety, and corruption of doctrine. [Pg 360]

But this grossness of treatment reaches its most offensive development in the impious attempt to symbolize the sublime mystery of the Holy Trinity by a grotesque figure with three heads, or a head with three faces joined together, somewhat after the manner of the three-headed image of Brahma in the Hindoo mythology.[612] In other examples the Trinity is represented by three harsh stiff and aged figures,[613] identified by the attributes of the tiara, cross, and dove, enveloped in one common mantle, and jointly crowning the Virgin Mary in heaven, whose flowing train the angels humbly bear. By this degradation of Deity and exaltation of Mary we may mark the infinite divergence in faith and practice of the modern church of Rome from the simplicity, purity, and orthodoxy of the ancient church of the Catacombs, as evidenced by that primitive art and symbolism whose priceless monuments we have been examining. [Pg 361]

[477] In the bas reliefs of Chartres Cathedral and in other mediæval churches, a biblical cycle somewhat analogous in character to that of the Catacombs is represented. In the former case the whole drama of time from the creation of the world to the last judgment is set forth in a series of pictures in stone comprising 1,800 figures, often with a touching *naiveté* and simple grace.

[478] *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte.*

[479] *History of Christian Art*, vol. i, p. 47.

[480] In an ivory diptych, probably of the fourth century, which is figured in Marriott's *Testimony of the Catacombs*, is a very spirited bas relief of Adam in the garden giving the beasts their names.

[481] Is there any allusion here to Noah as a "preacher of righteousness?"

[482] 1 Pet. iii, 20, 21. The dove is the symbol, says Tertullian, of the Holy Spirit bringing the peace of God after the mystical lustration of the soul in baptism.—*De Baptismo*, vii.

[483] It is difficult to conceive how such a wide departure from historic truth took place in these representations. It has been suggested that they were copied from some pre-existing type, upon which this form was imposed by the conditions of space in which it was executed. Such a type occurs in the celebrated Apamean medals, of date A. D. 193-211. See Fig. 67. It probably commemorated the Deucalion deluge; and the design was apparently modified by the Christian artists to represent the preservation of Noah.

[484] Hostia viva Deo tanquam puer offerar Isaac,
Et mea ligna gerens, sequar almum sub cruce patrem.

[485] *E. g.*, Greg. Nazianz., *Orat.* 42.

[486] 1 Cor. x, 4.

[487] Paulinus of Nola, in the beginning of the fifth century, describes in spirited lines certain paintings analogous to those of which we have been speaking, but including some subjects not treated in the Catacombs. Among these are the passage of the Red Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh and his host, Joshua and the ark of God, Samson bearing away the gates of Gaza, the Israelites crossing Jordan, and the pathetic episode of Ruth and her sister-in-law, the one following and the other forsaking the stricken Naomi, the emblem, as the worthy bishop remarks, of mankind, part deserting, part adhering to the true faith:

> Ruth sequitur sanctam, quam deserit Orpa, parentem;
> Perfidiam nurus una, fidem nurus altera monstrat.
> Præfert una Deum patriæ, patriam altera vitæ.

[488] Job xix, 17. This subject is also fantastically treated in Mediæval art. In a Byzantine MS. of the ninth or tenth century Job is exhibited as sitting in lugubrious melancholy amid the ruins of his house, while Satan is dancing before him in fiendish joy over the desolation he has caused, and is torturing his victim with a red-hot goad. Didron, *Iconog. Chrét.*, p. 158.

[489] *Roma Sotterranea*, i, 310. The newly elected pope receives the investiture with the words, "Receive the *pallium*, to wit, the fullness of the apostle's office." *Pallia* are sent to foreign bishops from the tomb of St. Peter, and those who receive them keep them "*in obsequium Petri*"—in obedience and devotion to Peter.

[490] Hom. ii. *In Ascens. Dom.*

[491] Several Romanist writers interpret, with doubtful propriety, a fresco in the cemetery of St. Priscilla as a representation of the Annunciation. True to its gentle genius, the art of the Catacombs passes over the tragical scenes of the Slaughter of the Innocents, whose horrors later art has delighted to portray.

[492] In the church of the Ara Cœli, at Rome, is a miraculous image of the infant Christ, carved, it is said, out of wood from the Mount of Olives, and painted by St. Luke. It is known as the *Santissimo Bambino*, or Most Holy Babe, and is taken in its state-coach to visit the sick. At one time it received more fees than any physician in Rome. Its fête is celebrated by theatrical representations of the scenes of the Advent. The apocryphal Gospel of the Infancy tends to popularize this feature of Romanism.

[493] According to an ancient tradition mentioned by Origen and Leo the Great the number of the Magi was three. In the mediæval miracle plays they are called three gipsy kings, and their names are given as Gaspar, Melchior, and Belshazzar.

The early Fathers all refer to the adoration of the Magi as a proof of the divinity of Our Lord, not as any homage to Mary. See Clem. Alex., *Pæd.*, ii, 8; Origen, *c. Cels.*, i, p. 46; Chrysos., in *Matt.*; Jus. Mar., *Dial. cum Tryph.*; Iren., *c. Hær.*, iii, 2; Hieron., *in Esaiam*, vi, 19; Ambr., *in Luc.*, ii; Aug., *Epiph. Serm.*

[494] *Rom. Sott.*, p. 261.—One of these devout fictions, known as the *Proto-Evangelium*, and attributed to St. James, was the source of those legends of the early life of Mary which furnished so many subjects to Italian art. According to this tradition she was dedicated while yet an infant to a religious life, and remained till twelve years of age in the temple, where she was daily fed by angels. See an inscription in Provence: MARIA VIRGO MINISTER IN TEMPLO GEROSALE. Later legends assert the angelic pre-annunciation of her birth and her immaculate conception, which has at length become a formulated dogma of the church, though contrary to the opinion of the ancient Fathers. (Kayes' *Tertul.*, p. 386 and *postea*.) St. Joachim and St. Anne, her parents, are invoked in the Missal, which also asserts her freedom from original sin, an exemption shared only by Our Lord, John the Baptist, and Jeremiah.

In her youth, says the *Proto-Evangelium*, Mary was consigned to Joseph, not for marriage, but for parental guardianship. A number of suitors claimed her hand, but the apparition of a dove flying from the top of Joseph's rod indicated the divinely chosen spouse. In course of time, in consequence of the growing superior regard for celibacy, the legends of her perpetual virginity were developed, although some, at least, of the Fathers held a contrary opinion. See Tertul., *De Monogamia*, c. 8, and *De Carne Christi*, c. 23; Neander's *Antignostikus*, Whedon's *Commentary*, Matt. xiii, 55. The word πρωτότοκον, *first-born*, applied to Jesus, Matt. i, 25, implies a second born afterward, as in Rom. viii, 29, "first born of many brethren;" otherwise the word μονογενής, *only born*, would be used, as in Luke vii, 12; ix, 38.

[495] De Rossi and some other writers call this figure Isaiah without any good reason.

[496] *Rom. Sott.*, p. 260.

[497] *Imagines Selectæ Deiparæ Virginis*, pl. iv. This picture is thought to be of the sixth century.

[498] *Test. of Catacombs*, p. 27.

[499] One of these has a saffron-coloured robe, and soft brown eyes and hair. The other wears a deep crimson robe with purple stripes. Both are richly embroidered and bejeweled.

[500] Northcote's *Catacombs*, p. 77.

[501] *Rom. Sott.*, p. 255.

[502] *Rom. Sott.*, pl. viii.

[503] The circumstance above mentioned is another evidence that no logical nor historical difficulties are any obstacle to the devout credulity of Rome, in discovering proofs of its favourite dogmas where a rational criticism is unable to find them.

[504] These figures are given in minute detail in Perret, tom. iii, planches 16 to 20. On the arch and on the other lunettes will be seen the "great fish" and the prophet Jonah, the Good Shepherd bearing a goat, not a lamb, on his shoulders, and the ever-recurring peacocks and doves.

[505] In Byzantine art, pictures of the Virgin Mary are generally inscribed with the letters MP ΘY for MHTHP ΘEOY—Mother of God.

[506] A literal interpretation of the Scripture: "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also."—Luke ii, 35.

[507] Mater æque non demonstratur adhæsisse illi, cum Marthæ et Mariæ aliæ in commercio ejus frequentantur. Hoc denique in loco (Luke viii, 20) apparet incredulitas eorum cum is doceret viam vitæ.—*De Carne Christi*, c. 7.

[508] Solus labe caret peccati conditor orbis,
Ingenitus genitusque Deus, Pater et Patre natus.
—*Apotheosis*, 894.

[509] Nec sumpsit [Christus] carnem peccati quamvis de materna carne peccati.—*De Peccatorum Meritis et Remissione*, lib. i, c. 24. He further beautifully says: Solus unus est qui sine peccato natus est in similitudine carnis peccati, sine peccato vixit inter aliena peccata sine peccato mortuus est propter nostra peccata.—*Ibid.*, c. 35.

[510] Φιλοτιμία καὶ ἀπόνοια.—*Hom. in Matt.*, xii, 47.

[511] See the words of Our Lord on this very subject, Luke xi, 28: "Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it."

[512] "Infanda."—*Theol. Dogmat. de Incarn.*, lib. xiv, c. i.

[513] These heretics receive their name from the κολλύρα, or cake, which they offered to the deified Virgin. Thus early was a new paganism substituted for that which was passing away. In modern Rome, cook-shops are dedicated to Mary under the title of "Our Lady of Cakes and Sugar-Plums," thus literally "baking cakes to the Queen of heaven," like the idolaters of Palestine denounced by the prophet. Madame de Staël has truly said, "The Catholic is the Pagan's heir."

[514] Iren. *adv. Hæreses*, lib. iii, c. 33; lib. v, c. 19.

[515] See the hymn in the office of the Virgin:

Quod Eva tristis abstulit

Tu reddis almo germine.

Compare also the “Ave maris stella.”

[516] *De Spectaculis*, c. 30.

[517] See Shelley’s Notes to *Queen Mab*.

[518] Maitland, p. 333.

[519] The letters B. M., so frequently recurring in sepulchral inscriptions, have no reference to the Virgin Mary. They stand for *Bene Merenti*—To the well-deserving, or *Bonæ Memoriæ*—Of pious memory.

[520] Ut ipsa corporis facies simulacrum fuerit mentis, figura probitatis.—*De Virgin.*, lib. ii, c. 2.

[521] Neque enim novimus faciem Virginis Mariæ.—*De Trin.*, c. 8.

[522] Aringhi (tom. ii, p. 195) copies a crucifixion from the Catacomb of “Julii Papæ," in which Mary appears crowned with a nimbus, and bearing, after the Byzantine manner, the label Dei Genetrix—Mother of God. It was probably painted by a Greek artist of late date. The miraculous images of Mary are too numerous to mention. Among these are the winking Madonna of Rimini; that of St. Peter’s, which shed blood when struck; that of Arezzo, which wept at the profanity of some drunkards; another at Rome, which shed tears at the invasion of the French; stranger still, one at Lucca, which transferred the infant Christ from one arm to the other to preserve him from danger; and one mentioned in the Fablieux of Le Grand, which, when a scaffold broke, stretched forth a painted arm to rescue from death the artist to whom she owed her existence! The practical and undevout curiosity of the Czar Peter of Russia exposed the fraud of one of the weeping Madonnas of the Greek church by the detection of a reservoir of water behind her eyes. In popular legend, also, Mary has often come down from her throne of glory, not to communicate lessons about sin and salvation, but to secure some trivial gain or to recover some lost money.

[523] *Peinture*, tom. ii, p. 38.

[524] Harduin, iv, 430, A. D. 712.

[525] In the church of St. Cecilia at Rome. The homage of the Virgin was now called ὑπερδουλεία—the highest degree of veneration.

[526] This legend is first mentioned by Gregory of Tours in the sixth century, (*De Gloria Mart.*, lib. i, c. 4,) next by John Damascenus in the eighth century, but is most fully detailed in the *Legenda Aurea* in the fourteenth. Some of the earlier paintings represent with touching *naiveté* the translation of the soul of Mary as a new-born infant to heaven, where it is received in the arms of her Divine Son. In later art the assumption is more literally represented, and Mary is received and crowned by the three persons of the Holy Trinity, while angels bear her train. Bodily assumption was also attributed to John the Baptist and Mary Magdalene.

[527] *E. g.*, Psa. lxviii, 1: “Let Mary arise, and let her enemies be scattered.” On one of the principal churches of Rome may still be read the awful perversion of Scripture: “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of Mary, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

[528] The expression of Modestus, patriarch of Jerusalem in the seventh century.

[529] In allusion to the woman in the Apocalypse, xii, 1.

[530] See a fresco in the *Campo Santo*, Pisa.

[531] In the church of *Gesù e Maria* at Rome.

[532] Janua Cœli.

[533] Stella matutina.

[534] Refugium peccatorum.

[535] Succurre miseris.

[536] Tu nos ab hoste protege, et mortis hora suscipe.

[537] Ora pro populo, interveni pro clero intercede pro devoto femineo sexu. See also in the “Ave Maris Stella,”

Salva vincla reis,
Profer lumen cæcis,
Mala nostra pelle,
Bona cuncta posce.

See also the “Regina Cœli,” and the “Ave Regina Cœlorum.”

[538] She has been actually designated the Fourth Person of the Trinity. In Rome there are twenty-seven churches dedicated to Mary for one dedicated to Christ.

“In dangers, in difficulties, in doubts,” says the Roman Breviary “in the abyss of sadness and despair, think of Mary, invoke Mary.”

[539] In the church of S. Maria Maggiore at Rome may be seen a restored mosaic of the adoration of the Magi, in which Mary is represented, with a golden nimbus and tunic, as sitting on a chair of state higher than that of the Divine Child. But in copies of the original mosaic of the fifth century, made two centuries ago, (Ciampini, *Vet. Mon.*, i, p. 200,) Mary is standing, without any nimbus or other sign of honour, by the side of Christ, who, attended by angels, occupies the throne. This was evidently a vindication of the divinity of the Son of Mary against the heresies of the Arians, which has been perverted by modern Romanists to an exaltation of the Virgin to co-equal honours with the Son of God.

The figure of Mary as the Queen of heaven in the church of St. Nicholas at Rome is said by Papebrocius, a Roman authority, to have been originally intended for Our Lord, but afterward altered to the Madonna, a significant illustration of the substitution of her worship for that of her Divine Son.

[540] See the wrathful image of Christ in the Last Judgment of the *Campo Santo* and the Sistine Chapel.

[541] Wordsworth's *Eccles. Sonnets*, xxi.

[542] Longfellow's "*Golden Legend*."

[543] Dec., 1854. An inscription in St. Peter's commemorates its publication.

[544] Luke ii, 46. Such is Didron's opinion.

[545] See Fig. 132.

[546] Numerous references to these veils occur in the Fathers; *e. g.*, Paulin., *Natal. Felic.*, iii, 6: Aurea nunc niveis ornantur limina velis; Hieron., *Epitaph. Nepot.*: Vela semper in ostiis; Epiphan., *ep. ad. Johan. Hierosol.*: Inveni vela pendens in foribus. They were used also at the entrance of Pagan schools, "to conceal," says Augustine, "the ignorance that took refuge within."

[547] Prudentes quinque virgines olei vasa cum lampadibus deferentes.—*Roma Sotteranea*, tom. iii, p. 171.

[548] Plutarch, *Quæst. Rom.*

[549] Rock's *Hierurgia*, p. 463.

[550] On an ivory diptych in the Educational Museum at Toronto, Ca., the raising of Lazarus appears exactly after this primitive type.

[551] Lord Lindsay, *Christian Art*, vol. i, p. 51.

[552] *Rom. Sott.*, p. 307.

[553] See Book II, chap. ii, p. 269.

[554] *Rom. Sott.*, p. 308.

[555] According to Romish tradition, the Divine Sufferer received five thousand stripes during his scourging. This, as they would be inflicted by Roman soldiers, would be beyond human endurance, and was far beyond what Jewish or Roman law would allow.

[556] Acts iv, 3.

[557] Aringhi, *Roma Sotterranea*, tom. ii, p. 273.

[558] Hence Augustine asserts that if the name of the apostle is not expressly mentioned, St. Paul is always understood by this title—Apostolus cum dicetur, si non exprimatur quis apostolus non intelligitur nisi Paulus.—*Contra duas Epis. Pelag.*, lib. iii, c. 3. The apostles were sometimes represented by twelve men, but without any individual distinction.

[559] O Roma felix, quæ duorum Principum
Es consecrata glorioso sanguine;
Horum cruore purpurata ceteras
Excellis orbis una pulcritudines.
—*Office for the Festival of St. Peter and St. Paul.*

St. Paul is designated the illustrious doctor, the vase of election, the teacher of the nations, and preacher of truth throughout the world.—Egregie doctor Paule, vas electionis, doctor gentium, prædicator veritatis in universo mundo.—*Ibid.*

[560] Of these types are the portraits on a bronze medal found in the Catacomb of St. Domitilla, in the so-called tomb of Sts. Peter and Paul at St. Sebastian's, and in the early sculptures, mosaics, and paintings generally.

[561] The scoffing Lucian, who may have conversed with some who witnessed the execution of St. Paul, describes him as "the bald-headed and long-nosed Galilæan, who mounted through the air into the third heaven."—Γαλιλαῖος, ἀναφαλαντίας, ἐπίῤῥινος, ἐς τρίτον ουρανὸν ἀεροβατήσας. —*Philopatris.* Nicephorus and the Acts of Paul and Thecla describe him as bald—ψιλὸς τὴν κεφαλήν. The apocryphal Acts and Malalas add the epithets γλυκύς and χάριτος πλήρης, sweet, and full of grace.

[562] The cultus of Peter, the result of the growing conception of his primacy, was developed to a degree second only to that of Mary. Its extent and character in the ninth century are indicated by a mosaic in the *triclinium* of San Giovanni di Laterano at Rome, in which the apostle, seated on a lofty throne, with the keys of heaven and hell lying in his lap, is bestowing the *pallium*, or symbol of ecclesiastical power, on the most holy lord, Pope Leo—so he is designated—and the standard of battle on the Emperor Charlemagne, both of whom are kneeling at his feet. Beneath is the following prayer, addressed to Peter as to God: BEATE PETRE DONA VITA LEONI PPE BICTORIA CARLO REGI DONA, "Blessed Peter, give life to Pope Leo, and victory to King Charles."

This religious cultus culminated in the erection of that noblest of all earthly temples, raised to the honour of a lowly fisherman, and in the idolatrous homage paid to the great bronze statue cast from that of Jupiter Capitolinus, if it be not indeed the identical statue of the heathen deity transformed into that of the Christian apostle and Romish saint.

[563] We may here notice the precious Romish relic known as St. Peter's chair. In June, 1867, the present pontiff ordered the bronze covering with which this object of veneration had been concealed for two hundred years to be removed, and the chair was found to be a solid oaken structure with iron rings, by which it could be carried like the *sella gestatoria*, in which the popes

are borne in religious processions, and covered in part with ivory plates on which are engraved the labours of Hercules and other scenes. This chair, which is commemorated in one of the festivals of the church, Romish tradition asserts to be that in which St. Peter sat while exercising episcopal authority at Rome, and in which it is presumed he was borne in state, like those haughty pontiffs who claimed to be his successors. It is supposed to have been preserved during the ages of persecution in the crypts of the Catacombs; indeed, tradition identifies the Catacomb of Ostrianus on the Appian Way as the scene where this relic was venerated in the early centuries. Those who regard the fact of Peter's presence in Rome as exceedingly hypothetical, and who altogether reject the notion of his episcopal authority, will regard any refutation of this legend as superfluous.

An inscription is shown said to have been engraved by St. Peter himself, also the font at which he baptized! (See Fig. 131.)

[564] It will be observed that in this chamber the Good Shepherd occupies the position of prominence and dignity in the compartment over the *arcosolium*, balanced by Daniel in the lions' den and the three Hebrews in the furnace. On the left hand is a shelf for lamps, magnified in Romish imagination into a credence table for supporting the elements of the eucharist. In the ceiling are *oranti* and lambs.

[565] *Rom. Sott.*, p. 268.

[566]

	Burgon.	Bosio.
History of Jonas	23	11
The Smitten Rock	21	16
Apprehension of Peter	20	14
Miracle of the Loaves	20	14
Giving Sight to the Blind	19	11
Change of Water into Wine	16	8
Raising of Lazarus	16	14
Peter's Denial	14	8
Daniel in the Lions' Den	14	7
Paralytic Healed	12	7
Creation of Eve	11	2
Sacrifice of Isaac	11	9
Adoration of the Magi	11	8
Fall of Adam and Eve	14	10
Woman with Issue of Blood	8	9
Christ's Entry into Jerusalem	6	8
The Good Shepherd	6	9
Noah in the Ark	5	6
Christ before Pilate	5	6
Giving of the Law	4	6
The Three Hebrew Children	4	3
Moses Taking Off his Shoes	2	2
Elias Taken Up to Heaven	2	3
Nativity, with Ox and Ass	1	4
Christ Crowned with Thorns	1	1

It will be seen that there is only one example of Christ crowned with thorns, and in that the harshness is removed by the substitution of a garland of flowers. How different from modern Roman Catholic art, in which the scenes of the passion are endlessly repeated! In pagan sarcophagi we find, instead of these sacred themes, crowded battle-pieces, with processions of warriors, chariots, horses, maskers, mythological groups, vintage scenes, etc. See the sarcophagi of the Empress Helena and of Constantia in the Vatican Museum, and before described.

[567] In ecclesia nullatenus sepeliantur, sed in atrio, aut porticu, aut in exedris ecclesiæ.—*Council of Nantes*, can. 6.

[568] Chrys., *Hom. 26, in 2 Cor.*

[569] Numerous Christian sarcophagi have also been found at Arles, Saragossa, Ravenna, Milan, and elsewhere.

The name sarcophagus, *flesh-eating*, from σάρξ and φάγω, it is well known, was derived from the supposed quality of the *Lapis Assius*, a stone of Assos in Asia Minor of which they were originally made, of corroding and consuming dead bodies, as ascribed to it by Theophrastus and Pliny.

[570] See especially Figs. 47, 48, 63, 91, 92, 96, 97, and postea 106.

[571] *Christian Art*, vol. i, p. 42.

[572] Τὸν ἀειδῆ καὶ ἄτιμον φανέντα.—*Dial. cum Tryph.*, 85.

[573] Adeo nec humanæ honestatis corpus fuit, nedum cœlestis claritatis.—*De Carn. Christi.*, c. 9.

[574] Sed species ejus inhonorata, deficiens ultra omnes homines.—*Contra Marc.*, iii, 17.

[575] Si inglorius, si ignobilis, si inhonorabilis; meus erit Christus.—*Ibid.*

[576] Ἀλλὰ τὸ εἶδος αὐτοῦ ἄτιμον ἔκλιπον παρὰ πάντας τοὺς υἱοὺς τῶν ἀνθρώπων.—*De Nudatione Noe*, lib. ii, vol. i, p. 13.

[577] Nisi enim habuisset et in vultu quiddam et in oculis sidereum, nunquam eum statim secuti fuissent apostoli.—*Epis. ad Princip. Virginem.*

[578] Certe fulgor ipsa et majestas divinitatis occultæ, quæ etiam in humanâ facie relucebat, ex primo ad se venientes trahere poterat aspectu.—*Hieronym. in Matth.*, ix, 9.

[579] Qua fuerit ille facie nos penitus ignoramus: nam et ipsius Dominicæ facies carnis innumerabilium cogitationum diversitate variatur et fingitur, quæ tamen una erat, quæcunque erat.—*De Trin.*, lib. vii, c. 4, 5.

[580] *Tableau des Catacombes*, p. 164.

[581] *Rom. Sott.*, p. 252.

[582] *Hist. Eccl.*, vii, 18. From this frequent association St. Paul as well as St. Peter was frequently regarded as being both among the original disciples. "Justly do they deserve to err," says Augustine, speaking of this mistake, "who seek Christ and his apostles, not in the holy volumes, but on painted walls."—*De Consens. Evang.*, lib. i, cx.

[583] This statue, it has been suggested, probably represented the philosopher Apollonius or the Emperor Vespasian, and the suppliant female figure a personified city or province. Gibbon thinks it impossible that it could be intended for the *poor* woman mentioned in the gospel. Eusebius mentions the belief as a mere popular tradition. "*They say* that this statue bears the likeness of Jesus"—Τοῦτον δὲ τὸν ἀνδριάντα εἰκόνα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ φέρειν ἔλεγον.—*Hist. Eccl.*, viii, 18.

[584] Iren., *adv. Hæres.*, i, 25. Aug., *De Hærisib.*, c. viii. The Emperor Alex. Severus, we have seen, had one of these images of Christ in his *Lararium*, with those of Abraham and Orpheus.—Æl. Lamprid. *in Vit. Alex. Sev.*, c. 29.

[585] Conspectus vultus ejus cum severitate et plenus efficacia, ut spectatores amare eum possint et rursus timere.... In reprehendendo et objurgando formidabilis; in docendo et exhortando blandæ linguæ et amabilis. Gratia miranda vultus cum gravitate. Vel semel eum ridentem nemo vidit sed flentem imo.—Fabricius, *Codex. Apoc. Nov. Teste.*, 1e., pars. 301.

Père Mabillon tells us that one of Christ's tears has been preserved and peculiarly honoured at Vendôme.

John Damascenus, in the eighth century, records the legend of a miraculous contemporary portrait of Christ which healed Agbarus, King of Edessa, of a mortal disease. It was till recently honoured in the church of St. Silvester at Rome.

The miraculous image known as the Veronica is claimed to be the actual impression of the Saviour's features made on the veil or handkerchief of a devout Jewess, who piously wiped his brow as he toiled along the way to Calvary. This image she brought to Rome, where it cured Tiberius Cæsar of the leprosy, and was afterwards presented to the Emperor Charlemagne. It is now publicly worshipped in St. Peter's with the utmost devotion and splendor. The name is probably derived from the label *vera icon* or *icona*—a true image—commonly attached to pictures of Our Lord. It was also given to the pious Jewess, who is identified as the niece of Herod. A colossal statue of St. Veronica adorns St. Peter's fane, and the event is celebrated in sacred art and pious verse. The following, from a MS. in St. George's Library, Windsor, is a favourable specimen of the latter:

> Salve, Sancta facies
> Mei Redemptoris,
> In qua nitet species
> Divini splendoris.
> Impressa panniculo
> Nivei candoris,
> Dataque Veronicæ,
> Signum ob Amoris.

Of equally apocryphal character are the *Volto Santo*, exhibited during Holy Week at St. Peter's, and the portraits attributed to Nicodemus, Pilate, St. Luke, or to celestial artists. One of the *Acheiropoietes*, or pictures made without hands, almost blackened with age, and of the Byzantine type, is thrice a year exhibited at the Lateran palace at Rome.

[586] Clem. Alex., *Strom.*, v.

[587] *Sacred Art in Italy*, p. 212. The Mosaics of this century in the adoration of the Magi at S. Maria Maggiore, before mentioned, is the earliest example of the appearance in art of the figures of angels, those sublime creations that glorify the canvas of the artists of the Renaissance. The winged genii in the Catacombs are rather an imitation of classic types than of a Christian significance.

The symbols of the four evangelists—the angel, lion, ox, and eagle—are unknown in the Catacombs, and first appear in the fourth century. Sometimes these symbols have reference to the four historic aspects of redemption through Christ—the Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension, as explained in the following monkish rhyme:

> Quatuor haec Dominum signant animalia Christum:
> Est homo nascendo, Vitulusque sacer moriendo,
> Et Leo surgendo, cœlos Aquilaque petendo.

[588] Psa. xcvii, 3.

[589] In the austere drama of Dante Christ receives the title of Sovereign Jove:

> O summo Giove,
> Che fosti 'n terra per noi crocifisso.—*Purgat.*, canto vi.

In Mediæval art Christ is frequently modeled after the pagan *Jupiter Tonans*.

[590] In some quaint French verses accompanying one of these pictures Our Lord, in giving an account of his journey, in characteristic accord with the erroneous theology of the times, is made to intimate that he would fain have avoided the unwelcome task:

> "Père," dist Jhésus, "retourné

Suis á toy, et ai consummé
Ce que faire me commandas
Quant jus ou monde m'envoyas,
Dont bien je m'en feusse passé."
—*Romant des Trois Pélerinages*, A. D. 1358.

[591] Tale simulacrum nefas est Christiano in templo collocare, multo magis is corde nefarium est. —*De Fide et Symbolo*, c. 7.

[592] Nefas habent docti ejus (ecclesiæ Catholicæ) credere Deum figurâ humani corporis terminatum.—*Confess.*, vi, 11. See also Orig. *Cont. Cels.*, 6, and Ambr. in Psa. cxviii.

[593] Pleno coruscat Trinitas mysterio;
Stat Christus in agno; vox Patris cœlo tonat;
Et per columbam Spiritus Sanctus fluit.

See a valuable note on the doctrine of a Trinity in Classic and Hindoo mythology in Whedon's Commentary, vol. ii, p. 77.

[594] Greg. II., Ep. i, *ad Leon.*

[595] Act 4. Concil. Nicen., 2.

[596] Παραφροσύνης ἄκρας καὶ ἀσεβείας τὸ σχηματίζειν τὸ θεῖον. κ. τ. λ.—*De Fide Orthodox.*, l. iv, c. 17.

Dei qui est incorporeus, invisibilis, a materia remotissimus, figuræ expers, incircumscriptus, et incomprehensibilis, imago nulla fieri potest.... In errore quidem versaremur ... impie rursum ageremus ... si vel invisibilis Dei conficeremus imaginem.—*Orat. 1 et 2 de Imaginibus.*

[597] Les défenseurs les plus zelés des images ayant condamné celles-ci *i. e.*, de la Trinité ou de la Divinité.—Dupin: *Bibli. Eccles.*, t. vi, p. 154.

[598] *Orig. Eccles.*, bk. vi, chap. viii, § 10.

[599] Northcote's *Catacombs*, p. 116.

[600] *Rom. Sott.*, p. 300.

[601] *Ibid.*, 301.

[602] *Dissertazioni Archeologiche di Raffaelle Garrucci*, (Roma, 4to., 1865,) vol. ii, p. 1.

[603] Dr. Northcote describes a bearded figure standing behind the chair of Mary as a representation of the Holy Ghost. Surely the more natural interpretation is that it is intended for Joseph.

[604] Ezekiel speaks of the manifestation of God by a "hand sent unto him." Ezek. ii, 9. The inspiration of Isaiah, and the divine judgments inflicted on Ananias and Sapphira, are thus indicated. In a Greek painting at Salamis, executed as late as the eighteenth century, the souls of the righteous in a state of beatitude are represented by five infant figures held in a gigantic hand projecting from the clouds.

[605] *Discours Sur les Anciens Monumens*, pp. 43, 46. The instance he refers to occurs in a Latin Bible presented to Charles the Bold in A. D. 850. The interpretation, however, is not certain.

[606] *Iconog. Chrét.*, pp. 55, 205.

[607] In a Greek painting of as late date as the twelfth or thirteenth century, Christ, indicated by the letters $\overline{\text{IC}}$ $\overline{\text{XC}}$, is represented as stretching out his hand over a prostrate figure labeled ΑΔΑΜ Ο ΠΡΩΤΟΠΛΑΣΤΟΣ—"Adam, the first-born," or rather "the first-formed."

[608] In one of these a winged head with cruciform nimbus, surrounded by a chaos of stars and planets, utters the word FIAT, and the earth with its inhabitants are called into being.

[609] In France the Supreme Being was generally represented as King, in Germany as Emperor, and in Italy as Pope.

[610] As in an example at the Madeleine at Paris.

[611] We have seen a picture of the creation in which the Almighty was represented as a feeble old man dressed in ecclesiastical robes, *with a lantern in his hand*.

[612] See a fresco by Andrea del Sarto at St. Salvi, Florence, two of the fifteenth century at Perugia, and an engraving in a copy of Dante printed at Florence in A. D. 1491. In an example given in Ames' Typography, a triangular jewel is appended to the three-faced head, the inscription on which attempts to explain mathematically the mysterious doctrine of the unity in trinity. This mystery was also symbolized by the shape of some of the ancient monasteries, by the number of their cloistered inmates, by the genuflections of the service and the parts of the liturgy; and even the bell and

"The rope with its twisted cordage three
Denoted the scriptural Trinity."

Sometimes the Holy Spirit is represented by a dove proceeding from the mouths of the Father and the Son, or even nailed to the cross with Christ.

[613] See on the carved stalls of the Amiens Cathedral, and at Vierrières in the Department de l'Aube, both of the sixteenth century.

CHAPTER IV.

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GILT GLASSES AND OTHER OBJECTS FOUND IN THE CATACOMBS.

EVER since the re-discovery and exploration of the Catacombs in the sixteenth century they have been a vast treasury from which, as from an inexhaustible mine, have been derived innumerable relics of Christian antiquity, many of them of inestimable value. Among these are a number of gilt glasses of curious design and remarkable interest, lamps, vases, rings, seals, toys, trinkets, and various objects of domestic use or ornament. Collections of these relics are found in most of the great museums of Europe, especially in those of the city of Rome. An account of the more important of them will be given in the present chapter.

Reference has already been made to the numerous fragments of gilt glass found in the Catacombs, which so remarkably illustrate Christian life in the primitive ages. In the last century, Buonarotti described all the specimens then known. The distinguished archæologist, Padre Garrucci, has recently exhaustively treated these remains of ancient art in his elaborate monograph on this subject.[614] They are also profusely illustrated in the magnificent pages of Perret.[615]

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These glasses are generally mutilated fragments, apparently the bottoms of drinking-cups, and occasionally of the dish-like shape of the classic *patera*. They vary in size from about one to four or five inches in diameter. The design is executed in gold leaf on the bottom of the cup, so as to appear through the glass on the inside, and is occasionally beautifully relieved by a dark purple background. It is protected by a plate of glass, fused upon the lower surface so as to become a solid mass, like the glass paper-weights with enclosed ornamental designs which are so common. The pictures thus hermetically sealed are indestructible so long as the glass is not fractured. These vessels were apparently affixed at the time of burial to the soft plaster of the grave; but the thinner portion, standing out from the cement, has almost invariably been broken, while the thick part, imbedded in the plaster, has been preserved. Sometimes even the solid bottoms of these vessels were fractured in the effort to detach them from the walls, and frequently impressions in the cement indicate where they were affixed. They are rarely found *in situ*, having been destroyed or carried off by successive generations of explorers or plunderers. The most important collection is in the Vatican Library. In the British Museum are some thirty specimens; in the museums of Paris, Florence, and Naples, a less number; and a few others in various private collections. The entire number extant is only three hundred and forty. In the course of a quarter of a century De Rossi discovered but two fragments of these glasses. This extreme rarity is doubtless owing to their excessive fragility, and probably also to their being destroyed in large quantities to procure the gold they contain. In some of the extant examples portions of this gold has been removed by inserting a knife between the plates of glass. Perhaps the ingenious avarice of the Jewish “dealers in broken glass,” notorious even in the days of Martial,[616] may have largely contributed to the destruction of these curious remains of Christian antiquity.

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It was thought that the manufacture of these glasses was known only at Rome; but in the year 1864 a fragment of a glass plate, with a number of small gilt medallions bearing scriptural representations imbedded in it, was discovered beneath the surface of the ground near the church of St. Severin at Cologne; and in 1866 another of similar character was found, accompanied by some charred bones, in a stone chest near the same place.

Buonarotti regarded these fragments as having all formed part of sacramental vessels; but the character of the designs seems frequently to preclude that idea. Several of these are derived from the fables of pagan mythology, and seem to indicate, if not heathen origin, at least the influence of pagan types. Among them are found the figures of Achilles, Hercules, Dædalus, Minerva, Mercury, the Three Graces, Cupid and Pysche, and other groups still less congruous with Christian thought. Other scenes represent various industries, as men sawing, planing, and carving wood; a ship-builder with his men at work; a tailor, druggist, and money-coiner, in their respective shops. Hunting scenes, men boxing, and charioteers encouraging their horses, also occur. A more numerous series represent domestic groups, portraits of husband and wife, frequently accompanied by their children, groups of children playing, or sometimes a lady in rich costume, with cupids holding her mirror and other toilet adjuncts. Frequently occurs what seems to be a marriage scene, with the bride and bridegroom joining hands over an altar, above which Christ is often depicted as placing crowns on their heads. Sometimes is expressed in gilt letters the beautiful wish VIVATIS IN DEO—“May you live in God.” In one instance it is a winged cupid that bestows the crown.

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The majority of the scenes, however, are of a distinctively Christian character, comprising most of the subjects in the symbolical and biblical cycles already described; but from the conditions of space, which are often exceedingly limited, the design is frequently of a very rudimentary type. In the large *patera* of Cologne the medallions contain the separate parts of different groups, which are only intelligible as a whole. Besides the ordinary scenes from Old and New Testament history there is a unique example of the triumph of Christ, in which he appears in fulness of glory holding the globe of sovereignty; while opposite to him stands a figure, interpreted by Garrucci as Isaiah prophesying the advent of the Light of the World. Perret also figures one example of Christ on the cross, with Mary and John beside it, which

he thinks is later than the sixth century.

Another class exhibits representations of the Virgin Mary, generally in the attitude of prayer, either alone, or standing between St. Peter and St. Paul, which position is also often occupied by St. Agnes or some other female saint. More frequently recurring than any other figures are those of St. Peter and St. Paul. They are found on eighty out of three hundred and forty specimens figured by Garrucci, or nearly one fourth of the whole. They appear generally as busts side by side, without the slightest indication of the superiority of one over the other, Peter being often on the left instead of the right, which, according to the Romish theory of his primacy, he should always occupy. Indeed, their perfect parity in dignity and honour is implied in the single crown sometimes suspended over their heads, or by their simultaneous crowning by Christ, who appears between or above them. Other saints are also represented, who are discriminated by labels bearing their names, as Lawrence, Vincent, Sixtus, Callixtus, Hippolytus, etc. There are also five or six specimens exhibiting Jewish symbols, the ark of the covenant and the rolls of the law. From the technical difficulties in the employment of a rather intractable material, as well as from the general decline of art, the execution is often uncouth and stiff. "The faithful," says Buonarotti, "desiring to adorn these vases with pious symbols, were forced to avail themselves of inexpert workmen, or even those who pursued other trades."[617] The accompanying is a characteristic example, from this author, of the domestic class. It exhibits a husband, wife, and child, with the motto in Latin characters, PIE ZESES—"Drink and live." Between the faces is an object like an ancient lachrymatory.

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Fig. 109.—Domestic Group in Gilt Glass.

It is probable that these vessels were designed not for sacramental solemnities, but for occasions of domestic and social rejoicing, as nuptial, baptismal, and anniversary festivals; and for the celebration of the Agape, or love-feast, after it had lost the religious character it possessed in early times. Hence the selection of a comparatively gay and mundane class of subjects; some derived from pagan art, and others implying a conformity to the fashionable follies and amusements of the world, and indicating a decline of piety and corruption of manners.

Garrucci thinks, from the large proportion of glasses bearing the effigies of St. Peter and St. Paul, that those at least were used in connexion with the feast in honour of these saints, which in the fourth and fifth centuries was celebrated in Rome as a public holiday, with much of the vulgar merriment with which the peasants of the Campagna keep their *festa* to-day. Mr. Brownlow hints the possibility that the "idea of restraining the potations of the Roman Christians, by depicting figures which could only be seen to advantage when the glass was empty, suggested the use of these gilded cups."[618]

The festive purpose for which many of these vessels was designed is indicated by the convivial character of the inscriptions they bear. Mr. Brownlow has translated the following examples in this sense:[619] DIGNITAS AMICORVM PIE ZESES CVM TVIS OMNIBVS BIBE ET PROPINA—"A mark of friendship; drink, and (long) life to thee, with all thine; drink, and propose a toast;" CVM TVIS FELICITER ZESES—"Mayest thou live happily with thine own;" or, more freely, "Life and happiness to thee and thine;" ΠΙΕ ΖΕΣΣΕΣ ΕΝ ΑΓΑΘΟΙΣ—"Drink and live among the good."

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Sometimes these inscriptions breathe a spirit of pious congratulation and good-will, as the following from Perret: HILARIS VIVAS CVM TVIS OMNIBVS FELICITER SEMPER IN PACE DEI ZESES—"Joyfully mayest thou live with all thine; happily mayest thou live forever in the peace of God." Augustine, describing in his Confessions the devout celebration of the anniversaries of the saints by his mother, Monica, says she used to bring to the festivals "a small cup of wine diluted according to her own abstemious habits, which for courtesy she would taste."[620]

Although it is impossible that *all* these vessels were designed for sacramental purposes, yet it is not improbable that some of them were used as patens and chalices in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Tertullian speaks of the representation of the Good Shepherd on the sacred cup in a manner which seems to imply similarity of material and ornamentation.[621] The *Liber Pontificalis* states that glass patens were in use in the third century. When these were superseded by gold and silver vessels they would not improbably be placed as memorials on the tombs of departed saints.[622]

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It is difficult to determine even the proximate date of these glasses. From the degraded character of their art they are evidently of a comparatively late period. Garrucci and some other writers, indeed, assign them to the third or fourth century; but from the occurrence of the nimbus, and for other technical reasons, Marriott attributes many of them to the fifth or sixth century.[623] Other peculiarities of execution are characteristic of Byzantine art, and a writer in the *Revue Chrétienne* asserts that there is not a single example of this mode of

treatment known to belong to the Roman period. The striking corruption of doctrine and practice indicated is also an evidence of late origin.

Numerous small cups or flasks, known as *ampullæ*, have been found affixed to the walls or imbedded in the plaster of the tombs, frequently containing in the bottom a reddish deposit. This Bosio concluded was dried blood, and therefore asserted that these cups were irrefragable proofs of the martyrdom of the persons to whose graves they were attached. The Roman ecclesiastical authorities received this theory with enthusiasm, and in the year 1688 issued a decree that, "The Holy Congregation of Relics, having carefully examined the matter, decides that the palm and vessel tinged with blood are to be considered most certain signs of martyrdom." Eminent Romanist writers have unflinchingly asserted, without the least corroboration of their theory from contemporary evidence, that these cups were filled with the martyr's blood and affixed to his grave;[624] —another example of the fatal mistake of Rome in fortifying truth with the bulwark of falsehood, and thus shaking our confidence even in that which is real. The Acts of the Martyrs, indeed, mention the collecting of their blood in napkins, sponges, or veils, to keep as a talisman and heirloom at home; but never of its preservation in a cup, or burial beside their graves. This symbol does not occur on the tombs of some who were unquestionably martyrs;[625] and some who have it, from their extreme youth, or from some other reason indicated by the inscription, cannot have belonged to that honoured class.[626] Moreover, as Mr. Seymour remarks, some of these alleged martyr blood-cups are of a form and exhibit designs unknown till long after the age of persecution.[627] In the example on the following page, given by Aringhi, the inscription is unwarrantably translated by Romanist epigraphists, "the blood of Saturnius;" instead of, in analogy with numerous other inscriptions, "the place [*locus*] of holy Saturnius."

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The chemist Leibnitz analyzed the red deposit in these vessels, and found that it was composed of organic matter, but does not hazard the assertion that it is blood. It has been suggested by Röstell, with whom Rochette agrees, that these cups were sacramental vessels, and that the sediment was the lees of wine, which would yield a similar organic residuum. The desire to express fellowship with the departed in the celebration of the Agape, or the Eucharist, which often took place beside their graves, may have led to the custom of affixing these vessels to the tombs and replenishing them with wine. We know that this yearning of the human heart led in course of time to the offering of the sacrament to the dead, and the burying it in their graves.[628]

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Fig. 110. Reputed Martyr Relic from the Catacombs.

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The occurrence of the palm branch engraved or painted on the tomb was also, as we have seen, declared by the Congregation of Relics to be a certain sign of a martyr's tomb. But this was a common symbol of victory both among the pagans and Jews, and therefore was naturally adopted by the Christians in token of their being "more than conquerors" through Christ, without any reference to martyrdom. It is found, moreover, on graves posterior to the times of persecution, on those of children, and even on a tomb which a man had prepared for himself while yet alive. Muratori, who gives this example, though a devout Romanist, says the palm was by no means a sign of martyrdom.[629] Other criteria of martyrdom were also adopted, as the occurrence of the laurel and the olive crown, and the appearance of *oranti* on the tombs; but the former are also common to paganism, and in Christian epigraphy adorn the graves of very young children, and the latter frequently occur on the sarcophagi after the age of persecution had passed.

It is remarkable that so few allusions to martyrdom occur in the Catacombs. In the whole range of the inscriptions, as before observed, only five, some of which may be spurious, commemorate martyrs, or less than one in two thousand. The pictorial representations of this event are less frequent still. In the cemetery of St. Priscilla was discovered a terra cotta bas relief of the martyrdom of St. Sebastian, but evidently of late date: the soldiers are armed with cross-bows, and are clad apparently in mediæval plate armour. This subject has at all times been a favourite theme of Italian art, and this relief may have been left at the shrine of the saints by some pious pilgrim of the Middle Ages. In the Catacomb of Callixtus is a painting of two Christians standing before the tribunal of a Roman magistrate. This is

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probably of the early centuries, but how different from the gross and bloody martyr-pictures in the church of *S. Steffano in Rotondo* in Rome. On one of the gilt glasses, executed long after the days of persecution, is a group supposed to represent Isaiah sawn asunder, and in one of the Catacombs is a scene thought to indicate the martyrdom of Hippolytus. The pictures of Daniel and the three Hebrews indicate rather the triumph than the trial of God's saints.

The martyrs left no outward memorial of their sufferings, nor was any needed, for their intrepid spirit animated the whole Christian community. D'Agincourt says he found in thirty years' exploration only one picture, and that of late and barbarian design, portraying martyrdom.[630] Those who themselves stood in jeopardy every hour did not magnify the merit of the faithful confession of Christ, whom they considered alone deserving of the title of "Faithful and True Witness." No sacred litany entreated St. Stephen, St. Lawrence, St. Vincent, and all holy martyrs, to pray for them; nor is any such inscription found in the whole range of the epigraphy of the Catacombs.[631]

In the following rude representation, from a slab in the Lapidarian Gallery, Romish imagination has discovered the outline of a furnace, or of a caldron of boiling oil in which Victorina was immersed. A comparison with other similar figures indicates that it is intended for a corn measure filled with grain, the sign of the trade of an ancient meal merchant.

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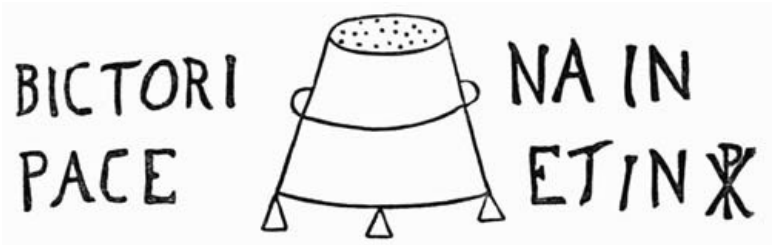

"Victorina in peace and in Christ."

Fig. 111.—A Reputed Symbol of Martyrdom.

In the Vatican Museum are certain truculent-looking objects, said by the Roman custodians to be instruments of torture taken from the graves of the martyrs.[632] But the locality in which they were found is seldom recorded, which deprives them of much of their historic value; and many of them are probably fictitious. Dr. Northcote admits that they are often "of doubtful authenticity," and that "many look more like domestic utensils, and seem to be of Etruscan workmanship." "These," he adds, "were probably never taken from the Catacombs at all."[633] Others have too modern an appearance to admit such a supposition, and look rather, as Maitland suggests, as if "taken from the chambers of the Holy Inquisition."[634] Among the most formidable of these alleged instruments of martyrdom, as well as the most probably genuine, are the terrible *plumbatæ* and *ungulæ*. The former were scourges of small chains loaded with bronze or lead, with which, it is recorded, the martyrs were often beaten to death.[635] Aringhi and others have affected to discover on the mouldering skeletons of the early Christians, after the lapse of fifteen hundred years, the marks made by these *plumbatæ*. In one exceptional instance given by Bosio,[636] an *orante* is represented with this dreadful instrument of torture lying beside her. The *ungulæ*, as the name implies, are iron claws or hooks, described in the Acts of the Martyrs as employed for lacerating their flesh. The dreadful wounds they inflict are referred to by Prudentius in his account of the martyrdom of St. Vincent: "One covers with kisses the double furrows of the *ungulæ*; another is glad to wipe the purple stream from the body."

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In the Catacomb of Calepodius was discovered an iron-toothed comb considered to have been similarly employed in torturing the martyrs; in the crypts of St. Alexander, among other iron instruments, was found a long narrow ladle, which it is thought was used in pouring molten lead down their throats; and in the cemetery of St. Agnes an iron hook, designed, as Aringhi conceived, for dragging their bodies after death. In the Vatican Museum is also a pair of iron forceps, with horrid trenchant teeth and the remains of wooden handles, probably employed in pinching and tearing the flesh of the helpless victims of heathen rage. A similar forceps is sometimes engraved on a funeral slab, where, in accordance with analogous examples, it probably indicated the trade of the deceased as a smith. The genius of primitive Christianity was averse to recording the circumstances of the believer's death, and made slight allusion to the sufferings of the martyrs. Although it is possible that some of these relics of persecution may be genuine, yet it is difficult to conceive how the Christians could obtain from the pagan authorities these instruments of torture, or why they should bury them with the martyred dead; and these considerations will account for the extreme rarity of their authentic occurrence.

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Vast numbers of lamps have been found in the Catacombs, and specimens abound in almost every antiquarian museum. They must have been absolutely necessary to dispel the darkness of these gloomy crypts, so as to render them safe for the solemnizing of funeral rites, for worship, or for sanctuary from oppression. They are of varying material and design, but are for the most part of terra cotta of the ordinary antique pattern and of common workmanship. Many, however, were executed in bronze or iron, often with considerable

taste and skill. Some of these had bronze chains by which to suspend them from the ceiling of the chambers or corridors. Those in terra cotta had frequently handles by which they could be carried; most, however, were without either, and were placed in niches in the *tufa* near the stairways, at the entrances of the principal galleries, at the angles of the corridors, and in the *cubicula* used for purposes of worship.

These lamps generally bore some Christian symbol, as the sacred monogram, the Good Shepherd, the palm, fish, or dove, and not unfrequently the heads of St. Peter and St. Paul. Sometimes the lamp itself was made in the shape of a boat, the emblem of the church voyaging through a stormy sea to the shores of eternity; of the mystic fish, whose representation entered so largely into primitive art; of a dove, the symbol of the believer's guilelessness and purity; or of a cock, the emblem of vigilance, a monition that he should watch and be sober. They frequently bear inscriptions referring to the five virgins, or to the source of true spiritual illumination, the divine word, which is a lamp unto the feet and a light unto the path. On one example occurs the legend, QVASI LVCERNAE LVCENTI IN CALIGINOSO LOCO—"As a light shining in a dark place," a sentiment peculiarly appropriate to those gloomy chambers of death, which were nevertheless illumined by the glorious hope of a blissful immortality. [Pg 377]

The accompanying example of a symbolical lamp in the form of a boat, furnished with chains and ring for suspension, is a characteristic type.[637] The figures in the little bark are interpreted by Roman archæologists as Peter and Paul—the pilot of the Galilean lake as the chief of the apostles holding the rudder and guiding the fortunes of the church. The tablet on the mast bears the inscription—DOMINVS LEGEM DAT. VALERIO SEVERO EVTROPIO. VIVAS—"The Lord gives the word. To Valerius Severus Eutropius. May you live." [Pg 378]

Fig. 113 exhibits a lamp from the Catacombs, on the upper part of which the ever-recurring ichthyic symbol is repeated, and on the handle the sacred monogram of the name of Our Lord. The lamp is replenished at the central opening. They sometimes burn with two or three lights. See also the terra cotta lamp with handle and medallion in Fig. 114, and the hanging lamps shown in Figs. 23 and 24.

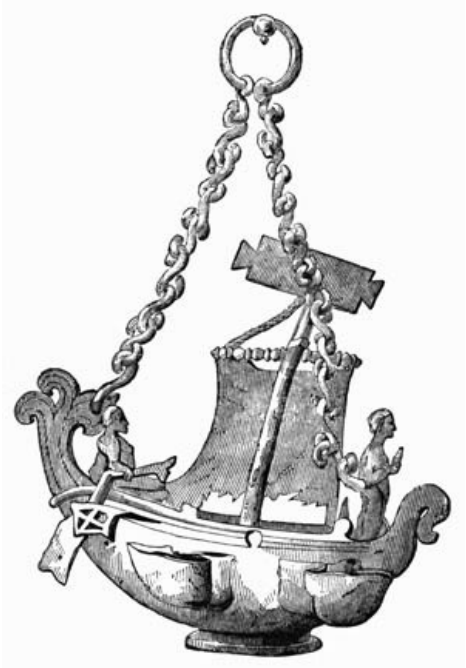

Fig. 112.—Early Christian Symbolical Lamp.

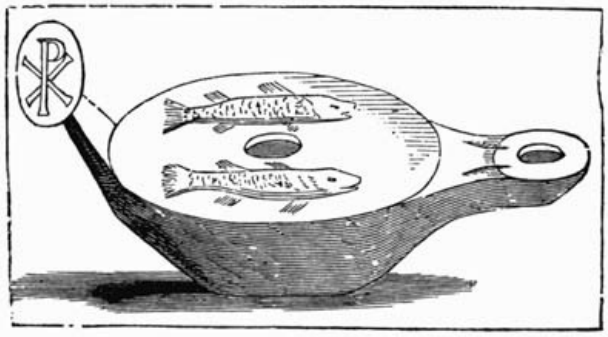

Fig. 113.—Symbolical Lamp from the Catacombs.

A lamp figured by Perret has the sacred monogram surrounded by the heads of the twelve apostles. On another found in the Jewish Catacomb is a representation of the seven-branched candlestick. This also occurs in Christian symbolism, and probably is emblematic, as has been suggested by Dr. McCaul, of the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit of divine illumination.

The necessary use of lights in the funeral solemnities of the church in the Catacombs was probably the origin of the Romish usage of burying the dead with the accompaniment of burning tapers even amid the blaze of day. It was also a heathen custom, in the adoption of which, as in so many other things, the Catholic became the pagan's heir.[638] Jerome mentions its observance in his day at the funeral of the famous Lady Paula.[639] Several others of the later Fathers mention the same practice. [Pg 379]

From the illumination of the subterranean chapels was also derived the custom of burning altar lights, which early became prevalent, and which is so striking a feature of modern Romanism.[640] The first step in this direction seems to have been the practice of burning tapers before the shrines of the martyrs in the Catacombs, probably for the convenience of pilgrims to their tombs, which practice was continued in the churches erected over their remains. The Council of Elvira forbade the custom,[641] which Vigilantius vehemently denounced as an imitation of the pagan superstition of lighting lamps at the graves of the dead.[642] "We almost see," he says, "the ceremonial of the heathen introduced into the [Pg 380] churches under the guise of religion—piles of candles lighted while the sun is shining.... Great honour do such persons as do this," he adds, "render to the blessed martyrs, thinking with miserable tapers to illumine those whom the Lamb in the midst of the throne shines upon with the splendour of his glory."[643] In the fifth century, however, the custom of thus striving to do "vain honour to the Father of lights" had become established.

Numerous terra cotta vases of varying size and shape have been found in the Catacombs. Some of these were quite large, and were probably used for holding water or wine for the fossors, or perhaps for the refugees from persecution. The first vase in the engraving on the following page, which is exactly the shape of the classic amphora,[644] is over three feet high. The acute termination at the bottom was set in a stand or stuck in the ground, so that the vessel stood upright. Many amphoræ have been found in this position in the cellars of Pompeii. The upper right hand object is furnished with a spout, and an opening for replenishing the vessel. That in the lower right hand corner is a lamp with a handle for carrying it, ornamented by medallion heads of St. Peter and St. Paul. The small flasks in the centre of the engraving are of enamel and purple glass, about an inch high, probably for holding precious unguents. These miniature vases were sometimes made of agate, and were occasionally in the shape of a bee-hive, probably emblematic of the milk and honey given at [Pg 381] baptism, to signify the sincere milk of the word and the sweets of salvation imparted to new-born babes of Christ.[645]

Fig. 114.—Earthen Vessels from the Catacombs.

Some of these vessels are shallow basins rather than vases, (see above, and also Fig. 116,) which have been interpreted by Roman Catholic writers as *benitiers*, or holy-water vessels employed in the services of the Romish ritual. They were more probably ablutionary basins [Pg 382] for the use of the fossors, summoned from their grimy labour to assist in the funeral solemnities; or, possibly, for the symbolical washing of the hands by the primitive bishops and presbyters before the consecration of the eucharist, which is mentioned by several of the Fathers as a fulfilment of that Scripture, "I will wash mine hands in innocency; so will I compass thine altar, O Lord."[646] They have also been regarded as baptismal vases.

Generally this primitive pottery, except the fictile lamps, bears no distinctive Christian symbol; yet sometimes it does, as the accompanying amphora, the bottom of which has been broken off. Around the vessel runs the inscription, VINCENTI PIE ZESE—"Vincent, drink and live." On the lower part are three conquering horses, probably in allusion to the name Vincent. Above the horses is the inscription, AEGIS OIKOYMENE ZEP, written backwards.

The tall vessels shown in Fig. 116, which are of silver with gold coating, are described by Perret as designed for holding the holy chrism,[647] or sacred

Fig. 115.—An Amphora.

anointing oil. They were more probably used for containing the wine for the eucharist, for which they were of sufficient size, as the subterranean assemblies could not be very numerous. On the large medallion is a bust of St. Paul, and on the reverse that of St. Peter. On the other vessel, besides the busts of these saints, is that of Our Lord wearing a nimbus, together with the sacred symbols of the cross, doves, and lambs. The nimbus, the form of the cross, the material, and the style of execution, indicate a comparatively late date. Some of the vessels we have described were doubtless employed also in the celebration of the Agape.

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Fig. 116.—Metal and Earthen Vessels from the Catacombs.

Among the most interesting objects found in the Catacombs are the rings and seals of the early Christians, which are frequently combined in one. Tertullian speaks of the *annulus pronubus*, or ring of espousal, the wearing of which was the only use of gold known to the Roman women in the days of primitive simplicity;[648] and St. Agnes declares her betrothal to Christ by the ring of his faith.[649] A signet ring was also considered an essential part of the bridal outfit of a newly wedded wife, and that not for ostentation, says Clement of Alexandria, but that, being entrusted with the care of domestic concerns, she may seal up those household treasures which might otherwise be insecure.[650] But these rings must be freed from every trace of idolatrous superstition, and bear only Christian symbols. "On our signet rings," says the writer just mentioned,[651] "let there be seen only a dove, or a fish, or a ship sailing toward heaven, or a lyre, or an anchor; for those men ought not to engrave idolatrous forms to whom the use of them is forbidden; those can engrave no sword and bow who seek for peace; the friends of temperance cannot engrave drinking cups."

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Signet rings, being ancient symbols of authority,[652] were also worn by bishops as a sort of badge of office, and as a pledge of their spiritual espousal to the church of Christ. A curious episcopal ring worn by St. Arnulf, bishop of Metz, in the sixth century, exhibits the well-known ichthyic symbol.[653]

The ring shown in Fig. 117 bears the sacred monogram accompanied by the significant Alpha and Omega. In the seal, or intaglio, copied in Fig. 118, the ship of the church is represented as borne by the symbolical fish, while doves, the emblem of the faithful, perch upon the mast and stern. In naive blending of the literal with the figurative, Our Lord in bodily presence is seen approaching the vessel and supporting Peter by the hand, doubtless in allusion to the trial of his faith on the Sea of Galilee. The identity of both figures is indicated by the names written overhead. Two other apostles row the vessel, and a third lifts up his hands in prayer. It was doubtless a seal of this character to which Clement of Alexandria alludes as bearing the ναῦς οὐρανοδραμοῦσα—"the ship in full sail for heaven."

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On some signet rings in the Museum of Naples, found in the ruins of Pompeii, are the Christian symbols of the mystical fish, palms, and the anchor of hope, or the synonymous word ΕΛΠΙC. These are almost the sole indications of the existence of any Christian element in that gay, luxurious city. Other Pompeian rings bear light Epicurean mottoes, as: ΕΥΤΥΧΙ ΠΑΝΟΙΚΙ Ο ΦΕΡΩΝ—"Good luck to thee, O wearer, and to all thine;" ΛΕΓΟΥCΙΝ Α ΘΕΛΟΥCΙΝ ΛΕΓΕΤΩCΑΝ ΟΥ ΜΕΛΙΜΟΙ—"They say what they will; let them say, I care not." Another has an engraving of a finger holding an ear, with the word, MNHMONEYE—"Remember." Other Roman rings bear such mottoes as, AMO TE AMA ME—"I love thee, love thou me;" PIGNVS AMORIS—"A pledge of love;" VNI AMBROSIA VENENVM CAETERIS—"To one nectar, to others poison."

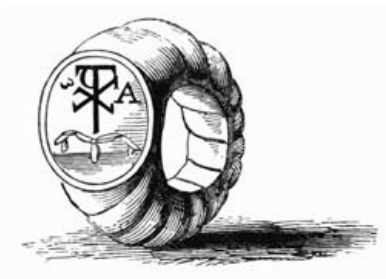

Fig. 117.—A Ring from the Catacombs.

Fig. 118.—A Seal from the Catacombs.

More frequently than the seal itself occurs its impression in the plaster of the graves, either to express some Christian sentiment, or as a means of recognizing a tomb which bore no other mark. The stamp of coins, or even shells, stuck into the plaster, were used apparently for the same purpose. In the following engraving are represented impressions of two of these seals. In the first is the confession of faith in the divinity of Our Lord by some orthodox Christian, probably in the time of the Arian heresy. In the second a devout believer declares his hope in Christ.

CHRISTVS EST DEVS.
Christ is God.

SPES IN EO.
Hope in Him, *i. e.*, in Christ.

Fig. 119.—Impressions of Early Christian Seals.

Other seals bear such pious mottoes as DEVS DEDIT—"God gave;" VIVAS IN DEO—"May you live in God;" SPES IN DEO—"Hope in God;" PEDE SECVNDO—"May you succeed happily." Vast numbers of tiles bearing impressions of the die upon them are found, but these are merely the stamps of the imperial brick kilns, with the names of the reigning sovereigns.

Affecting memorials of domestic affection are found in the toys and trinkets of little children enclosed in their graves or affixed to the plaster without. The dolls in the following engraving strikingly resemble those with which children amuse themselves to-day. They are made of ivory, and some are furnished with wires, by which the joints can be worked after the manner of the modern marionettes. The object in the upper left hand corner is a terra cotta vase with a narrow slit for receiving money, like the common children's savings banks. Beneath it is an ivory ring. The other objects are small bronze bells, forming part of a child's rattle. In the Catacomb of St. Sebastian was also found a small terra cotta horse of rude design, dappled with coloured spots.

The human affections are the same in every age. These simple objects speak more directly to the heart than "storied urn or animated bust." As we gaze upon these childish toys in the Vatican Museum the centuries vanish, and busy fancy pictures the weeping Roman mother placing these cherished relics of her dead babe in its waxen hands or by its side, as it is laid from her loving arms in the cold embrace of the rocky grave, and then, with tear-dimmed eyes, taking a last, long, lingering farewell of the loved form about to be closed from her sight forever.

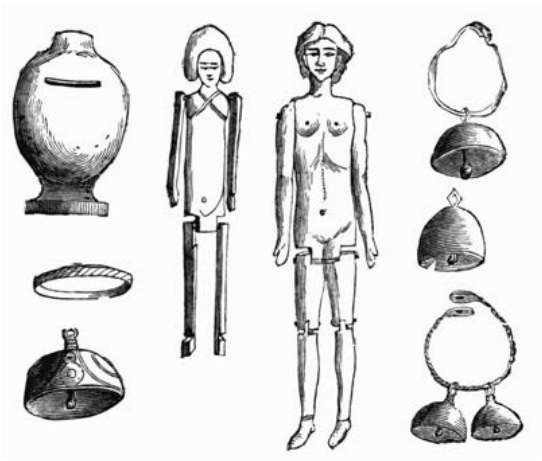

Fig. 120.—Children's Toys found in the Catacombs.

Numerous toilet articles have also been found in the Catacombs, generally in the graves of the dead or cemented by the plaster to the tombs. Many of these have been plundered and lost; but still a very interesting collection exists in the Vatican Library. Among its contents are long silver or ivory bodkins for the hair, combs of box or ivory, scent-bottles and boxes of perfume, broaches, earrings, bracelets, sometimes with keys to unlock the clasps, and other ornaments in bronze, silver, or gold.[654] The simpler manners of the Christian women, as compared with those of pagan faith around them, is indicated by the conspicuous absence of the rouge pots and jars of cosmetics, and many other articles of luxury, which formed so important a part of the toilet requisites of

Rome's proud dames, and which are so frequently found in the ruins of Pompeii. The Christian ornaments, moreover, even after the departure from the primitive simplicity of manners, were of a very different character from those of the corrupt civilization of paganism. Instead of the abominable representations of heathen art, suggesting every evil thought and stimulating every vile passion, of which so many examples occur in the Museum of Naples, only chaste and modest figures are found; and even the articles of the toilet are frequently adorned with pious mottoes. Thus, on a bodkin for a lady's hair, probably a love-gift to a wife or betrothed bride, is engraved the beautiful sentiment, ROMVLA SEMPER VIVAS IN DEO—"Romula, may you ever live in God." Such a religious art seems an anticipation of the day when "Holiness to the Lord" shall be written upon the bells of the horses.

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Small caskets of gold or other metal for containing a portion of the gospels, generally part of the first chapter of John, which were worn on the neck, have also been found. They seem to have been introduced in the decline of primitive piety in imitation of the Jewish phylactery or pagan amulet, and were probably worn for the same superstitious purpose, to avert danger or to cure disease. They were condemned by Irenæus, Augustine, Chrysostom, and by the Council of Laodicea, as a relic of heathenism.[655] On a carved figure of a fish, with a hole drilled through it for suspending it from the neck, and probably intended for an amulet, is engraved the word, CΩCAIC—"Mayest thou save us." Medals, coins, and what are described as tessaræ of hospitality, by which the early Christians recognized travelling members of distant churches as sharers of the same faith, and admitted them to their assemblies and their homes, have likewise been found. So also have articles of domestic economy, as spoons, knives, keys, drinking-cups and shells used as such, and even a metallic kettle for cooking. Certain articles employed in religious service, as a baptismal font, altars, chairs, etc., will be hereafter described.

This practice of burying with the dead the objects which they had employed in life was common to the pagans from the earliest Etruscan times to the most recent heathen sepulture. They interred in the tombs of the departed every kind of utensil and implement of trade, and even articles of food. M. Rochette perceives herein a notion, confused and gross though it may be, of the immortality of the soul, and a proof of that instinct of man which recoils from the thought of annihilation.[656] In like manner, the Christians, although animated by a loftier hope, and inspired with an assurance of eternal deathlessness, long followed this ancient custom, even to the extent sometimes of putting the piece of money in the mouth of the deceased, intended by the heathen for the payment of Charon.[657] This was most probably, in many instances a mere unthinking conformity to ancient use and wont. Milman asserts that the practice of burying money, often large sums, with the dead, was the cause of the very severe Roman laws against the violations of the tombs, inasmuch as the government wished to reserve to itself that source of revenue.[658]

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Fig. 121.—Statue of the Good Shepherd.

In the Christian Museum of the Vatican is a marble statue of the Good Shepherd, figured in the accompanying engraving, which is believed to be from the Catacombs. Although the execution is coarse, yet from the general style Rumohr thinks it probably the oldest extant specimen of Christian statuary.[659] Sculpture seems to have bowed less willingly than painting to the new religion, and was much more tardy in laying its offerings on the altar of Christianity. It retained also much of the spirit of paganism, and never became thoroughly imbued with Christian sentiment. The colossal figure of the Galilean fisherman beneath the mighty dome of his proud mausoleum—that stateliest fane in Christendom—if not indeed the identical statue of the Capitoline Jove, is copied from a heathen model. The majestic Moses of Michael Angelo seems rather the embodied conception of the cloud-compelling Phidian Zeus than of the Hebrew patriarch, described as the meekest of men. Even Thorwaldsen's sublime figures of Christ and the apostles exhibit more of the majesty of antique pagan art than of the meek and tender grace of Christianity. Sculpture, as M. Rochette well remarks, struck its roots deeply into the soil of heathenism, and was with the utmost difficulty transplanted therefrom. It is essentially pagan in its character, and is especially adapted for the expression of the severer virtues. Painting is more instinct with Christian spirit, and is the better fitted for the representation of the softer graces.

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Moreover, the profession of the sculptor was held in abhorrence on account of its connexion with idolatry. Tertullian stigmatizes the makers of images as the foster-fathers of devils and the procurers of idols.[660] Prudentius calls Mentor and Phidias the makers and parents of the heathen gods.[661] All who were in any wise connected with this unhallowed craft were rejected from the ordinance of baptism and denied the holy eucharist.[662] "The ancient Christians," Buonarotti truly remarks, "always kept aloof from these arts, by which they might have run a risk of polluting themselves with idolatry; and hence it arose that few or none of them devoted themselves to painting or to sculpture, which had as their principal object the representations of the gods or the myths of the heathen."[663] Hence the almost entire absence of Christian statuary from the Catacombs. Even the sculptured bas reliefs of the sarcophagi before described were for

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the most part the product of that later period, when Christianity, coming forth from these subterranean crypts, walked in the light of day and basked in the favour of princes.

This brief notice of early Christian sculpture would be incomplete without some reference to the statue of the celebrated Hippolytus, bishop of Portus, the most remarkable known specimen of that class. It was discovered by some workmen digging near the church of *San Lorenzo fuori le mura* in the year 1551, and probably originally stood in the adjacent Catacomb of Hippolytus. The martyr bishop is represented as seated in a sort of episcopal [Pg 393] chair. The figure is modelled with a classic grace and dignity superior to any examples of the Constantinian period. Indeed, the distinguished art critic, Winckelmann, declares it to be the finest specimen of early Christian sculpture extant. It was considerably mutilated, but has been skilfully restored, and now stands in the Lateran Museum. On the base of the chair is engraved a list of the published writings of Hippolytus,[664] and also the table which he constructed for determining the true period of the Easter festival. The discovery of an error in this table deprived it of much of its value; and the date of this monument is probably prior to that discovery, or the early part of the third century.

Passing allusion should also be here made to the early Christian diptychs, specimens of which are found in almost every antiquarian museum. These were formed after the model of the imperial and consular diptychs, or registers of the public officers of Rome. They consisted of tablets of ivory, wood, or metal, folded together,[665] and bore the names of the [Pg 394] bishops, officers, or distinguished patrons of the church, and memorials of the martyrs and holy dead. These memorials were frequently read in the religious assemblies of the primitive church, especially on the anniversaries of the martyrs' death. This practice led in course of time to the invocation of their aid in the Litany of the Saints, and to other errors of Romanism. The diptychs had also frequently elaborate bas reliefs of scenes from the biblical cycle, and in the age of image-worship bore the figures of the saints to whom a corrupt Christianity had begun to pay an idolatrous veneration. They became thus the prototype of the illuminated missal of the Middle Ages.

[614] *Vetri ornati di figure in oro trovati nei cimiteri dei Cristiani primitivi di Roma raccolti e spiegati da Raffaele Garrucci.*—Roma, 1858.

[615] *Osservazioni sopra alcuni frammenti di vasi antichi di vetro ornati di figure trovati nei cimiteri di Roma.*—Firenze, 1716.

[616] Transtyberinus ambulator,
Qui pallentia sulphurata fractis
Permutat vitreis.—*Epig.*, i, 42.

[617] Sicche volendo i fedeli adornar con simboli devoti i loro vasi, erano forzati per lo più a valersi di artefici inesperti, e che professavano altre mestieri.—*De' Vetri Cemeteriali.*

[618] *Rom. Sott.*, p. 283.

[619] *Ibid.*

[620] "Unde dignationem sumeret."—*Conf.*, vi, 2. Compare with the expression DIGNITAS in the previous inscription.

[621] Pastor quem in calice depingis.—*De Pudicit.*, c. 7. Ipsæ picturæ calicum vestrorum, si vel in illis *perlucebit* interpretatio,... et ego ejus pastoris scripturam haurio *qui non potest frangi*.—*Ibid.*, 10.

[622] Glass chalices are common, indeed it is said universal, at the present day in the Coptic churches of Egypt. The *San Greal*, or reputed vessel of the institution of the Lord's Supper, preserved in the Cathedral of Genoa, is, curiously enough, of glass, of a hexagonal form.

[623] P. 16, first foot note. Both Christ and Mary have the nimbus. The legend *Christus et Istafanus* on one example, indicating a transition into modern Italian, implies a late date.

[624] Rock's *Hierurgia*, p. 269.

[625] See the epitaphs of Lannus and Gordianus, p. 98.

[626] Muratori gives the epitaph of a girl of the age of two years and twenty days, on whose tombstone this cup was found, and feeling the absurdity of this theory, but unwilling to controvert the decree of the Congregation of Relics, he adds ironically, "In these sacred cemeteries you especially wonder at two things, namely, that when so many glass or figured vases occur no mention is made in the inscriptions of martyrdom; and especially that *infants* suffered death on account of faith in Christ"—In sacris iis cœmeteriis duo potissimum mireris, Nempe quum tot Vasa vitrea aut figulina occurrant, nullam tamen in ipsis inscriptionibus mortis pro Christo toleratæ mentionem haberi, et praeterea Infantes ob Fidem Christi morti datos fuisse.—*Nov. Thesaur. Vet. Inscrip.*, p. 1958, No. 8.

[627] *Mornings with the Jesuits*, p. 222.

[628] The Third Council of Carthage in the year 397 forbade this practice, because Christ said, "Take and eat," whereas a dead body can neither take nor eat—Placuit ut corporibus defunctorum eucharistia non detur. Dictum est enim a Domino Accipite et edite: cadavera autem nec accipere possunt, nec edere.—*Conc. Cath.*, 3, can. 6. Chrysostom also denounces the practice because the words were spoken to the living and not to the dead.—*Hom.*, 40, in 1 Cor. Gregory the Great speaks of the burial of the Eucharist with the dead, "Jussit communionem Dominici corporis in pectus defuncti reponi atque sic tumulari."—*Greg. Dial.*, lib. ii, c. 24. Maitland thinks that these cups were probably depositories for aromatic gums much used in the interment of the dead.

[629] “Ergo palma indicium minime Martyri fuit.”—The inscription, which bears two palms, reads thus—LEOPARDVS SE BIBV FECIT.

[630] Il n’a rencontré lui même dans ces souterrains aucun trace de nul autre tableau représentant une martyre.—*Hist. de l’Art.*

[631] A fresco of the martyrdom of Felicitas and her seven sons, in an ancient chapel within the Baths of Titus, is not later, according to M. Rochette, (*Mém. de l’Acad. des Inscr.*, tom. xiii, p. 165,) than the seventh century.

[632] Aringhi has given an entire chapter on this subject, entitled “Martyriorum instrumenta unà cum martyrum corporibus tumulo reponuntur.”—*Rom. Sott.*, i, 29.

[633] *Catacombs of Rome*, pp. 111, 112.

[634] *Ibid.*, p. 187.

[635] “Flagellum quoddam ad corpus excruciandum,” is the phrase of Aringhi.

[636] *Rom. Sott.*, p. 387.

[637] *Perret*, tom. iv, planche 2. The ship was a favourite type of the church during the Middle Ages. In the church of St. Etienne-du-Mont, at Paris, is a representation of a vessel crowded with passengers, among whom the portrait of Francis I. has been recognized. In an ancient Merovingian MS. missal the same idea is repeated, only the Holy Spirit is substituted as pilot —Bene gubernatus est Spiritus Sanctus.

[638] *La Corinne.*

[639] Translata episcoporum manibus, cum alii pontifices lampadas cereosque præferrent.—Hieron., Ep. 27, *ad Eustach., in Epitaph. Paulæ*.

[640] Sometimes a single candelabrum bears three hundred and sixty-five lights, emblematic of the days of the year. More impressive is a solitary lamp ever burning at some lowly shrine, the type of the flame of love burning in perpetual adoration on the altar of the heart.

[641] Canon., 34.

[642] The following inscription from Gruter indicates this practice:

QVISQVE · HVIC · TVMVLO
POSVIT · ARDENTEM · LVCERNAM
ILLIVS · CINERES · AVREA · TERRA · TEGAT.

“Who ever places a burning lamp before this tomb, may a golden soil cover his ashes.”

Lactantius accuses the pagans of burning lights to God as to one living in darkness, (*Institut. Divin.*, lib. vi, cap. 2,) and the Theodosian Code forbids the custom.

[643] Prope ritum gentilium videmus sub prætextu religionis introductum in ecclesias, sole adhuc fulgente moles cereorum accendi, etc.—*Adv. Vigil.*, ii.

[644] From ἀμφί and φέρω—on account of the handles on each side of the neck. They were also called *diota*, or two-eared, from διώτη.

[645] Lac significat innocentiam parvulorum.—Hieron., in *Esai*. lv, 1. Deinde egressos lactis et mellis prægustare concordiam ad infantiæ significationem.—*Ibid.*, *Contr. Lucif.*, c. 4. See also Tertul., *de Coron. Mil.*, c. 3; Clem. Alex., *Pædagog.*, lib. i, c. 6.

[646] Nam utique et altare portarent et vasa ejus, et aquam in manus funderent sarcerdoti, sicut videmus per omnes ecclesias.—Aug., *Quæst. Vet. et Nov. Test.*, qu. 101. See also Cyril, *Catech. Myst.*, 5, n. 1.

[647] “*Renfermer le Saint-chrême.*” Tom. i, p. 266.

[648] Cum aurum nulla norat præter unico digito, quem sponsus oppignerasset annulo pronubo. —*Apol.*, c. 6.

[649] Et annulo fidei suæ subarravit me.—In Ambr. *Ep.* 31.

[650] Clem. Alex., *Pædagog.*, iii, 2.

[651] *Ibid.*

[652] See the example of Pharaoh, Gen. xli, 42; and Ahasuerus, Esther iii, 10, and viii, 2.

[653] Pitra, *Spicil. Solesm.*, tom. iii, tab. iii, n. 4.

[654] When the tomb of the Empress Maria, wife of Honorius, was opened in 1544, a profusion of ornaments and trinkets were found, from which, it is said, not less than thirty-six pounds of gold were taken. The Empress Placidia was also interred in similar gorgeous funeral pomp, which was, however, consumed in 1577 by the accidental ignition of her gold-embroidered robes.

[655] Iren., lib. ii, c. 57. Aug., tract 7, *in Joan.*; serm. 215, *de Tempore*. Chrysos., hom. vi, *Contr. Judæos*. Conc. Laodic., can. 36.

[656] Il y avait là une notion confuse et grossière sans doute de l’immortalité de l’âme, mais il s’y trouvait aussi la preuve sensible et palpable de cet instinct de l’homme, qui repugne à l’idée de la destruction de son être.—*Mém. de l’Acad. des Inscr.*, tom. xiii, p. 689.

[657] Rochette says that this practice continued down to the time of Thomas Aquinas, who wrote against it.

[658] “Gold may justly be taken from the sepulture which no longer contains its original owner,” says the minister of Theodoric to a provincial governor; “indeed, it is a sort of fault to leave idly

hidden with the dead that which might support the living."—Aurum enim justè sepulcro detrahitur, ubi dominus non habetur; imo culpæ genus est inutiliter abdita relinquere mortuorum, unde se vita potest sustentare viventium.—Cassiod., *Var.*, iv, 34.

[659] *Italienische Forschungen*, vol. i, p. 168.—The subject of early Christian sculpture is fully treated in a recent work by Dr. Wilhelm Lübke, entitled *Geschichte der Plastik*. Two vols. Leipzig: Seeman, 1870.

[660] Qua constantia exorcizabit *alumnos suos*, quibus domum suam cellariam præstat ... quid aliud quam procurator idolorum demonstraris?—*De Idol.*, c. 11.

[661] Fabri deorum, vel parentes numinum.—*Peristeph.*, x, 293.

[662] *Constit. Apostol.*, lib. viii, c. 32.

[663] Stettero sempre lontane di quelle arti, colle quali avessero potuto correr pericolo di contaminarsi colla idolatria, e da ciò avvenne, che pochi, o niuno di essi si diede alla pittura e alla scultura, le quali aveano per oggetto principale di rappresentare le deità, e le favole de' gentili.—Buonarotti, *De' Vetri Cemeteriali*.

[664] These were exceedingly voluminous, and although several of them have perished, those which remain throw great light on one of the most obscure periods in the history of the church, and vindicate the title of Origen of the West, bestowed on Hippolytus by Pressensé. Among his most important works were a commentary on the greater part of the Old and New Testament, treatises on Antichrist, on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, on Good and the Origin of Evil, on God and the Resurrection. He was especially noted, moreover, as a vigorous and skilful polemic, and wrote against Platonism and Judaism, and, as we have seen, (page 173,) against Callixtus, bishop of Rome, for his pantheistic heresy. His great work, however, is that entitled the *Philosophoumena*. "It is a vast repertory," says Pressensé, "reviewing all the doctrinal controversies of the church from the earliest ages and most obscure beginnings of Gnosticism. Christian antiquity has left us no more valuable monument than the treatise "On all the Heresies" of Hippolytus, discovered a few years since among the dusty treasures of a convent of Mount Athos."

[665] Whence the name, from δίπτυχον, twofold; when several tablets were used they were called πολύπτυχον, or manifold.

BOOK THIRD.

THE INSCRIPTIONS OF THE CATACOMBS.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE INSCRIPTIONS.

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Few places in Rome are more attractive to the student of Christian archæology than the Lapidarian Gallery in the palace of the Vatican. In this long corridor[666] are preserved a multitude of epigraphic remains of the venerable past, shattered wrecks of antiquity, which have floated down the stream of time, and have here, as in a quiet haven, at length found shelter. The walls on either side are completely covered with inscribed slabs affixed to their surface. On the right hand are arranged the pagan monuments collected from the neighbourhood of the city—sepulchral and votive tablets, altar dedications, fragments of imperial rescripts and edicts, and other evidences of the power and splendour of the palmy days of Rome. On the left are the humble epitaphs of the early Christians, rudely carved in stone or scratched in plaster, and brought hither chiefly from the crypts of the Catacombs. Of greater interest to him who would rehabilitate the early ages of the church, and

> To the sessions of sweet silent thought
> Would summon up remembrance of things past,[667]

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is this long corridor of inscriptions than any of the four thousand apartments of that vast palace of the popes, with their priceless bronzes, marbles, gems, frescoes, and other remains of classic art. He will turn away from the noble galleries where the Laocoon forever writhes in stone, and Apollo—lord of the unerring bow—watches his arrow hurtling toward its mark, to the plain marble slabs that line these walls. In the rude inscriptions here recorded he will discover some of the strongest evidences of revealed religion and most striking proofs of the purity of the faith, simplicity of worship, and uncorrupted doctrines of the early church. Thus primitive Christianity lifts its solemn protest in these halls of wealth and power, in the very palace of the popes, against the anti-Christian system of which they are the representatives.

Here the monuments of pagan and of Christian Rome confront each other. The spectator stands between two worlds of widest divergence, and cannot but be struck with the immense contrast between them. “I have spent,” says M. Rochette, “many entire days in this sanctuary of antiquity, where the sacred and profane stand face to face in the written monuments preserved to us, as in the days when paganism and Christianity, striving with all their powers, were engaged in mortal conflict.”[668] On the one side are recorded the pride and pomp of worldly rank, the lofty titles and manifold distinctions of every class, from divinities to slaves. The undying historic names of Rome’s mighty conquerors, the leaders of her cohorts and legions, mingle with those of the proud patrician citizens, and alike display on their sepulchral slabs the august array of prænomen, nomen, and cognomen, which attest their lofty social position or civil power.[669] The costly carving and elaborate bas reliefs of many of these monuments indicate the wealth of him whom they commemorate. The elegantly turned classic epitaph—with its elegiac hexameters breathing the stern and cold philosophy of the Stoa, or an utter blankness of despair concerning the future, or, perchance, a querulous and passionate complaining against the gods—shows how the races without the knowledge of the true God met the awful mystery of death. The numerous altars to all the fabled deities of the Pantheon, the vaunting inscriptions and lofty attributes ascribed to the shadowy brood of Olympus—“unconquered, greatest, and best”—read, by the light of to-day, like an unconscious satire on the high pretensions of those vanished powers. The fragmentary edicts of the emperors, the numerous military trophies, and the records of complicated political orders, indicate the might and majesty of the Empire in the days of its utmost power and splendour.

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On the other side of the corridor are the humble epitaphs of the despised and persecuted Christians, many of which, by their rudeness, their brevity, and often their marks of ignorance and haste, confirm the truth of the Scripture, that “not many mighty, not many noble, are called.” Yet these “short and simple annals of the poor” speak to the heart with a power and pathos compared with which the loftiest classic eloquence seems cold and empty. It is a fascinating task to spell out the sculptured legends of the Catacombs—the vast graveyard of the primitive church, which seems to give up its dead at our questioning, to bear witness concerning the faith and hope of the Golden Age of Christianity. As we muse upon these half-effaced inscriptions—

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> Rudely written, but each letter
> Full of hope, and yet of heart-break,
> Full of all the tender pathos
> Of the Here and the Hereafter—

we are brought face to face with the church of the early centuries, and are enabled to comprehend its spirit better than by means of any other evidence extant. These simple epitaphs speak no conventional language like the edicts of the emperors, the monuments of the mighty, or even the writings of the Fathers; they utter the cry of the human heart in the hours of its deepest emotion; they bridge the gulf of time, and make us feel ourselves akin with the suffering, sorrowing, yet triumphant Christians of the primitive ages.

These inscriptions were found *in situ* in the explorations of the Catacombs, or were dug up in vineyards in the vicinity of the city. They have been diligently collected by antiquarians for the last three hundred years. Before the year 1578 there were not a thousand Christian inscriptions extant in all Italy. Of these not one was derived from the Catacombs, and the earliest date was the year 533. With all its boasted veneration for the past, and professed devotion to the antiquities of primitive Christianity, the Church of Rome allowed the memory of the Catacombs, the shrine and sanctuary of the faith in the early centuries, to be as completely forgotten as the site of Troy; and even after their rediscovery many of their principal records of the past were wantonly destroyed or recklessly lost through the ignorance or carelessness of their self-constituted guardians and preservers. Numerous invaluable inscriptions have perished from the effects of time; many have been scattered throughout the public and private collections of Europe; and many more have been defaced or ruined by the feet of generations of worshippers in the churches of whose pavements they form a part. Bosio describes many monuments extant in his day of which De Rossi saw only the fragments, and the latter pathetically deplores the destruction and devastation of those precious relics of Christian antiquity.[670]

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Christian epigraphy, however, was not altogether neglected during the Middle Ages. A manuscript collection of epitaphs found at Einsiedlen, and attributed to the ninth century, is partly Christian; and another, found at Kloster Newburg, is exclusively so. A manuscript in St. Mark's Library at Venice contains about a hundred and fifty early Christian epitaphs. The first collection after the revival of letters was made by Pietro Sabini, and another was published by Onofrio Panvini. Leo X. commanded Raphael, the *capo architetto* of St. Peter's, to preserve from injury the inscriptions—*res lapidaria*—of the older structure; but no systematic attempt at their preservation was made till Benedict XIV. appointed Francesco Brambini to that task. He collected a large number in the long gallery of the Vatican; but they were not arranged till the close of the last century, when they were classified by the distinguished archæologist Geatano Marini at the command of Pius VI. A new collection was begun in the Lateran Museum by Padre Marchi, which has been greatly enlarged and admirably classified and arranged by Cavaliere De Rossi. There are also other collections in the Collegio Romano, and in the Kircherian and other Museums. Many sepulchral slabs are also affixed to the walls or inserted in the pavement of the churches of St. Paul, St. Gregory, St. Laurence, St. Mark, St. Maria in Trastevere, and in a few others in Rome.[671]

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That distinguished scholar and epigraphist, De Rossi, has passed through the crucible of his critical examination all the extant inscriptions of the first six centuries found in the neighbourhood of Rome. In the first volume of his *Inscriptiones Christianæ* he gives all those with consular dates, thirteen hundred and seventy-four in number. He designs giving in future volumes the remainder of the series, classified according to their doctrinal, historical, or other characteristics. He treats the subject with the utmost candour and moderation, and illustrates these frequently obscure topics with exhaustive and various scholarship. There are now over eleven thousand of these epitaphs extant, which number is being continually increased by the progressive exploration of the Catacombs. From an analysis of their general characteristics and appearance the following results are derived.

The inscriptions are generally engraved on marble slabs from one to three feet long and one foot high, which are used to close the graves of the dead; many, however, are mere scratches on the soft surface of the plaster, hardened in drying; and some are written with red or black paint, or, more rarely, with charcoal. The letters vary from half an inch to four inches in height, and the incised surface is frequently coloured with a reddish pigment. Prudentius, alluding to this practice of chiseling the letters in stone, calls upon the faithful to "wash with their tears the furrows of those marble slabs."[672]

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The epitaphs are for the most part written in uncial characters, frequently without any separation of the words,[673] although sometimes they are divided by spaces, points, or leaves. They frequently abound also in contractions and monogrammatic abbreviations, imposed by limit of space or economy of labour, as in the following figure:

Fig. 122.—"Gemella sleeps in peace."

Although sometimes well cut, the inscriptions are often wretchedly executed, presenting a straggling and scarce legible scrawl, as in the following examples, the second of which indicates a transition into the later cursive character. [Pg 402]

Fig. 123.—"Ligurius Successus, in peace."

Fig. 124.—"Domitius in peace. Lea erected this."[674]

This ancient epigraphy often betrays extreme ignorance, and sets at defiance all the laws of grammatical construction. The spelling is frequently atrocious, and the general style and character utterly barbarous, rendering the meaning extremely obscure or altogether undecipherable. The language was much corrupted by the foreigners and slaves who formed so large a portion of the population. The later examples are often marked by the absence of terminal inflexions and the use of prepositions instead, and by other indications of the falling to pieces of the stately Latin tongue, which had been the vehicle of such a noble literature and such lofty eloquence, and of its degeneracy from the purity of the Augustan era into the mixed dialect of the Middle Ages, from which the modern Italian has sprung.[675] [Pg 403]

The barbarous Latinity of the following indicates the degradation into which the language had fallen:

IIBER QVI VIXI QVAI QVO
PARE IVA ANOIVE I ANORV
M PLVI MINVI XXX I PACE.

Read: *Liber, qui vixit cum compare sua annum I. Annorum plus minus XXX. In pace.*

Liber, who lived with his wife one year. He lived thirty years, more or less. In peace.

Sometimes the inscription is found upside down, being probably thus placed by one unable to read. In the following example, from the Catacomb of St. Priscilla, a dove was afterward added, to correct in part the mistake of the ignorant fossor. Probably the epitaph may have been scratched on the stone by the dim light struggling through a *luminare*, but when brought to the grave it was too dark to see which side was uppermost. [Pg 404]

Fig. 125.—Inscription upside down.

In one example in the Lapidarian Gallery, represented in Fig. 126, the inscription is actually written backwards, like Hebrew text. Probably, as Maitland suggests, the stonecutter took the impression on marble from a written copy, and was too ignorant to perceive that it was, of course, reversed.

Fig. 126.—Reversed Inscription.

Read: *Elia Vincentia. qui vixit an ... et mesis II, cum Virginis que vixit annu diem.*

Elia Vincentia, who lived ... years and two months, and lived with Virginius a year and a day.

Most of the early epitaphs are of touching brevity and simplicity. Frequently only a single word, the name given in baptism, is recorded on the tomb, as in Fig. 127, which exhibits also the Christian symbols of the monogram, cross, and palm.

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Fig. 127.—"Cassta." (*sic.*)

In Fig. 128 the names of three individuals appear on the same slab, which is recognizable as Christian only by the symbol of the Good Shepherd:

Fig. 128.—"Septimina, Aurelius, Galymedes."

Frequently the phrase IN PACE, or DORMIT IN PACE, is added, in attestation of the Christian faith of the deceased, (see Figs. 122-124;) or, more briefly still, the word LOCVS is prefixed, as LOCVS PRIMI—"The place of Primus,"[676] as if descriptive of the last long home, the house appointed for all living.

The later inscriptions are frequently far removed from this naive simplicity, being inflated in style and elaborate in execution, attesting the increased wealth and growing pride of the Christian community. Of these we shall hereafter have frequent examples. One very remarkable series is that executed, under the direction of Pope Damasus, in the latter part of the fourth century. He composed numerous metrical epitaphs in honour of the martyrs, which were engraved in marble in a singularly elegant decorated character, designed by his secretary, Furius Dionysius Filocalus, who was also an accomplished artist. Hence the letters of these Damasine inscriptions are as distinct a characteristic in early Christian epigraphy as the celebrated Aldine type in the bibliography of the revival of learning. There are few of the Catacombs where these inscriptions have not been found; and De Rossi has been enabled thereby to reconstruct some valuable historical monuments from a few fragments, just as a skilful anatomist will reconstruct a skeleton from a portion of the vertebræ. Some of the most important of these have already been given; others will hereafter occur. The Latinity is often of a school-boy mediocrity; but they are of great value as determining the identity and elucidating the history of many important Christian tombs.

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Most of the epitaphs, as we might naturally expect, were written in Latin. Nevertheless, a considerable proportion are in Greek, to which circumstance several causes conduced. Although Latin was the language of the mass of the Roman population, yet Greek was also spoken largely by the educated classes. We know, too, from the pages of Juvenal[677] and contemporary writers, that Rome swarmed with numbers of slaves and others from Greece and Asia Minor, who, although they might be able to speak Latin, would find it very difficult to write it. Moreover, Greek seems to have been in the early centuries a sort of ecclesiastical language at Rome, just as Latin is now throughout Roman Catholic Christendom. It was in this language that the glad tidings of the new evangel were first declared, and in it St. Paul wrote his epistle to the Roman church. The new wine of the gospel flowed from that classic chalice which so long had poured libations to the gods. Probably a religious sentiment led to the adoption, even by those to whom it was unfamiliar, of the language in which their holiest teachings and highest hopes had been originally conveyed, and in which the Apostolic Fathers and the greatest apologists, theologians, and historians of the early church had fought the battles of the faith. The responses of the Roman liturgy long continued to be

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uttered in this tongue, and traces of this practice still remain in the *Kyrie, eleeson! Christe, eleeson!* of the Order of the Mass. This primitive Greek influence has also left its indelible impression on our language in such words as church, bishop, presbyter, eucharist, baptism, catechism, liturgy, psalm, and hymn.

Sometimes the humble mourner had to be content with recording the Latin words in Greek characters, as in the following examples: ΛΕΙΒΕΡΕ ΜΑΞΙΜΙΛΛΕ ΚΟΙΟΥΓΕ ΑΜΑΝΤΙCCΙΜΑΕ ΦΙΚΙΤ ΕΝ ΠΑΚΕ. Read: *Liberæ Maximillæ conjugi amantissimæ, vixit in pace*—"To Libera Maximilla, a most loving wife. She lived in peace." ΒΕΝΕ ΜΕΡΕΝΤΙ ΦΙΛΙΕ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΕ ΚΥΕ ΒΙΞΙΤ ΜΗCΙC XI ΔΙΕΣ XVIII. Read: *Bene merenti filiæ Theodoræ, qui vixit menses XI, dies XVIII*—"To our well-deserving daughter Theodora, who lived eleven months and eighteen days."[678]

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In copying Latin inscriptions many errors arose from the mason mistaking the Roman characters for similar Greek ones, as A for Λ, T for Γ, and the Latin H and P for the Greek *Eta* and *Rho*. The Greek influence is also seen in the altered inflexion of Latin words, as *maritous* for *maritos*, *filies* for *filias*, and the like. The proportion of Greek inscriptions among those before the time of Constantine is estimated at one eighth.[679] After that period it is less, indicating the gradual decline of Greek influence. In Gaul and the western provinces the proportion is not so great. At Autun there is only one Greek epitaph.

Of the eleven thousand extant inscriptions only thirteen hundred and seventy-four bear dates. The period of the others can be only approximately determined by a comparison with those whose ages are known; by a careful examination of the execution, language, and general sentiment, those of earlier date being less florid and more classical in style; by the presence or absence of certain symbols, as the sacred monogram, of which no example is known before the period of Constantine; and by the position in the Catacombs, those in the lower *piani* being of later date.

Judging by these criteria, De Rossi has arrived at the following conclusions: About six thousand of the epitaphs belong to the first four centuries, and are from the Catacombs; the rest were found above ground. Of these six thousand, about four thousand are before the year 324 A. D., when Constantine became sole emperor.

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Only one of the *dated* inscriptions belongs to the first century, (A. D. 71,) two are of the second, (A. D. 107 and 111,) and twenty-three of the third; the fourth century is represented by over five hundred; the fifth by nearly as many; the sixth by about three hundred, principally in its earlier half; and the seventh by only seven.

Of these dated inscriptions, all before the year 313 A. D., when the edict of Milan gave peace to the church, are from the Catacombs. After that event subterranean sepulture rapidly decreased. Of the epitaphs bearing dates between the years 313 A. D. and 337 A. D., two thirds are from the Catacombs, and one third from the basilicas and other places of burial above ground. From A. D. 337 to the time of Julian the proportion of each was about equal. Of the dated inscriptions of the last quarter of this century, about one fourth are subterranean. Of those between the years A. D. 400 and A. D. 410, not one in ten is from the Catacombs, and after that period not one subterranean example occurs.[680] Sometimes, in epitaphs of late date, the name of the church and the position of the tomb are mentioned, as in the following: DEPOSITVS IN BASILICA SANCTORVM NASARI ET NABORIS SECVNDV ARCV IVXTA FENESTRA, (A. D. 404,)—"Buried in the basilica of Sts. Nasarius and Nabor, in the second arch near the window;" DEPOSITA IN CONTRA COLONNA VII, (A. D. 452,)—"Buried in the space opposite the seventh column."

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The Christian era was not adopted as a note of time till after the sixth century. The dates of the Roman inscriptions were therefore indicated by the names of the consuls for the year, generally written in an abbreviated form.[681] Frequently the addition VC., for *Vir Clarissimus*—"An illustrious man"—or, in the case of imperial consuls, DN., for *Dominus Noster*—"Our Lord"—also occurs.[682] In one instance the epithet DIVVS—"Divine"—assumed by the emperors, is employed in a Christian epitaph, in unthinking imitation of a heathen formula.

This mode of indicating dates, to which the name hypatic (from ὕπατος, consul) has been applied, continued in vogue till the latter part of the sixth century, and is the last recognition of that venerable institution, the Roman consulate. The year of the emperor, which was enjoined by Justinian, A. D. 537, for the dating of all public acts, appears after that time.

Towards the close of the fourth century the date is sometimes indicated by the name of the presiding bishop of the church at Rome, as SVB LIBERIO EPISCOPO, SVB DAMASO EPISCOPO, or TEMPORIBVS SANCTI INNOCENTII, the last expression used probably after the death of the pope named. The names of the bishops of other dioceses than that of Rome are also used, an indication of the parity of episcopal rank in the primitive ages. Thus we have in the year A. D. 397 the name PASCASIO EPISCOPO, according to De Rossi, probably the bishop of an ancient diocese in the immediate vicinity of the city. In the sixth century the names of certain priests, and even deacons, were used as local marks of time.

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In a large number of inscriptions the day of the month is mentioned, although the year is not. Cardinal Wiseman attributes this to the custom of commemorating the anniversary of the death of the departed as that of his birth into a higher life.[683] But a similar usage is observed also in pagan epitaphs; and Dr. McCaul has well remarked[684] that it is the day of burial that is mentioned more frequently than that of death. The date of birth is seldom

given,[685] but the length of life is almost invariably indicated, frequently with great minuteness. Not only are the number of years, months, and days mentioned, but often, with loving exactness, the hours, half-hours, and even the "scruples" or twenty-fourths of an hour, as in the following example: BENE MERENTI IN PACE SILVANA QVAE HIC DORMIT VIXIT ANN. XXI. MENS. III. HOR. IV. SCRVPLOS VI.—"To the well-deserving Silvana, who sleeps here in peace. She lived twenty-one years, three months, four hours, and six scruples." Six scruples are a quarter of an hour.

When the exact number of years was unknown, the expressions PLVS MINVS, ΠΛΕΟΝ ΕΛΑΤΤΟΝ—"more or less"—were used.[686] Frequently the duration of married life is also [Pg 412] mentioned with extreme definiteness, as in the following:[687] SILVANA NICIATI MARITO BENE MERENTI CUM QVO VIXIT ANNIS TRIBVS MANSIBVS DVABVS HORIS UNDECIM,—"Silvana to her well-deserving husband Niciatis, with whom she lived three years, two months, eleven hours."

The day of the month is generally indicated in the ordinary way with reference to the divisions of Calends, Nones, and Ides.[688] The days of the week are mentioned by their usual classical names, as *Dies Solis*, Sunday; *Dies Lunæ*, Monday; *Dies Martis*, Tuesday; *Dies Mercurii*, Wednesday; *Dies Jovis*, Thursday; *Dies Veneris*, Friday; and *Dies Saturni*, Saturday. Sometimes, however, the first and last days of the week are indicated by the Christian designations *Dies Dominica*, the day of the Lord, and *Dies Sabbati*, the day of rest.

The Christian inscriptions also habitually ignore all mention of the birth-place or country of the deceased, as if in recognition that the Christian's true country is beyond the grave.[689] As if, also, in obedience to the injunction to forsake father and mother in order to follow [Pg 413] after Christ, details of family or descent, which are so conspicuous in some heathen inscriptions, almost never occur.

Mr. Burgon has briefly expressed the principal points of contrast between modern epitaphs and those of the early Christians, as follows: "They never mention the date of birth,[690] we seldom omit it. They constantly record the day of burial, we never. They seldom mention the year of death, we never omit it. We never allude to burial, they always. They frequently record the years of married life, we never. In theirs the survivors appear prominently, even by name, and are sometimes mentioned exclusively. With us the dead are always named, the living seldom."[691]

There are among these inscriptions several examples of *opisthographæ*, as they are called, [692] that is, Christian epitaphs written on slabs that had originally borne one of pagan character. The latter are generally defaced or obliterated, filled with cement or turned to the wall, or placed upside down or sideways, so as to indicate their rejection by the Christian artist. Sometimes, however, they are still legible, but they have manifestly no connection with Christian sepulture whatever. Some are not funeral epitaphs at all, and some which are commemorate an entire family, though affixed to a single Christian grave. The appropriation of heathen monuments for the reception of Christian inscriptions will appear less strange when we reflect that the very temples of the gods have been the quarries from which many of the churches and palaces of later times were built.

Sometimes, as in the example given in Fig. 59, the heathen formula of consecration to the [Pg 414] "Divine Spirits"—D. M., for *Dis Manibus*—is obliterated, and the sacred monogram gives the slab a Christian character. Occasionally, however, these letters appear in manifestly Christian inscriptions, in which case Fabretti and others have maintained that they were capable of the interpretation *Deo Magno* or *Deo Maximo*—"To the Supreme God." With still less probability M. Rochette renders them *Divis Martyribus*—"To the divine martyrs," for which expression no countenance is to be found in the entire range of the Catacombs. Both interpretations are entirely gratuitous suppositions, for which Christian epigraphy furnishes absolutely no warrant. It is more probable that they were careless or conventional imitations of a common heathen formula, which was occasionally adopted by the Christians without thought, or perhaps in ignorance of its meaning, just as they also imitated the winged genii and other classic accessories of pagan art in the ornamentation of the Catacombs. Dr. McCaul has suggested that the Roman mortuary sculptors probably kept sepulchral slabs on sale, as is often done now, with the common formulæ already engraved, which were purchased without regard to their appropriateness, and that in filling up the inscription the Christians sometimes neglected to obliterate the letters of pagan significance. Possibly, also, some lingering remnants of heathen superstition may sometimes be indicated by their use.

The letters BM., which frequently occur in these inscriptions, have been erroneously interpreted as standing for *Beatus* or *Beata Martyr*, for which there is no authority whatever. They unquestionably indicate the ever-recurring phrase, both in pagan and Christian epigraphy, *Bene Merenti*—"To the well-deserving," or *Bonæ Memoriæ*—"Of happy memory."

[666] It is eight hundred feet in extent, and contains about three thousand inscriptions.

[667] Shakspeare's *Sonnets*, No. XXX.

[668] *Tableau des Catacombes*, p. x.

[669] Cf. Juv., "Gaudent prænomine molles auriculæ." These are very rare in Christian

inscriptions. See *postea*.

[670] Demolita et horrendum in modum vastata.—*Prolegomena* to *Inscr. Christ.* He has often to complain that he is unable to read part of the inscription:—Reliqua legere haud potui. Marangoni tells us that thousands of epigraphs were taken from the Catacombs to the church of St. Maria in Trastevere; seven cartloads to St. Giovanni de Fiorentini; two cartloads to another church of St. Giovanni in Rome; yet there are at present only about twenty in the portico of the former and not *one* in either of the two latter churches. See Heman's *Sac. Art. in Italy*, pp. 58, 59.

[671] The latter works of Fabretti, Muratori, Orelli, Martigny, Cardinal Mai, and Perret contain numerous examples. These have all been laid under tribute in preparing these pages.

[672] Nos pio fletu, date, perluamus
Marmorum sulcos.—*Peristeph.*, hymn vii.

[673] We append the following examples by way of illustration:

CALEVIVSBENDIDITAVINTRISOMVVBIPOSITIERANT
VINIETCALVILIVSETLVCIVSINPA.

Calevius sold to Avinius a place for three bodies, where both Cavilius and Lucius had (already) been placed in peace.—De Rossi, *Inscr. Christ.*, No. 489.

ΤΡΙΑΚΟΝΤΑΠΕΝΤΑΕΤΗCΕΝΘΑΔΕΚΙΤΕΥΠΑΤΙΑ
ΘΥΓΑΤΗΡΑΝΤΩΝΙΟΥΚΩCΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΠΟΛΙΤΙCCΑ.

Here lies Hypatia, thirty-five years of age, daughter of Antonius, a native of Constantinople.—De Rossi, No. 583.

The originals are more difficult to decipher, but with a little practice it becomes comparatively easy. Sometimes the letters are of greatly varying sizes, as in the following:

LOCVSAVGVSTILECTORIS.
The place of Augustus, the Reader.

[674] See, also, the uncouthness of the epitaph of Martyrus, Fig. 19, and of Tesaris, Fig. 58.

[675] The distinctions of case gradually disappear, the accusative and genitive are often used indiscriminately, and the former is frequently substituted for the ablative, as in the following phrases, *cum uxorem, cum fratrem, sine aliquam, pro caritatem, decessit de seculum*, etc. The transition into Italian is indicated by the prefixing the letter *i*, as in the words *ispiritus*, *iscribet*; by affixing *e*, as *posuete* for *posuit*, and by the general softening of the pronunciation, as *santa* for *sancta*, *meses* for *menses*, and *sesies* for *sexies*. The names *Stefano* and *Filipo* have also a very modern appearance.

The misplacing of the aspirate is seen to be by no means a cockney peculiarity, as in the following examples:—*Hossa*, *hordine*, *Hosiris*, *helephantus*, *post hobitum*, *Hoctobris*, *heterna*, etc. In the following the *h* is omitted: *Onorius*, *ora*, *omo*, *ilaris*, *ospitium*, *onestus*, *oc*, and *ic*. The permutation of the letters *t* and *d*, and *v* and *b*, is also common, as *adque* for *atque*, and *bibit* for *vivit*. We also find such forms as *vicxit*, *visit*, *bissit*, or *visse*, for *vixit*; *michi* for *mihi*; *pake* or *pache* for *pace*; *opsequia* for *obsequia*; *quisquenti* for *quiescenti*; *depossio* for *depositio*; *vocitus* for *vocatus*; *pulla* for *puella*; *omniorum* for *omnium*; *restutus* for *restitutus*; *pride* for *pridie*; *que* or *qae* for *quæ*, and the like. Many of these peculiarities, however, are common to later pagan as well as to Christian inscriptions.

[676] See Fig. 45.

[677] See his "Græculus esuriens," (*Sat.*, iii, 78,) and the expression, "In Tiberem defluxit Orontes."—*Ib.*, 62.

[678] Sometimes the two languages are strangely blended in the same epitaph; and occasionally we find a Greek inscription in Latin characters, as in the following: PRIMA IRENE SOI. Read: Πρῖμα εἰρήνη σοι—"Prima, peace to thee."

[679] In the dated inscriptions the proportion is less, as the Latin-speaking Christians would be the more likely to employ the consular dates as indications of time.

[680] Of the four hundred Gaulish inscriptions in Le Blant few bear dates, and of these none are earlier than the time of Constantine. The first is of the year A. D. 334; the next, at Autun, of the year A. D. 374. They are also more artificial and rhetorical in style than those of Rome.

[681] For example, POL · II · ET · APR · II · COS, which, expanded, reads thus: *Pollione iterum et Apro iterum Consulibus*, that is, 176 A. D.

L · FAB · CIL · M · ANN · LIB · COS—*Lucio Fabio Cilone, Marco Annio Libone Consulibus*, that is, 204 A. D. To save space we have generally omitted the names of the consuls, giving merely the date.

[682] Sometimes we have the forms VVCC., *Viri Clarissimi*; DD. NN., *Domini Nostri*; and AVGG., or AAVVGG., *Augusti*.

[683] *Fabiola*, p. 146.

[684] *Christian Epitaphs*, Introd., p. xxii, note †. We are indebted to this masterly prolegomena for several of the illustrations cited.

[685] In one example it is minutely indicated thus: *Ora noctis* · IIII. ··· VIII *Idus Madias die Saturnis luna vigesima Signo Apiorno*,—"In the fourth hour of the night, the eighth day before the Ides of May, the twentieth day of the Moon, in the sign of Capricorn." De Rossi regards this as an astrological horoscope—a relic of heathen superstition.

[686] The greatest age we have observed in Christian epitaphs is ninety-one years. See Fig. 19. The youngest is three months—*Mens. III.* We have noticed in Muratori (p. 382, No. 5) the

following remarkable instance of longevity: *M. Flavius Secundus filius fecit Flavio Secundo patri q. vixit ann. CXII, et Flaviæ Urbanæ matri piæ vixit ann. CV.*—"M. Flavius Secundus, the son, made this to Flavius Secundus, his father, who lived one hundred and twelve years, and to his pious mother, (who) lived one hundred and five years." Kenrick quotes an epitaph of a child of three and his mother (*mammula*) of eighty; and another of a man of one hundred and two years, ninety of which were passed without disease. The average duration of life, according to Ulpian, was thirty years.

[687] The relationship is generally expressed by such phrases as *vixit mecum*, *duravit mecum*, *vixit in conjugio*, *fecit mecum*, *fecit cum compare*. McCaul, *Christ. Epitaphs*, Introd. xv.

[688] *Ib.*, xxvii.

[689] Of 5,000 epitaphs in Squier's Index, only forty-five mention the country of the deceased. See one example, page 401, second footnote, and also the following, of date A. D. 388: *Rapetiga, medicus, civis Hispanus, qui vixit in pace annos plus minus XXV*,—"Rapetiga, a physician, a citizen of Spain, who lived in peace twenty-five years, more or less."

[690] This is not quite correct.

[691] *Letters from Rome*, pp. 202, 203.

[692] From ὀπίσθιος and γράφω, *to write again*.

CHAPTER II.

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THE DOCTRINAL TEACHINGS OF THE CATACOMBS.

"WHAT insight into the familiar feelings and thoughts of the primitive ages of the church," remarks the learned and eloquent Dean Stanley,[693] "can be compared with that afforded by the Roman Catacombs! Hardly noticed by Gibbon or Mosheim, they yet give us a likeness of those early times beyond that derived from any of the written authorities on which Gibbon and Mosheim repose.... The subjects of the painting and sculpture place before us the exact ideas with which the first Christians were familiar; they remind us, by what they do not contain, of the ideas with which the first Christians were not familiar.... He who is thoroughly steeped in the imagery of the Catacombs will be nearer to the thought of the early church than he who has learned by heart the most elaborate treatise even of Tertullian or of Origen."

By the study of the inscriptions, paintings, and sculpture of this subterranean city of the dead, we may follow the development of Christian thought from century to century; we may trace the successive changes of doctrine and discipline; we may read the irrefragable testimony, written with a pen of iron in the rock forever, of the purity of the primitive faith, and of the gradual corruption which it has undergone.

In this era of critical investigation of the very foundations of the faith it will be well to examine this vast body of Christian evidences as to the doctrinal teachings of the primitive times, which has been handed down from the believers living in or near the apostolic age, and thus providentially preserved in these subterranean excavations, as a perpetual memorial of the faith and practice of the golden prime of Christianity.

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While we should not expect to find in these inscriptions a complete system of theology, we would certainly look for some definite expression regarding the religious belief of those who wrote these memorials of the dead. We would expect some reference to the lives of the departed, to the virtues of their character, and to the hopes of the survivors as to their future condition in the spirit-world. In this expectation we are not disappointed. We find in these epitaphs a body of evidence on the doctrines and discipline of the primitive church, whose value it is scarcely possible to overestimate. We are struck with the infinite contrast of their sentiment to that of the pagan sepulchral monuments, and also by the conspicuous absence, in those of the early centuries and purer period of Christianity, of the doctrines by which the church of Rome is characterized. We shall also find references to some of the heresies, which, like plague spots, alas! so soon began to infect the church,[694] and some of which even found distinguished ecclesiastical patronage.[695]

The Church of Rome lays especial claim to the traditions of the early ages and the antiquities of the Catacombs as proofs of the apostolic character of her peculiar dogmas and usages. But these ancient records are a palimpsest which she has written all over with her own glosses and interpretations; and when the ordeal of modern criticism revives the real documents and removes the accumulation of error, the testimony of the past is strikingly opposed to the pretensions of the Roman See and the teachings of Romish doctrine. The distinguished scholarship, laborious research, and archæological skill of such eminent authorities as De Rossi, Pitra, Garrucci, and other Roman *savants*, only furnish the weapons for the refutation of many of Rome's most cherished beliefs. There are those, indeed, who carry to these investigations the faculty of seeing what they wish to see, and what no others can perceive. It not unfrequently happens, also, that extreme credulity and superstition are found united with great learning and high scientific attainments. The effect, however, of the honest examination of this testimony by a candid mind is seen in the case of Mr. Hemans, the learned author of "Ancient Christianity and Sacred Art in Italy." This gentleman, although a pervert from the Anglican communion to that of Rome, and in strong sympathy with many of its institutions, as is apparent from his interesting volume, felt compelled by the historical and monumental testimony of the Catacombs, and of early Christian art and literature, to retrace his steps, and, however reluctantly to condemn and abandon the faith he had espoused.

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Protestantism, therefore, has nothing to fear from the closest investigation of these evidences of primitive Christianity. They offer no warrant whatever for the characteristic doctrines and practice of the modern Church of Rome. There is not a single inscription, nor painting, nor sculpture, before the middle of the fourth century, that lends the least countenance to her arrogant assumptions and erroneous dogmas. All previous to this date are remarkable for their evangelical character; and it is only after that period that the distinctive peculiarities of Romanism begin to appear. The wholesome breath of persecution and the "sweet uses of adversity" in the early ages tended to preserve the moral purity of the church; but the enervating influence of imperial favour and the influx of wealth and luxury, led to corruptions of practice and errors of doctrine. Her trappings of worldly pomp and power were a Nessus garment which empoisoned her spiritual life. Hence the Catacombs, the rude cradle of the early faith, became also the grave of much of its simplicity and purity.

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In the investigation of early Christian epigraphy, therefore, the determination of dates is of the utmost importance, as it is only inscriptions of the earlier and acknowledged purer

period of the church which can bear authoritative testimony as to primitive doctrine. We shall, therefore, first examine in chronological order *all* those bearing dates earlier than the fourth century which have any doctrinal significance, and then glean the evidence of later examples as to the antiquity of Romanist teachings. We will take the inscriptions as given in his great work,[696] by De Rossi, the most eminent authority on this subject; but while accepting his facts, and acknowledging his candour and honesty of research, which qualities we will seek to imitate, we cannot in all cases accept his conclusions.

The first dated inscription possessing any doctrinal character occurs in the year 217.[697] It is taken from a large sarcophagus found in the *Via Labicana*, and is of great interest as indicating the lofty social position and honourable offices of the deceased as a member of the imperial household, as well as the devout confidence of his pious freedmen in his spiritual beatification. The upper portion of the following inscription, that in larger type, is engraved on the front of the sarcophagus, and that in smaller characters on the back. The use of a sarcophagus is an indication of the wealth of the deceased.

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M · AVRELIO · AVGG · LIB · PROSENETI
A CVBICVLO · AVG ·
PROC · THESAVRORVM
PROC · PATRIMONI · PROC ·
MVNERVM · PROC · VINORVM
ORDINATOADIVO COMMODO
IN KASTRENSE PATRONO PIISSIMO
LIBERTI · BENEMERENTI
SARCOPHAGVM DE SVO ·
ADORNAVERVNT ·

PROSENES RECEPTVS ADDEVM · V · NON ····· SSA ····· NIA PRAESENTE · ET · EXTRICATO · II
REGREDIENS IN VRBE AB EXPEDITI ONIBVS SCRIPSIT AMPELIVS LIB.
—*Inscrip. Christ.*, No. 5.

To Marcus Aurelius Prosenes, freedman of the two Augusti, of the bed-chamber of Augustus, Procurator of the Treasures, Procurator of the Patrimony, Procurator of the Presents, Procurator of the Wines, appointed by the deified Commodus to duty in the camp, a most affectionate Patron. For him, well-deserving, his freedmen provided (this) sarcophagus at their own cost.

Prosenes received to God, on the fifth day before the Nones of— Præsens and Extricatus (being consuls) for the second time.

Ampelius his freedman, returning to the city from the wars, wrote (this inscription.)

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We have here the earliest indication of doctrinal belief as to the condition of the departed. It is not, however, a dark and gloomy apprehension of purgatorial fires, but, on the contrary, the joyous confidence of immediate reception into the presence of God.[698] The retention of the pagan title of the emperor, "the deified Commodus," is an anomalous feature in a Christian monument, although doubtless it is merely the unthinking imitation of a common epigraphic formula.

Accompanying an inscription of date A. D. 234, is the first example of the symbols, afterward so common, the fish and the anchor, but no other distinctively Christian feature. In the next year, A. D. 235, occurs the following epitaph, in which there is possibly an intimation of immortality in the expression *de sæculo recessit*—"retired from the world," or "from the age."[699] AVRELIA DVLCISSIMA FILIA QVAE DE SAECVLO RECESSIT VIXIT ANN · XV · M · IIII · SEVERO ET QVINTIN COSS,—"Aurelia, our very sweet daughter, who retired from the world, Severus and Quintinus being consuls. She lived fifteen years and four months." The epithet "very sweet daughter" is peculiarly appropriate to the Christian character, although common also on pagan tombs.

In the year A. D. 238, on a sarcophagus which bears the first dated representation of the Good Shepherd, we find the following touching inscription. It conveys nothing doctrinal beyond the phrase "most devout," or "God-loving," expressive of the youthful piety of the deceased. ΗΡΑΚΛΙΤΟC Ο ΘΕΟΦΙΛΕCΤΑΤΟC ΕΖΗCΕΝ ΕΤ(η) Η ΠΑΡΑ Η(μέραc) ΙΓ ΕΝΟCΗCΕΝ ΗΜ(ε)Ρ(αc) ΙΒ.... ΞΑΝΘΙΑC ΠΑΤΗΡ ΤΕΚΝΩ ΓΛΥΚΥΤΕΡΩ ΦΩΤΟC ΚΑΙ ΖΩΗC—"The very devout Heraclitus lived eight years and thirteen days. He was ill twelve days.... Xanthias his father, to his son, sweeter than light and life." The mention of the duration of the illness is very rare in these epitaphs. The yearning affection of the bereaved father is beautifully expressed in the last clause.

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The next example merely gives the consular date, A. D. 249, and the assurance that the deceased sleeps, DORMIT—a distinctively Christian synonym for death. In the year A. D. 268 occurs a fragment on which one may with difficulty decipher the inscription by the parents "to their well-deserving son, who lived twelve years and eleven months." The chief interest attaches to the last line: VIBAS INTER SANCTIS (*sic*) IHA—"May you live among the holy ones."

The meaning of the last three letters is unknown. They have been interpreted as standing for *in pace* or *et have*; but the last rarely, if ever, occurs in Christian epigraphy. Dr. McCaul ingeniously conjectures that the last word is intended for *sanctissimas*, or "most holy ones," the H being an ill cut M. This natural ejaculation of the sorrowing friends, of which we shall find occasional examples, is certainly no indication of the later Romish practice of prayers for the dead, or of the intercession of the saints. On this slab are also the first known

examples of the dove, olive branch, and vase.

The next dated inscription, of the year 269, A. D., is of a very barbarous character—Latin words in Greek letters, not engraved, but merely painted on the slab. It is evidently, as is indicated by its wretched grammar and orthography, the production of extreme ignorance. [Pg 422] It requires a strong dogmatic prepossession to detect in its incoherent language any meaning beyond the attestation of the sanctity of character of the deceased. After giving the date, it reads thus: ΛΕΥΚΕC · ΦΙΛΕΙΕ CΕΒΗΡΕ · ΚΑΡΕCCΕΜΕ · ΠΟCΟΥΕΤΕ · ΕΔ · ΕΙCΠΕΙΡΕΙΤΩ · CΑΝΚΤΩ · ΤΟΥΩ · Read, *Leuces filiæ Severæ carissimæ posuit et spiritui sancto tuo,*—"Leuces erected this (memorial) to her very dear daughter, and to thy (*sic*) holy spirit."

Nothing further of a doctrinal character occurs till the year 291, when we find the following barbarous example. The grammar and spelling are atrocious, and the division of the words quite arbitrary: EX VIRGINEO TVO BENE MECO VIXISTI LIB ENIC ONIVGA INNOCENTISSE MACERVONIA SILVANA REFRIGERA CVM SPIRITA SANCTA. Read, *Ex virginio tuo bene mecum vixisti libens in conjuga innocentissima Macervonia Silvana. Refrigera cum spiritis sanctis* —"Macervonia Silvana, thou didst live well with me from thy maidenhood, rejoicing in most innocent wedlock. Refresh (thyself) among the holy spirits."

No candid interpretation can discover in the closing acclamation any thing beyond the natural expression of a desire for the happiness of the departed among the sanctified.

There is nothing, therefore, in any of the inscriptions of the first three centuries—the ages of the purity of the faith—which can in the least degree support the assumptions of Roman controversialists as to the antiquity of Romish dogmas. Nor is there any indication of those dogmas till the latter part of the fourth century, as will be evident from a brief examination of the principal inscriptions having any reference to doctrine before that period. [Pg 423] In the year A. D. 302 we find the following beautiful tribute of conjugal and filial affection, which only, however, attests the high Christian character of the deceased: DOMINO PATRI PIISSIMO AC DVLCISSIMO SECVNDO VXOR ET FILII PRO PIETATE POSVERVNT—"To the highly venerable, most devout, and very sweet father, Secundus. His wife and sons in expression of their dutifulness have placed this slab."

In the year A. D. 310, in the epitaph of a youth twenty-two years of age, we find the beautiful euphemism for death, ACCERSITVS AB ANGELIS—"Called away (literally, sent for) by angels." There is no doctrine of purgatory here. The Christian soul, like Lazarus, is borne by angels to Abraham's bosom, and not, like Dives, to tormenting flames, albeit called of purgatorial efficacy to supplement the work of Christ. In A. D. 329 occurs the still nobler expression, NATVS EST LAVRENTIVS IN ETERNVM ANN XX · DORMIT IN PACE—"Laurentius was born into eternity in the twentieth year of his age. He sleeps in peace."

Sometimes the word *natus* refers to the new birth of spiritual regeneration, and admission to the church by the rite of baptism. Thus, in an example of date A. D. 338, a youth of twenty-four years of age is said to have been born and died in the same year, though at the interval of a few months. In A. D. 377 we find the expression COELESTI RENATVS AQVA—"Born again of heavenly water."

In the year A. D. 335 the chaste and modest character of a Christian matron is commended, without any suggestion of the Romish notion of the superior merit of virginity, as follows:

> B · M · CVBICVLVM · AVRELIAE · MARTINAE · CASTISSIMAE · ADQVE. PVDICISSIMAE · FEMINAE · QVI · FECIT · IN · CONIVGIO · ANN · XXIII · D · XIIII—"To one well-deserving. The sleeping-place [Pg 424] of Aurelia Martina, a most chaste and modest woman, who passed in wedlock twenty-three years, fourteen days."

The primitive Christians had no doubt of the immediate happiness of those who died in the faith. They were incapable of the blasphemous thought that the atoning blood of Christ was insufficient to wash away their guilt and that therefore they were doomed to penal fires,

> Till the foul crimes done in their days of nature
> Were burned and purged away.

All the expressions applied to the death of the righteous indicate the assurance of their spirits' peace and happiness. Thus, in addition to the examples already given, we have, A. D. 339, BENE QVESQVENTI (*sic*) IN PACE—"Resting well in peace;" A. D. 339, IN PACE DECESSIT, A. D. 349, and A. D. 360, IBIT and EXIBIT IN PACE—"Departed in peace;" A. D. 348, REQVIEVIT—"Entered into rest;" A. D. 353, PAVSABIT—"Will repose;" A. D. 355, QVIESCIT —"He rests," not REQVIESCAT—"May he rest," as the Romanists write, but the joyful assurance of present repose in the peace of God; A. D. 359, IVIT AD DEVM—"He went to God;" A. D. 363, SEMPER QVIESCIS SECVRA—"Thou dost repose forever free from care;" A. D. 368, QVIENCIS (*sic*) IN PACE CONIVX INCOMPARABILIS—"Thou restest in peace, incomparable wife;" A. D. 369, VOCITVS (*sic*) IIT IN PACE—"Called away, he went in peace;" in A. D. 380, we find AETERNA REQVIES FELICITATIS—"Everlasting rest of happiness." The Christians, as is asserted in the following, sorrowed not as those without hope: IVLIAE INNOCENTISSIMAE ET DVLCISSIMAE, MATER SVA SPERANS—"To the most sweet and innocent Julia, her mother hoping." The loved ones were "not lost, but gone before:" PRAECESSIT NOS IN PACE—"He went before us in peace;" ΠΡΟΑΠΕΛΘΩΝ ΤΟΥ ΚΑΘ ΗΜΑC ΒΙΟΥ—"Having gone [Pg 425] before from our life." Sometimes the body seems to be regarded as the clog and fetter of the soul, binding it to earth, as in the following: ABSOLVTVS DE CORPORE—"Set free from the

body;” CORPOREOS RVMPENS NEXVS GAVDET IN ASTRIS—“Breaking the bonds of the body, he rejoices in the stars,” that is, in heaven.

The entire inscriptions from which extracts are thus given may be found in De Rossi’s *Inscriptiones Christianæ*, under the respective dates.

The following, of date A. D. 381, rises to loftier poetical flights, though ignoring the metrical divisions, which are indicated in the copy by parallels:

> THEODORA QVAE VIXIT ANNOS XXI M. VII D. XXIII IN PACE.... AMPLIFICAM SEQVITVR VITAM DVM CASTA AFRODITE || FECIT AD ASTRA VIAM CHRISTI MODO GAVDET IN AVLA || RESTITIT HAEC MVNDO SEMPER CAELESTIA QVAERENS || OPTIMA SERVATRIX LEGIS FIDEIQVE MAGISTRA || DEDIT EGREGIAM SANCTIS PER SECVLA MENTEM || INDE EXIMIOS PARADISI REGNAT ODORES || TEMPORE CONTINVO VERNANT VBI GRAMINA RIVIS || EXPECTATQVE DEVM SVPERAS QVO SVRGAT AD AVRAS || HOC POSVIT CORPVS TVMVLO MORTALIA LINQVENS || FVNDAVITQVE LOCVM CONIVNX EVACRIVS INSTANS.
>
> Theodora, who lived twenty-one years, seven months, twenty-three days. In peace. Whilst following an exalted life, a chaste Venus, she pursued her way to the stars. Now she rejoices in the court of Christ. She resisted the world, ever following heavenly things. A devout observer of the law, and mistress of honour, she applied an illustrious mind to holy things while here in this world. Hence she reigns (amid) the choice odours of paradise, where the herbage is forever green beside the streams of heaven,[700] and awaits God, in order that she may rise to the upper air. She laid her body in this tomb, forsaking mortal things, and Evacrius, her husband, built the monument, superintending the work.

The first inscription at all favourable to Romish doctrine is the following barbarous example, (A. D. 380:)

HIC QVIESCIT ANCILLA DEI OVEDE
SVA OMNIA PEPENDIT DOMVM ISTA
QVVM AMICI DEFLENT SOLACIVM Q. REQVIRVNT
PRO HVNC VNVM ORA SVBOLEM QVEM SVPERIS
TITEM REQVESTI ETERNA REQVIEM FELICITAS CAVSA MANEBIS.

> Read: *Hic quiescit ancilla Dei quæ de suis omnibus pependit domum istam, quam amicæ deflent solaciumque requirunt. Pro hac una ora subole quam superstitem reliquisti. Eterna requie felicitatis causa manebis.*
>
> Here rests a handmaid of God[701] who, of all her riches, possesses but this one house: whom her friends bewail, and seek for consolation. O pray for this thine only child whom thou hast left behind. Thou wilt remain in the eternal repose of happiness.

The yearning cry of an orphaned heart for the prayers of a departed mother is, however, a slight foundation for the Romish practice of the invocation of the saints.

Previous to this date we have found not the slightest indication of Romish doctrine; and if those doctrines have been transmitted, as their advocates assert, from the very earliest ages, it is incredible that they should have left no trace in the dated inscriptions for nearly four centuries. After this time, it is true, we find occasional epitaphs which, rigidly interpreted according to the canons of theological criticism, contain sentiments unwarranted by Scripture; but these may be the result of carelessness of expression, or of the corruptions of doctrine which had already taken place in the church.

If then those inscriptions which apparently favour Romish dogmas, of which we know the date, are all of a late period, we may assume that those of a similar character which are undated are of the same relative age, and therefore valueless as evidence of the antiquity of such dogmas. Dr. Northcote admits the fact, but objects to this conclusion as founded upon negative evidence; yet he himself adopts the same line of argument concerning the absence of military rank among the primitive Christians. But we are not left to negative evidence. We have the amplest testimony of a positive character, which we shall proceed to examine, showing that even in the fifth and sixth century the vast proportion of the inscriptions are of a highly evangelical character, and are entirely antagonistic to the most cherished doctrines of the Church of Rome.

The Christian’s view of death is always, in striking contrast to the sullen resignation or blank despair of paganism, full of cheerfulness and hope. Its rugged front is veiled under softest synonyms. The grave was considered merely as the temporary resting place of the body, while the freed spirit was regarded as already rejoicing in the presence of God in a broader day, and brighter light, and fairer fields than those of earth. The following examples will illustrate the pious orthodoxy of these early Christian epitaphs.

ABIIT ETHERIAM CVPIENS CAELI CONSCENDERE LVCEM. (A. D. 383.)

> She departed, desiring to ascend to the ethereal light of heaven.

LIMINA MORTIS ADIIT
EVTVCHIVS SAPIENS PIVS ADQ BENIGNVS
IN CHRISTVM CREDENS PREMIA LVCIS ABET. (*sic.*) A. D. 393.

> Eutuchius, wise, pious, and kind, believing in Christ, entered the portals of death, (and) has the rewards of the light (of heaven).

DVLCIS ET INNOCES (*sic*) HIC DORMIT SEVERIANVS SOMNO PACIS...
CVIVS SPIRITVS IN LVCE DOMINI SVSCEPTVS EST. (A. D. 393.)

Here sleeps in the sleep of peace the sweet and innocent Severianus, whose spirit is received into the light of the Lord.

HIC IACET VRBICA SVABIS (*sic*) SEMPERQ. PVDICA
VIXIT VERBORVM VERA LOQVVTA (*sic*) IN SEMPITERNALE
AEVVM QVIESCIT SECVRA. (A. D. 397.)

Here lies Urbica, agreeable and ever modest. She lived a speaker of truth. She rests free from care throughout endless time.

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NEC REOR HVNC LACRIMIS FAS SIT DEFLERE
CORPORIS EXVTVS VINCLIS QVI GAVDET IN ASTRIS
NEC MALA TERRENI SENTIT CONTAGIA SENSVS. (A. D. 399.)

Nor do I think it right to lament with tears him, who, freed from the fetters of the body, rejoices among the stars, nor feels the evil contagion of earthly sense.

PAVSABET (*sic*) PRAETIOSA ANNORVM
PVLLA (*sic*) VIRGO XII. TANTVM ANCILLA DEI ET XPI.

Pretiosa went to her rest, a maiden of only twelve years of age, a handmaid of God and of Christ. (A. D. 401.)

NON TAMEN HAEC TRISTES HABITAT POST LIMINA SEDES
PROXIMA SED CHRISTO SIDERA CELSA TENET. (A. D. 406.)

Nevertheless she occupies not the doleful seats behind the threshold, but inhabits the lofty stars, next to Christ.

HIC REQVIESCET (*sic*) IN SOMNO PACIS MALA....
ACCEPTA APVT (*sic*) DEVM. (A. D. 432.)

Here rests in the sleep of peace Mala ... Received into the presence of God.

REDDITVR HAEC MERITIS QUAE SINE FINE MANET.

This (life) without end which remains is bestowed for his pious desert.

In the following epitaph of date A. D. 472, the departed is represented as comforting the survivors with the thought of the felicity of the blest:

LEVITAE CONIVNX PETRONIA FORMA PVDORIS
HIS MEA DEPONENS SEDIBVS OSSA LOCO
PARCITE VOS LACRIMIS DVLCES CVM CONIVGE NATAE
VIVENTEMQVE DEO CREDITE FLERE NEFAS.

I, Petronia, the wife of a deacon, the type of modesty, lay down my bones in this resting place. Refrain from tears, my sweet daughters and husband, and believe that it is forbidden to weep for one who lives in God.

The early Christians confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth, and that they desired a better country, even a heavenly. They felt that, in the language of Cyprian, the soul's true Fatherland is on high. This sentiment is expressed as follows, in an epitaph of [Pg 429] date A. D. 493, MIGRAVIT DE HOC SAECVLO—"He migrated from this world." Similar is the idea in the following: FELIX VITA FVIT FELIX ET TRANSITVS IPSE—"Happy was the life, and happy also the death," literally, "the transit;" HIC REQIESCIT .. QVAE A DEO INTER EXORDIA VIVENDI DE HAC LVCE SVBLATA EST VT IN MELIORE LVMINE VIVERE MERERETVR—"Here rests ... who was snatched away by God in the very beginning of life from the light of earth, that she might be worthy to live in the more glorious light (of heaven)."

The following is a striking protest against the heathen notions of the future state.

SI MENTIS VIRTVS LVCISQVE SERENIOR VSVS
DEFVNCTO IN XPO REVENIT NON TARTARA SENTIT
CYMERIOSQVE LACOS MERITIS POST FATA SVPERSTES
FVNERIS ET LEGEM PERIMENS TERRAEQVE SEPVLCRIS
ASTRA TENET NESCITQVE MORI SIC LVCE RELICTA.

Since vigour of mind and more serene enjoyment of the light return to the dead in Christ, she feels not (the pains of) Tartarus, nor the Cimmerian lakes, by her deserts surviving after death and destroying that law of the grave, (which is) imposed on the sepulchres of earth, she occupies the stars, and knows not death, having in this manner left the light.

We find also such expressions as follow: DEPOSTVS (*sic*) IN PACE FIDEI CATHOLICE, (*sic*) —"Buried in the peace of the Catholic faith," A. D. 462; HIC. REQ. IN PACE DEVS, (*sic*)—"Here rests in the peace of God," A. D. 500; IN PACE ECCLESIAE—"In the peace of the church," A. D. 523; IN PACE ET BENEDICTIONE—"In peace and benediction;" SEMPER FIDELIS MANEBIT APVD DEVM—"Ever faithful, he shall remain with God," (*circ. 590*); FATVM FECIT—"She fulfilled her destiny;"[702] REDDIDI NVNC DIVO RERVM DEBITVM COMMVNE OMNIBVS—"I have [Pg 430] rendered now to the Lord of the universe the debt common to all," A. D. 483; ZOTICVS HIC AD DORMIENDVM—"Zoticus here laid to sleep;" DORMITIO ELPIDIS—"The sleeping place of Elpis;" DORMIVIT ET REQVIESCIT—"He has slept and is at rest;" DORMIT SED VIVIT—"He

sleeps but lives;" QVIESCIT IN DOMINO IESV—"He reposes in the Lord Jesus;" IVIT AD DEVM —"He went to God;" EVOCATVS A DOMINO—"Called by God;" ACCEPTA APVD DEVM —"Accepted with God;" ΕΤΕΛΕΙΩΘΗ—"He finished his life;" ΕΚΟΙΜΗΘΗ—"He fell asleep;" DAMALIS HIC SIC · V · D—"Here lies Damalis, for so God wills."

Many of these undated inscriptions are full of Christian thought, and breathe the strongest assurance of the happiness of the departed, as the following from the Lateran Museum:

MACVS PVER INNOCENS
ESSE IAM INTER INNOCENTES COEPISTI
QVAM STAVILIS TIBI HAEC VITA EST
QVAM TE LAETVM EXCIPET MATER ECCLESIA
MVNDO REVERTENTEM COMPREMATVR PECTORVM
GEMITUS STRVATVR FLETVS OCVLORVM.

Macus, innocent boy, thou hast already begun to be among the innocent. Unto thee how sure is thy present life. Thee how gladly thy mother, the church, (on high,) received returning from this world. Hushed be this bosom's groaning, dried be these weeping eyes. [703]

Of similar character are also the following: SALONICE ISPIRITVS TVVS IN BONIS—"Salonice, thy spirit is among the good;" REFRIGERAS SPIRITVS TVVS IN BONIS—"Thou refreshest thy spirit among the good;" ΠΡΩΤΟC ΕΝ ΑΓΙΩ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙ ΘΕΟΥ ΕΝΘΑΔΕ ΚΕΙΤΑΙ—"Here in the Holy Spirit of God lieth Protus;" CORPVS HABET TELLVS ANIMAM CAELESTIA REGNA—"The earth has the body, celestial realms the soul;" ΓΛΥΚΕΡΟΝ ΦΑΟC ΟΥ ΚΑΤΕΔΕΨΑΣ (*sic*) ΕΣΧΕΣ ΓΑΡ ΜΕΤΑ COY ΠΑΝΑΘΑΝΑΤΟΝ—"Thou didst not leave the sweet light, for thou hadst with thee Him who knows not death," literally, "the all-deathless one;" AGAPE VIBIS IN ETERNVM —"Agape, thou livest forever;" DORMIT ET VIVIT IN PACE XO, (*sic*)—"He sleeps and lives in the peace of Christ;" MENS NESCIA MORTIS VIVIT ET ASPECTV FRVITVR BENE CONSCIA CHRISTI —"The soul lives unknowing of death, and consciously rejoices in the vision of Christ;" PRIMA VIVIS IN GLORIA DEI ET IN PACE DOMINI NOSTRI XR.—"Prima, thou livest in the glory of God, and in the peace of Christ, Our Lord."[704]

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The glorious doctrine of the resurrection, which is peculiarly the characteristic of our holy religion as distinguished from all the faiths of antiquity, was everywhere recorded throughout the Catacombs. It was symbolized in the ever-recurring representations of the story of Jonah and of the raising of Lazarus, and was strongly asserted in numerous inscriptions. As the early Christians laid the remains of the departed saint in their last long rest, the sacred words of the Gospel, "I am the Resurrection and the Life," must have echoed with a strange power through the long corridors of that silent city of the dead, and have filled the hearts of the believers, though surrounded by the evidences of their mortality, with an exultant thrill of triumph over death and the grave. This was a recompense for all their pains. Of this not even the malignant ingenuity of persecution could deprive them. Although the body were consumed and its ashes strewn upon the waters, or sown upon the wandering winds, still, still the Lord knoweth them that are his, and keeps the dust of his chosen. Tertullian ridicules the heathen for believing the doctrine of metempsychosis and rejecting that of the resurrection.[705] "God forbid that he should abandon to everlasting destruction," he exclaims, "the labour of his hands, the care of his own thoughts, the receptacle of his own Spirit!"[706]

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The hope of the resurrection is often strongly expressed, as in the following examples:

HIC REQVIESCIT CARO MEA NOVISSIMO VERO DIE
PER $\overline{\text{XPM}}$ CREDO RESVSCITABITVR A MORTVIS. (A. D. 544.)

Here rests my flesh; but at the last day, through Christ, I believe it will be raised from the dead.

RELICTIS TVIS IACES IN PACE SOPORE
MERITA RESVRGES TEMPORALIS TIBI DATA REQVIETIO.

You, well-deserving one, having left your (relations), lie asleep in peace—you will arise—a temporary rest is granted you.

In an epitaph of the year 449 we read, RECEPTA CAELO MERVIT OCCVRRERE $\overline{\text{XPO}}$ AD RESVRRECTIONEM PRAEMIVM AETERNVM SVSCIPERE DIGNA—"Received into heaven, she deserved to meet Christ at the resurrection, worthy to receive an everlasting reward." In the following example from the Catacomb of Naples, Christian confidence adopts the sublime language of Job:

CREDO QVIA REDEMPTOR MEVS BIBIT (*sic*) ET NOBISSIMO DIE
DE TERRA SVSCITABIT ME IN CARNE MEA VIDEBO $\overline{\text{DOM}}$.

I believe, because that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day shall raise me from the earth, that in my flesh I shall see the Lord.

More briefly is this cardinal doctrine asserted in the following: IVSTVS CVM $\overline{\text{SCIS}}$ XPO MEDIANTE RESVRGET—"Justus, who will arise with the saints through Christ." HIC IN PACE REQVIESCIT LAVRENTIA QVAE CREDIDIT RESVRRECTIONEM—"Here reposes in peace Laurentia, who believed in the resurrection."[707]

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The very idea of death seems to have been repudiated by the primitive Christians. "*Non mortua sed data somno*," sings Prudentius in paraphrase of the words of Our Lord, "She is not dead but sleepeth."[708] Hence the Catacomb was designated the *cœmeterium*,[709] or place of sleeping, and the funeral vault the *cubiculum*, or sleeping chamber. The dead were not "buried," as the pagan expressions *conditus*, *compositus*, *situs*, indicate; but *depositus*, "laid down" in their lowly beds till the everlasting morn should come, and the angel's trump awake them; consigned as a precious trust to the tender keeping of mother earth, and "lying in wait for the resurrection."[710] The saints were "fallen asleep" in Jesus, and on the bridal morning of the soul they should awake with his likeness and be satisfied. The primitive Christians believed that the power which called a Lazarus from the tomb could wake to life again the slumbering millions of this valley of dry bones, vaster far than that of Ezekiel's vision, till they should stand up upon their feet an exceeding great army. [Pg 434]

But this sleep was a sleep of the body only, not of the soul. The ancient Christians were assured, as we have seen, of the immediate happiness of those that died in the faith. They believed that being absent from the body they were present with the Lord; that as soon as they passed from earth's living death they entered into the undying life and unfading bliss of heaven. Though surrounded by the mouldering bodies of the saints in Christ, the eye of faith beheld their glorified spirits, starry-crowned and palm-bearing, among the white-robed multitude before the throne of God. They admitted no thought of a long and dreary period of forgetfulness, nor probation of purgatorial fires, before the soul could enter into joy and peace.

The sublime reflections with which Cyprian concludes his treatise *De Mortalitate* nobly express the grand consoling thoughts which sustained the primitive Christians, and which sustain God's saints in every age. "We are but pilgrims and strangers here below," he exclaims, "let us then welcome the day that gives to us the joys of heaven. What exile longs not for his native land? Our true native land is paradise. A large and loving company expects us there. O the bliss of those celestial realms where no fear of dying enters! There the glorious choir of the apostles, the exulting company of the prophets, the countless army of the martyrs, await us. To them let us eagerly hasten. Let us long to be with them the sooner, that we may the sooner be with Christ."

What a striking contrast to these holy hopes is the pagans' blankness of despair concerning the future. Compared with this assurance of a blissful immortality, how cold and cheerless is their shadowy elysium, their unsubstantial visions of the spirit-world; how terrible the gloomy Acherontian lake, dark Lethe's stream, and Styx, and fiery Phlegethon. Like a gleam of heaven's sunshine in a benighted age are these rude inscriptions of the early Christians. Sublimer is their lofty hope, reaching forward beyond this world, and laying hands of faith upon the eternal verities of the world to come, than the imperishable renown of classic sages, or the Roman poet's vaunting boast of earthly immortality—*Non omnis moriar*. [Pg 435]

Even the high philosophy of Greece and the noble stoicism of the Roman mind afford no consolation to the soul brought face to face with the solemn mystery of death. A forced and sullen submission to the inevitable is all that they can teach. They shed no light upon the world beyond the grave, DOMVS AETERNA—"An eternal home,"[711] and SOMNO AETERNALI —"In eternal sleep," are written on their tombs, frequently accompanied by an inverted torch, the emblem of despair. To them death is an unsolved and insoluble problem. Their loftiest reasonings lack authority to satisfy the mind. It is the gospel of Christ alone which dispels the awful shadows of the tomb, plants the flower of hope in the very ashes of the grave, and brings life and immortality to light; which appeases the soul-hunger of mankind, and meets the yearning cry of the human heart.

Even the thoughtful mind of Pliny could extract no comfort from the various theories concerning the future state, but looked forward to annihilation as the universal doom. "To all," he says, "from the last day of life is there the same lot that there was before the first; nor is there any more consciousness after death than there was before birth."[712] Of Agricola, the wise and good, the philosophic Tacitus could only say with an incredulous sigh, "Doubtless if there be a place for the departed spirits of the just, if great souls perish not with the body, thou dost calmly repose."[713] "That the manes are any thing," says Juvenal, "or that the nether world is any thing, not even boys believe, unless those still in the nursery."[714] In sullen submission to fate, the pagan submits to the inevitable doom. When the name has issued from the fatal urn he leaves forever his woods, his villa, his pleasant home, and enters the bark which is to bear him into eternal exile.[715] The wisest sages can only fan the embers of their hopes into a flickering flame, and cry, "Ha! we have seen the fire." [Pg 436]

The following are examples of the melancholy and despairing spirit often breathed by pagan epitaphs:

PRAEVENERE DIEM VITAE CRVDELIA FATA
ET RAPTAM INFERNA ME POSVERE RATE
HOC LECTO ELOGIO IVVENIS MISERERE IACENTIS
ET DIC DISCEDENS SIT TIBI TERRA LEVIS.

The cruel fates have anticipated the term of life, and placed me, snatched away, in the infernal bark. Having read this elegy pity the fallen youth and say departing, May the earth be light upon thee. [Pg 437]

INFANTI DVLCISSIMO QVEM DII IRATI AETERNO SOMNO DEDERVNT—"To a very sweet child, whom the angry gods gave to eternal sleep." SVSCIPE NVNC CONIVNX SI QVIS POST FVNERA SENSVS DEBITA MANIBVS OFFICIA—"Receive now, O husband, if after death is any consciousness, the rites due to departed spirits." The hopeless parting of a dying wife is thus expressed: CARE MARITE MIHI DVLCISSIMA NATA VALETE—"O husband, dear to me, and dearest daughter, farewell." Or more briefly we read, AVE ATQVE VALE—"Hail and farewell."

Sometimes the desponding view of life is like the bitter experience of the Hebrew moralist, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" One such example reads thus:

DECIPIMVR VOTIS ET TEMPORE FALLIMVR ET MORS
DERIDET CVRAS ANXIA VITA NIHIL.

We are deceived by our vows, misled by time, and death derides our cares; anxious life is naught.

Of similar character is the following recalling the complaint of Job, "He cometh forth as a flower and is cut down:" VIVE LAETVS QVICVNQVE VIVIS VITA PARVVM MVNVS EST MOX EXORTA EST SENSIM VIGESCIT DEINDE SENSIM DEFICIT—"Live joyful who ever thou art that livest. Life is a small gift. It is scarcely sprung up when it imperceptibly flourishes and then imperceptibly declines." The succeeding example is remarkable for its misanthropy: ANIMAL INGRATIVS HOMINE NVLLVM EST—"No animal is more ungrateful than man." The inspired apothegm, "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out," is illustrated in the following: EX OMNIBVS BONIS SVIS HOC SIBI SVMPSERVNT—"Of all their wealth they possess only this tomb." We find also the expression, MATER GENVIT ME MATER RECIPIT—"Mother (earth) nourished me, she receives me again," analogous to the declaration of Scripture, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Spon gives also the following example: VIXI VT VIVIS MORIERIS VT SVM MORTVVS—"I have lived as thou livest, thou shalt die as I have died." Sometimes the cold consolation is offered that others are also the subjects of sorrow and death, as DOLOR TALIS NON TIBI CONTIGIT VNI—"Such grief affects not thee alone;" NEC TIBI NEC NOBIS AETERNVM VIVERE CESSIT—"Neither to you nor to us was it granted to live forever." Similar to this is a Christian inscription, ΕΥΨΥΧΕΙ CΕΚΟΥΝΔΕ ΟΥΔΕΙC ΑΘΑΝΟΤΟC—"Be of good cheer, Secundus; no one is immortal."

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More painful even than the gloomy stoicism of many pagan inscriptions is the light Epicurean tone which frequently occurs, as in the instance which follows, where life is compared to a play:

VIXI · DVM · VIXI · BENE · IAM · MEA
PERACTA · MOX · VESTRA · AGETVR
FABVLA · VALETE · ET · PLAVDITE ·

While I lived, I lived well. My play is now ended, soon yours will be. Farewell and applaud me.[716]

In the succeeding example the sentiment is still more Anacreontic. It breathes the true pagan spirit, *Carpe diem*—"Seize the day. Pluck each flower of pleasure as you pass. Press all life's nectar into one frenzied draught and drain it to the dregs. Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Even in the solemn presence of death, the soul, unawed by the dread shadow of the future, turns regretfully to the vanished pleasures of earth, and finds its only consolation in the thought of their enjoyment.

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D · M · TI : CLAVDI · SECVNDI
HIC · SECVM · HABET · OMNIA
BALNEA · VINVM · VENVS · CORRVMPVNT · CORPORA
NOSTRA · SED · VITAM · FACIVNT B · V · V ·

To the Divine Manes of Tiberius Claudius Secundus. Here he enjoys every thing. Baths, wine, and lust ruin our constitutions, but—they make life what it is. Farewell, farewell.[717]

The following expresses the very essence of coarse sensualism: QVOD EDI ET BIBI MECVM HABEO QVOD RELIQVI PERDIDI—"What I ate and drank I have with me; what I left I have lost." Compare the moral antithesis of the sentiment expressed by John Wesley: "What I gave away I have still; what I kept I have lost."

Frequently the pagan epitaphs contain an outburst of scorn or defiance of the unjust gods that sit aloft and make their sport of human woe, as is seen in the accompanying examples:

PROCOPE · MANVS · LEBO · CONTRA · DEVM
QVI · ME · INNOCENTEM · SVSTVLIT.

I, Procope, lift up my hands against the god who snatched away me innocent.

In an epitaph in the Lapidarian Gallery a bereaved mother in the bitterness of her soul cries out:

ATROX O FORTVNA TRVCI QVAE FVNERE GAVDES
QVID MIHI TAM SVBITO MAXIMVS ERIPITVR
QVI MODO IVCVNDVS GREMIO SVPERESSE SOLEBAT
HIC LAPIS IN TVMVLO NVNC IACET ECCE MATER.

O relentless Fortune, who delightest in cruel death,

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Why is Maximus so suddenly snatched from me?
He who lately used to be joyful in my bosom,
This stone now marks his tomb.—Behold his mother.

Compare also the following: INVIDA LIBITINA FILIIS ABSTVLIT PATREM—"Envious Libitina snatched away a father from his children;" VICTA EST IVSTICIA NON AEQVO IVDICE FATO—"Justice is overcome by that unjust judge, Fate;" DIIS INIQVIS ANIMVLAM TVAM RAPVERVNT—"To the unjust gods, (who) snatched away thy soul."

But the holy teachings of Christianity revealed to the weary and heavy laden souls of men, aching with a sense of orphanage, the loving Fatherhood of God,[718] and produced a spirit of meekness and resignation altogether foreign to the pagan mind. Of pathetic interest, as illustrating this fact, is a Christian fragment of date *circ.* A. D. 600, on which we may still read the inscription

QVI · DEDIT · ET · ABSTVLIT
.... OMINI · BENEDIC ....

The familiar words suggest the imperishable thought, which has been a source of consolation to bereaved ones in every age. "Like a voice from among the graves," says Dr. Maitland, "broken by sobs, yet distinctly intelligible, fall these words on the listening ear, 'who gave, and hath taken away—blessed [be the name] of the Lord.'"

We occasionally find pagan inscriptions breathing a sense of spiritual existence and hope of future life.[719] The yearning of the human heart that

> Longs for the touch of a vanished hand
> And the sound of a voice that is still,

and the hunger of the soul for communion with the dear departed in the loving tryst of the silent land are pathetically expressed in the following prayer of Furia Spes: PETO VOS MANES SANCTISSIMAE (*sic*) ... MEVM CONIVGEM HORIS NOCTVRNIS VT VIDEAM ET ETIAM VT EGO DVLCIVS ET CELERIVS APVD EVM PERVENIRE POSSIM—"I beseech you, most holy spirits, that I may behold my husband in the midnight hours; and also that I may more sweetly and swiftly go to him." [Pg 441]

More common, however, is the feeling of hopeless severance expressed by the frequent valediction, VALE VALE LONGVM VALE—"Farewell, farewell, a long farewell;" or, sadder still, VALE AETERNVM—"Farewell forever."

There occur in the Catacombs frequent examples of acclamations addressed to the departed, expressive of a desire for their happiness and peace. These acclamations have been quoted by Romanist writers as indicating a belief in the doctrine of purgatory, and in the efficacy of prayers on behalf of the dead. The importance of this subject will justify its careful examination. Many of the examples quoted by Roman controversialists are not precatory at all, but simply declarative.[720] But there are others in which the expression assumes a distinctively optative form. Some of these may be of comparatively late date, as the *graffiti*, or inscriptions of pilgrims near the more celebrated shrines, of which we have seen examples at the so-called "papal crypt." But others are unquestionably part of the original epitaphs. We find, for instance, such expressions as VIVAS—"May you live;" VIVAS IN DEO, ZHC EN ΘΕΩ—"May you live in God;" VIVAS IN ETERNVM—"May you live forever;" ETERNA TIBI LVX—"Eternal light to thee;" ESTOTE IN PACE—"Be in peace;" VIVAS INTER SANCTOS—"May you live among the holy ones;" VIVAS IN NOMINE XTI—"May you live, in the name of Christ;" ZHCHC (*sic*) IN ΔΕΟ XPICTO—"May you live in God Christ;" VIVAS IN DOMINO ZEZV—"May you live in the Lord Jesus;" VIVAS VINCAS—"May you live, may you conquer;" DORMITIO TVA INTER DICAEIS, (ΔΙΚΑΙΟΙC)—"May your sleep be among the just;" DEVS TIBI REFRIGERET—SPIRITVM TVVM REFRIGERET—"God refresh thee, refresh thy spirit;" EIPHNH COI—"Peace to thee;" EN EIPHNH ΣOY TO ΠNEYMA—"In peace be thy spirit;" O ΘEOC ANAΠAYCH THN ΨYXHN EN CKHNAIC AΓIΩN—"God give thy soul rest in the tents of the holy." These, it will be perceived, are not intercessions *for* the dead, but mere apostrophes addressed *to* them, as is apparent in the following: ZΩTIKE ZHCAICEN (*sic*) KYPIΩ ΘAPPI, (*sic*)—"Zoticus, mayest thou live in the Lord. Be of good cheer." They were no more prayers for the souls of the departed than is Byron's verse, "Bright be the place of thy rest." [Pg 442]

But the wish sometimes takes the form of a prayer *for* the beloved one, as MNHCΘHC IHCOYC O KYPIOC TEKNON EM ...—"Remember, O Lord Jesus, our child;" ΔEOYC XPICTOYC OMNIΠOTEC CΠIPIT ... TOY PEΦ.IΓEPE IN ☧, (Latin in Greek characters,)—"May the Almighty God Christ refresh thy spirit in Christ." NHMNHΘH EAYTOY Ω ΘEOC ICTOYC AΓNAC (*sic*)—"Remember him, O God, among thy lambs;" MNHCΘHTI KYPIE THC KOIMHCEΩC THC ΔOYΛHC COY ANAΠAYCON THN ΨYXHN TOY ΔOYΛOY COY EN TO ΦΩTINΩ EN TΩ ANAΨYΞEΩC EIC KOΛΠON ABPAAM,—"Remember, O God, the sleep of thy servant; give rest to the soul of thy servant in the light, in the refreshment in Abraham's bosom:" DOMINE NE ADVMBRETVR SPIRITVS—"O Lord! let not (this) soul be brought into darkness;" MNHCΘH AYTOY O ΘEOC EIC TOYC AIΩNAC—"May God remember him forever."[721] [Pg 443]

These intense expressions of affection of the ardent Italian nature[722] that would fain follow the loved object—"though lost to sight to memory dear"—beyond the barrier of the tomb, are surely a slight foundation on which to build the vast system of mercenary masses for the dead. And yet they are the only evidences that keen Roman controversialists can adduce

from these Christian inscriptions of the first six centuries.[723] And, be it remembered, these inscriptions were not a formulated and authoritative creed framed by learned theologians, but the untutored utterances of humble peasants, many of whom were recent converts from paganism or Judaism, in which religions such expressions were a customary sepulchral formula. The accompanying examples indicate the prevalence of this practice in pagan epigraphy: AVE or HAVE VALE—"Hail, farewell;" DI TIBI BENEFACIANT—"May the gods be good to thee;" OSSA TVA BENE QVIESCANT—"May thy bones rest well;" SIT TIBI TERRA LEVIS—"May the earth be light upon thee;" ΧΑΙΡΕ ΕΥΠΛΟΕΙ—ΕΥΔΡΟΜΕΙ—"Rejoice, a safe voyage, a prosperous journey;" ΕΥΨΥΧΕΙ ΚΥΡΙΑ ΚΑΙ ΔΩΗ COI ΟCIPIC ΤΟ ΨΥΧΡΟΝ ΥΔΩΡ—"Be of good cheer, O lady, and to thee Osiris give to quaff the cooling water;"[724] ΕΝ ΜΥΡΟΙC COI ΤΕΚΝΟΝ Η ΨΥΧΗ—"In precious odours be thy soul, my child;" HIC MANES PLACIDA NOCTE QVIESCANT ET SVPER IN NIDO MARATHONIA CANTET AEDON—"Here may the manes rest throughout the placid night, and above thee in her nest may the Marathonian nightingale sing;" BENE VALEAS MATER ROGAT TE VT ME AD TE RECIPIAS VALE—"Farewell, thy mother prays, O take me to thyself again, farewell."[725] In the Jewish epitaphs these acclamations are much more common than in the Christian inscriptions. The following is an example: MARCIA BONA IVDEA DORMITIO IN BONIS—"Marcia, a good Jewess, thy sleep be among the good." On many modern Hebrew tombstones are the words, "Let his soul be bound up in the bundle of life."

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Small wonder, therefore, that those Christian converts who had been brought up in pagan or Jewish superstition should retain traces of this ancient custom so congenial to the sympathies of the human heart, unprescient as they were of the baneful results to which it would lead. Their freedom of language had not yet been restricted, as Bishop Kip remarks, to the cold rules of ordinary logic by the fear of deadly heresy. We know, indeed, from the testimony of the Fathers, that mention of the dead was frequently made in the prayers of the church. These prayers, however, were often thanksgivings—εὐχὴ εὐχαριστήριος—for those who were asleep in Christ, or commemorations of their virtues for the improvement of the living.[726] Many of the Fathers vigorously protest against the idea that the dead can be benefitted by any prayers on their behalf, and strongly assert their changeless state in the other world.[727] The notion, however, of the efficacy of these prayers gradually crept into the church; but that they were not conceived to procure remission from purgatorial flames is evident from the fact that, even at a comparatively late period, they were offered on behalf of the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints, and even of the Virgin Mary herself, who were all believed to be in the immediate presence of God. At length even this tremendous error found entrance into the church, and gave into the hands of a mercenary hierarchy the keys of heaven and hell.

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But in the testimony of the Catacombs is no trace of that torturing doctrine which hangs the heart on tenter-hooks of dread suspense, and wrings from the lacerated affections a dole to a hireling priesthood for the exercise of their ghostly functions in delivering the souls of the departed from burning flame. There is no hint in their cheerful art and pious epitaphs of the Dantean horrors, the worse than Sisyphean toil, and torments more dire than those of Tantalus, under the intense conception of which for centuries the heart of Christendom was wrung. No; the early church believed the pious dead already to enjoy the ampler life, the more ethereal air, and sweet beatitude of paradise.[728]

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Associated with the Romish practice of praying for the dead is that of praying *to* them. For this there is still less authority in the testimony of the Catacombs than for the former. There are, indeed, indications that this custom was not unknown, but they are very rare and exceptional. In all the dated inscriptions of the first six centuries, thirteen hundred and seventy four in number, there is only *one* invocation of the departed. It is that of the year 380, already given, in which from the heart of an orphaned and ignorant[729] girl, in the hour of her bitter sorrow and bereavement, is wrung the cry, PRO HVNC VNVM ORA SVBOLEM—"O pray for this, thine only child." The few undated inscriptions of a similar character are probably of as late, or it may be of a much later, date than this; and the invocation is almost invariably uttered by some relative of the deceased, as if prompted by natural affection rather than by religious feeling. Thus we have such examples as the following: PETE PRO FILIIS TVIS—"Pray for thy children; "PETE ET ROGA PRO FRATRES ET SOBOLES TVOS, (*sic*)—"Entreat and pray for your brothers and children;" ORA PRO PARENTIBVS TVIS—"Pray for thy parents;" VIBAS IN PACE ET PETE PRO NOBIS—"May you live in peace and pray for us;" VIBAS IN DEO ET ROGA—"May you live in God and pray;" IN ORATIONIBVS TVIS ROGES PRO NOBIS QVIA SCIMVS TE IN ☧—"In your prayers, pray for us, for we know you (to be) in Christ." ΔΙΟΝΥCΙΟC ΝΗΠΙΟC ΑΚΑΚΟC ΕΝΘΑΔΕ ΚΕΙΤΕ ΜΕΤΑ ΤΩΝ ΑΓΙΩΝ ΜΝΗCΚΕCΘΕ ΔΕ ΚΑΙ ΗΜΩΝ ΕΝ ΤΑΙC ΑΓΙΑΙC ΥΜΩΝ ΠΡΕΥΧΑC ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ ΓΛΥΨΑΤΟC ΚΑΙ ΓΡΑΨΑΝΤΟC—"Dionysius a spotless infant, lies here with the saints. O remember us also in thy holy prayers; aye, and the sculptor and writer as well." The last clause is in smaller characters as if an afterthought.[730]

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These few examples among eleven thousand inscriptions, of which the greater number are of post-Constantinian date, are a slight foundation for the vast Roman system of the invocation of saints. "If this doctrine," says Bishop Kip, "so much in unison with many of the deepest feelings of our nature, had been held by the primitive church, we should have found it written broadly and clearly every-where through these epitaphs. Its proof would not be left to half a dozen inscriptions among thousands which plainly declare the reverse." How different from these lowly crypts is a modern Romish sepulchral chapel, with its ceaseless appeals by the dead for the prayers of the living, and by the living for the prayers of the dead; with its ever-recurring *Orate pro anima*, and *Maria sanctissima, ora pro nobis*. We

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search in vain through all the corridors of those ancient sanctuaries of the Christian faith for a single example of these now universal Romish formulæ.

The invocation of saints probably sprang from the superstitious reverence paid to the martyrs after the age of persecution had passed. *Miserere nostrarum precum*, "Pitying, hear our prayer," sings Prudentius at the close of the fourth century in his hymn to St. Vincent. VT DAMASI PRECIBVS FAVEAS PRECOR INCLYTA MARTYR—"Illustrious martyr, I beseech thee to aid my prayers," writes Damasus about the same period in his epitaph on St. Agnes; and in an epitaph on his sister Irene he exclaims, NOSTRI REMINISCERE VIRGO VT TVA PER DOMINVM PRAESTET MIHI FACVLA LVMEN—"Remember me, O virgin, that by God's help your torch may give me light."

Thus was developed in course of time a vast celestial hierarchy endowed with the attributes of Deity,[731] usurping the intercessory office of Christ, and rivalling the polytheism of paganism. The primitive Fathers repudiated the worship of any saint or angel, or the intervention of any mediator with God but Christ. "We worship the Son of God," write the elders of Smyrna, "but the martyrs we only love."[732] "We sacrifice not to martyrs," says Augustine, "but to the one God, both theirs and ours;"[733] "nor is our religion," he indignantly adds, "the worship of dead men."[734] "It is the devil who has introduced this homage of angels," says Chrysostom;[735] and the Council of Laodicea, (A. D. 361,) forbade their invocation as idolatrous and a forsaking of Christ.[736]

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We now turn from these polemical subjects to the consideration of the doctrines, common to Christendom, of the trinity of the Godhead and the divinity of Jesus Christ. We know from ecclesiastical history that numerous heresies sprang up in the early centuries with reference to these august themes; but no evidence accuses the church in the Catacombs of departure from the primitive and orthodox faith in these important respects. Frequently, indeed, the belief in these cardinal doctrines is so strongly asserted as to suggest, that it is in designed and vigorous protest against the contemporary heretical notions.

The doctrine of the essential divinity of the Son of God is repeatedly and strikingly affirmed. Not only are the symbolical letters Alpha and Omega often associated with the sacred monogram, in allusion to the sublime passage in the Revelation descriptive of the eternity of Christ, but his name and Messianic title are variously combined with that of the Deity so as to indicate their identity. Thus we have the expressions ZHCHC IN DEO XPICTO, (*sic*)—EN THEΩ KYPEIΩ XEICTΩ, (*sic*)—VIBAS IN CHRISTO DEO—IN DOMINO IESV—"May you live in God Christ—in God, the Lord Christ—in Christ God—in the Lord Jesus." Or the divine attributes are still more strongly expressed as follows: ΔEOYC XPICTOYC OMNIΠOTEC, (*sic*)—"God Christ Almighty;" DEO SANC XRO VN LVC, (*sic*)—"God, holy Christ, only light;" DEO SANC ☧ VNI, (*sic*)—"To Christ, the one holy God." We have seen the impression in the plaster of a grave whereby some orthodox believer, probably in protest against the Arian heresy, has "set to his seal" that "Christ is God." Fig. 119, page 386.[737]

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Mention is made of the three persons of the Trinity separately in several epitaphs in which the deceased is said to sleep IN DEO—IN CHRISTO—IN SPIRITV SANCTO, and collectively in the following of date 403, QVINTILIANVS HOMO DEI CONFIRMANS TRINITATEM AMANS CASTITATEM RESPVENS MVNDVM—"Quintilianus, a man of God, holding fast the doctrine of the Trinity, loving chastity, contemning the world." In later examples from Aqueilia and other places we find the formulæ, IN NOMINE SANCTAE TRINITATIS—PATRIS ET FILII ET SPIRITVS SANCTI—"In the name of the Holy Trinity—of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."[738]

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Patristic evidence informs us that both these doctrines were firmly held by the primitive Christians. The doxologies, benedictions, and baptismal formulæ, of the ancient liturgies are all in the name of the triune God. The divinity of the three persons and at the same time the unity of the Godhead are distinctly and often asserted. This is also affirmed in frequent Christian inscriptions "to the one God"—DEO VNO. (*sic*.)

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Such, then, is the testimony of the Catacombs concerning the doctrines of the early believers—a testimony more favourable to the general character of ancient Christianity than the writings of the Fathers and ecclesiastical historians of the times; probably, as Dr. Maitland remarks, because "the sepulchral tablet is more congenial to the expression of pious feeling than the controversial epistle, or even the much needed episcopal rebuke." We know, indeed, from these latter sources, that heresy, strife, recrimination, and mutual anathemas early disgraced the religion of peace and love. But no sounds of this profane controversy disturbed those quiet resting-places of the Christian dead. The expression of faith and hope and joy and peace—the peace of God that passeth all understanding—everywhere appears. The stricken and sorrowing believer burst not forth like the heathen in passionate complainings and impotent rage against the gods, but bowed in meek submission to *His* will who doeth all things well. With devout and chastened spirit he bore the ills of life, and with calm confidence and holy joy he met the doom of death,

> Not like the quarry slave, at night
> Scourged to his dungeon; but, sustained and soothed
> By an unfaltering trust, approached his grave,
> Like one who wrapped the drapery of his couch
> About him, and lay down to pleasant dreams.[739]

[693] *Eastern Churches.*

[694] Tertullian says they destroy the soul as fevers do the body.—*De Præscrip. Hæreticorum*, c. 2.

[695] The Gnostic Marcion sought admission to the Roman presbytery and Valentine even aspired to the episcopal chair. "Speraverat episcopatum Valentinus."—Tertull., *Adv. Valent.*, c. iv.

[696] *Inscriptiones Christianæ Urbis Romæ Septimo Sæculo Antiquiores.*

[697] The earlier inscriptions express merely the consular dates, and in one instance only, the name and age of the deceased.

[698] Dr. McCaul remarks the occurrence of a similar expression in a pagan inscription given by Muratori, (978, 979,) as follows: *D.M. in hoc tumulo jacet corpus exanimis* (sic) *cujus spiritus inter deos receptus est; sic enim meruit,*—"In this tomb lies a lifeless body whose spirit is received among the gods, for so it deserved."

[699] The use of *recedo* in the sense of "to die" is classical; but in the above form it is unknown in pagan epigraphy.

[700] Compare Wesley—

"There everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers."

[701] De Rossi thinks *Ancilla Dei* a proper name.

[702] The following is the brief biography of some unknown saint at Naples: SERVVS DEI ... ET AD VITA (*sic*) PERBENIT (*sic*,)—"A servant of God ... and attained unto life."

[703] Burgon.

[704] Of the Antiochene Christians Chrysostom writes: "They say not of the departed 'he is dead,' but, 'he is perfected.'"—*Hom.* in *Matt.*, 68.

[705] *Apol.*, c. 48.

[706] *De Resur. Carn.*, c. 9. He mentions the long duration of the bones and teeth, and quotes the story of the phœnix as an argument in favour of the doctrine, c. 13.

[707] A spurious epitaph of the fourteenth century, given by Maitland, p. 82, as genuine, thus fantastically refers to this august theme: QVI INQVIETVS VIXI NVNC TANDEM MORTVVS NON LVBENS QVIESCO, SOLVS CVR SIM QVAESERIS (*sic*) VT IN DIE CENSORIO SINE IMPEDIMENTO FACILIVS RESVRGAM—"I who lived restless, being now at length dead, rest unwillingly. Do you ask why I am alone? That in the day of Judgment I may more readily rise without impediment."

[708] See also the epitaph given in Book I, chap. iii.—ALEXANDER MORTVVS NON EST SED VIVIT SVPER ASTRA—"Alexander is not dead but lives above the stars."

[709] Similarly the African Christians called their burial places *accubitoria*—"sleeping places."

[710] Wiseman, *Fabiola*, p. 145. Dr. McCaul, however, regards the expression as simply equivalent to buried.

[711] This phrase is sometimes, though very rarely, inadvertently used in Christian epitaphs, as also the expression, Τὸν ἀγρήγορον ὕπνον καθεύδει—"Sleeps the sleep that knows no waking." Of somewhat pagan form is the following epitaph of Cardinal Porto-Carero at Toledo, *Hic jacet pulvis cinis et nihil*—"Here lies dust and ashes, and nothing more."

[712] Omnibus a suprema die eadem quæ ante primum, nec magis a morte sensus ullus aut corporis aut animæ, quam ante natalem.

[713] Si quis piorum manibus locus, si non cum corpore extinguuntur magnæ animæ, placide quiescas.—*Vit. Agric.*

[714] Esse aliquid manes et subterranea regna,
Nec pueri credunt, nisi qui nondum ære lavantur.—*Sat.*, ii, 149.

[715] See that saddest but most beautiful of the odes of Horace—To Delium, II, 3.

... Et nos in æternum
Exilium impositura cymbæ.

[716] In a similar spirit the dying emperor Augustus inquired if he had played his part well in the farce of life, and asked the applause of his courtiers.

Δότε κρότον
Καὶ πάντες ὑμεῖς μετὰ χαρᾶς κτυπήσατε.

[717] The Swedish poet Georg St. Jernhjelm ordered to be written on his tomb the pagan sentiment, VIXIT DVM VIXIT LAETVS—"While he lived he lived merrily."

[718] "God counts even the bristles of the swine," says Tertullian, "much more the hairs of his children."

[719] The following proposes a practical test of the existence of spirits: TV LEGIS ET DVBITAS MANES ESSE SPONSIONE FACTA INVOCA NOS ET INTELLIGES—"You who read this epitaph and doubt whether spirits exist, invoke us, and by our answer you will know."

[720] Thus in Rock's *Hierurgia*, a standard Romanist authority, such expressions as REQ IN PACE are explained sometimes in defiance of the grammatical construction of the context, as signifying "Mayest thou rest," as if REQVIESCAS, instead of, in analogy with numerous other examples, "he rests,"—REQVIESCIT. Sometimes the cardinal word is entirely omitted, as in the expression, IN PACE ET BENEDICTIONE, which is quite unwarrantably translated, "May you rest in peace and benediction."

[721] Sometimes the modernized form of the language indicates the late origin of *graffiti* found on ancient monuments, as in the following, PREGA ILA PER SILVINA, VIVI ILA NEL DIO CRISTO.

[722] The adoring love of Cicero for his daughter found expression in the building of a temple to her memory.

[723] Rock quotes them as "*proof*" that the primitive Christians believed that the soul of the deceased might be in an intermediate state, where the efficacy of such aspirations could reach him, and his spirit could be refreshed and benefitted by the supplications of his surviving brethren.—*Hierurgia*, p. 322. He gives several examples similar to the above; but no accumulation of such evidence affords the slightest warrant for the corrupt practice of the Church of Rome.

[724] Burgon.

[725] *Ibid.*

[726] Ut ex recordatione eorum proficiamus.—*Orig.* in *Rom.*, xii. These commemorations of the departed were generally celebrated on the anniversaries of their death—their birthday as it was called—Oblationes pro defunctis pro natalitiis, annua die facimus—Tertul., *De Coron. Mil.*, c. 3; cf. *De Monogam.*, c. 10.

[727] Quando isthinc excessum fuerit, nullus jam locus pœnitentiæ est, nullus satisfactionis effectus.—Cypr. *ad Demet.*, § 16; cf. Greg. Naz., *de Rebus suis*, and Hieron. in *Galat.*, c. 6. The modern Greek church offers prayers for the dead without believing in the doctrine of purgatory.

[728] The doctrine of purgatory was first preached by Gregory the Great; and this fiery realm, so rich in revenue of tears and blood, was afterward formally annexed to the papal dominions by a bull.

[729] See the barbarous Latinity of the inscription, p. 426.

[730] Some of the examples of alleged invocation of saints given by Romanist writers are altogether gratuitous assumptions. Thus the letters P. T. PR. N. S. have been, without the slightest warrant, expanded thus, *Pete pro nobis*, "Pray for us." Others are merely requests to be remembered by the dear departed, as ΔIONYCIN EIC MNIAN EXETE—"Have ye in remembrance Dionysius." The *graffiti* of the pilgrims at the shrines of the more celebrated martyrs, in which are occasional invocations of the dead, are no criteria of primitive belief and practice, for these are of every age down to comparatively late mediæval times. The example in the text is from Burgon.

[731]

Qui lumine Christi
Cuncta et operta vides, longeque absentia cernis.

—Paulin., *Nat.* vi.

See also the Litany of the Saints in Romish Missal.

[732] Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ προσκυνοῦμεν τοὺς δὲ μάρτυρας ἀγαπῶμεν.—*Euseb.*, iv, 35.

[733] Nec ... sacrificemus martyribus, sed uni Deo et martyrum et nostro.—*De Civ. Dei*, 22, 10.

[734] Non sit nobis religio cultus hominum mortuorum.—*De Ver. Relig.*, c. 55.

[735] Ὁ διάβολος τὰ τῶν ἀγγέλων ἐπεισήγαγε.—*Hom.*, 9.

[736] Οὐ δεῖ Χριστιανοὺς ἀγγέλους ὀνομάζειν.—*Can.*, 35. The "saints" of the primitive church, says Schaff, were the whole body of believers, and not a narrow spiritual aristocracy, as in the Romish church. The Council of Constantinople, A. D. 712, decreed that "Whosoever will not avail himself of the intercession of the Virgin Mary, let him be accursed." "May God Almighty forgive your sin by the merits of Our Lady," said Gregory VII. to Beatrice and Matilda.—*Harduin* vi, 1235.

[737] We have frequent evidence of the zeal of the early Christians in the study of the Scriptures. The Bible was not the sealed book that it is in modern Rome. Jerome counsels that it be frequently read and scarcely ever laid aside, that it be studied not as a task but for delight and instruction, and that some of it be learned by heart every day.—Divinas Scripturas sæpius lege, imo nunquam de manibus tuis sacra lectio deponatur.—*Ep. ad Nepotian.*, 7. Non ad laborem, sed ad delectationem et instructionem animæ.—*Ep. ad Demetriad.*, 15. Nec licebat cuiquam sororum ignorare psalmos, et non de Scripturis sanctis quotidie aliquid discere.—*Ep. ad Eustoch.*, 19.

We find no traces in the early period of the church of the fierce intolerance and dreadful anathemas that mark modern Romanism. Tertullian in golden words asserts that liberty of conscience which a Dominic and Torquemada afterward so ruthlessly trampled under foot. "It is a fundamental human right," he exclaims, "that every man should worship according to his own conviction. It is no part of religion to compel religion."—*Ad Scap.*, 2. Compare also the wise words of Cassiodorus: "Cum divinitas patiatur multas religiones esse, nos unam non audemus imponere. Retinemus enim legisse, voluntarie sacrificandum esse domino, non cujusquam cogentis imperio."

[738] The pagan Lucian satirizes the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, "one in three and three in one"—Ἓν ἐκ τριῶν, καὶ ἐξ ἑνὸς τρία.—*Philopatr.*, ad fine. Pliny mentions the Christian worship of Christ as God, "Carmenque Christo quasi Deo."—*Ep. ad Had.* In response to the heathen accusation of worshipping a mere man, a crucified impostor—ἀνεσκολοπισμένον σοφιστὴν, (Luc., *de Mort. Pereg.*,) the Christians reply that he is also God: Υἱος καὶ πατὴρ εἷς ἄμφω κύριος—Clem., *Paed.*, iii, 12; "Deus est et Dei Filius, et unus ambo."—Tertul., *Apol.*, 30. In contrast to Christian monotheism, Tertullian ridicules the polytheism of the heathen, and compares the contests of the gods in Homer to those of gladiators.—*Ad. Nat.*, 10. Imitating the keen irony of Isaiah, he exclaims, "You make a cooking pot of Saturn, a frying pan of Minerva. Even the mice gnaw, the spiders defoul your gods."—*Ibid.*, ii, 12. The trinity of Plato and the Hindoo sages was a mere speculative subtlety. Tertullian spurned the fusion of philosophy and Christian doctrine. "Away with such mottled Christianity," he exclaims.—*De Præscrip. Hæret.*, c. 7. Compare his noble confession of faith in God, the eternal Spirit, an incorporeal essence, the true Prometheus who gave order to the world, concluding with the noble words, "We say, and before all men we say,

and torn and bleeding under your tortures we cry out, ‘We worship God through Christ.’”—*Apol.,* 17-22.

[739] Bryant’s *Thanatopsis*.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND CHARACTER AS READ IN THE CATACOMBS.

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THE inscriptions of the Catacombs give us many interesting indications of the social position, domestic relations, and general character of the primitive Christians, as well as of their religious belief. They lift the veil of ages from the buried past and cause it to live again, lit up with a thousand natural touches which we seek in vain from books. They bridge the gulf of time, and make us in a sense contemporaries of the early church. They give us an insight into the daily life and occupations of the ancient believers, of which no mention is made in the crowded page of history. The winding Catacombs are the whispering gallery of the bygone ages. Their humble epitaphs are echoes thrilling with a deep and tender meaning, too low and gentle to be heard across the strife of intervening years. In their touching pathos we seem to hear the sob of natural sorrow for the loved and lost, "the fall of kisses on unanswering clay," the throbbings of the human heart in the hour of its deepest emotion, when the parting pang unseals the founts of feeling in the soul. We read of the yearnings of an affection that reaches beyond the grave, and hungers for reunion with the dear departed above the skies; the expression of an inextinguishable love that death itself cannot destroy. We see the emblematic palm and crown rudely scratched upon the grave wherein the Christian athlete, having fought the fight and kept the faith, has entered into dreamless rest. We read, too, the records of the worldly rank of the deceased—sometimes exalted, more often lowly and obscure—frequently accompanied by the emblems of their humble toil.

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The very names written on these marble slabs are often beautifully and designedly expressive of Christian sentiment or character. Sometimes the correspondence of name and character is indicated, as in the following: ΣΙΜΠΛΙΚΙΑ Η ΚΑΙ ΚΑΛΩΝΥΜΟΣ—"Simplicia who was also rightly so-called;" HIC VERVS QVI SEMPER VERA LOCVTVS—"Here lies Verus, who ever spoke verity." These names were frequently assumed in adult age, when the convert from paganism laid aside his former designation, often of an idolatrous meaning, in order to adopt one more consistent with the Christian profession. Thus we have such beautifully significant names as INNOCENTIA, "Innocence;" CONSTANTIA, "Constancy;" PRVDENTIA, "Prudence;" DIGNITAS, "Dignity;" DECENTIA, "Comeliness;" PEREGRINVS, "A pilgrim;" SABBATA, "Rest;" ANASTASIA, "The resurrection;" ΠΙΣΤΙΣ, "Faith;" ΕΛΠΙΣ and SPES, "Hope;" ΑΓΑΠΗ, "Love;" ΕΙΡΗΝΗ, "Peace;" ΑΓΑΘΗ, "Good;" ΕΥΣΕΒΙΟΣ, "Pious;" ΕΥΚΑΡΠΙΑ, "Good fruit;" PROBVS, "Just;" FELIX, "Happy;" FIDELIS, "Faithful;" FORTVNATA, "Fortunate;" VERVS, "True;" DIGNVS, "Worthy;" CASTA, "Pure;" BENIGNVS, "Kind;" NOBILIS, "Noble;" AMABILIS, "Amiable;" INGENVA, "Sincere;" VENEROSA, "Venerable;" GAVDIOSA, "Rejoicing," GRATA, "Pleasing;" CANDIDVS, "Frank;" DVLCIS and ΓΛΥΚΥΣ, "Sweet;" SEVERA, "grave;" with the comparatives, FELICIOR, NOBILIOR, etc., and the superlatives, FELICISSIMA, "most happy;" NOBILISSIMA, "most noble;" FIDELISSIMA, "most faithful;" DIGNISSIMA, "Most worthy;" DVLCISSIMA, "Most sweet;" and the like.[740]

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Sometimes, too, a pious word or phrase was used as a proper name, as among the ancient Hebrews and the English Puritans. Thus we have such examples as, QVOD VVLT DEVS, "What God wills;" DEVS DEDIT, "God gave;" ADEODATVS[741] and ADEODATA, "Given by God;" ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΣ, "God-born;" ΘΕΟΔΩΡΑ, "God-given;" DEO GRATIA, "Thanks to God;" ΘΕΟΦΙΛΟΣ, "God-beloved;"[742] RENATVS, "Born again;" REDEMPTVS, "Redeemed;" ACCEPTISSIMA, "Very well pleasing;" BONIFACIVS, "Well-doer;" ΕΥΠΡΟΣΔΕΚΤΟΣ, "Accepted" or "Acceptable;" and ΣΩΖΟΜΕΝΗ, "Saved."[743] De Rossi thinks that the expressions, ANCILLA DEI, "Handmaid of God;" and SERVVS DEI, "Servant of God," are sometimes proper names.

Some of the names in these inscriptions were probably given by the heathen in reproach and contempt, and were afterward adopted by the Christians in humility and self-abasement. It is difficult to account otherwise for such names as, CONTVMELIOSVS, "Injurious;" CALAMITOSA, "Destructive;" PROIECTVS, "Cast out;" SERVILIS, "Servile;" and especially such opprobrious epithets as FIMUS and STERCORIA, "Dung" and "Filth." In the last there may be an allusion to the words of St. Paul, (1 Cor. iv, 13,) "We are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." Thus the primitive believers bound persecution as a wreath about their brows, exulted in the glorious infamy, and made the brand of shame the badge of honour.

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A few Scripture names occur, and have a strangely foreign look amid those of Greek or Latin origin by which they are surrounded. Thus we have Petrus, Joannes, Paulus, Stephanus, Rebecca, Elizabeth, Susanna, and Maria. The extreme rarity of the last, however, since so popular throughout Christendom, is an indication that the homage of the Virgin Mary is the growth of later times.

The names of animals were often applied to both Christians and pagans, as Aper, Leo, Leopardus, Porcella, Muscula, Tigris, Ursus, and Ursa; and some of these we have seen pictorially represented on the tombs.[744] Other names were derived from the months, as Januarius, Aprilis, December, etc.; and even from the appellations of the pagan deities, as Mercurius, Apollinaris, etc. Sometimes the pet name by which the deceased was familiarly known in life is recorded, as Agnella, "Little Lamb;" Lepusculus and Leporilla, "Little Hare;" Rosula, "Little Rose;" Jocundilla, "Merry Little Thing," etc.[745]

Most of the names, as might be expected, were of classic origin, sometimes indicating

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alliance with families of senatorial, consular, or even imperial rank. We find also indications of the custom of adopting the names of the reigning dynasty. The modern Victorias and Alberts find their analogues in the Aurelias and Constantias of the Aurelian and Constantinian periods. The lofty prænomen, nomen, and cognomen of the pagan epitaphs rarely appear in this Christian series. Only two or three examples of these triple names occur. Even two names become uncommon, and persons undoubtedly entitled to these distinctions of rank were recorded only by a single name. Having renounced the pride of birth, and place, and power, they laid aside their worldly titles for the new name given in Christian baptism. Sometimes the names of the deceased are not recorded in the epitaphs at all, perhaps, as Fabretti suggests, because they wish them to be written only in the Book of Life.[746] For the same reason probably, or from poverty or ignorance, most of the funeral tiles and slabs bear no inscription whatever.

These inscriptions frequently give intimations of the social rank and occupations of the deceased. Sometimes the enumeration of titles indicates exalted position and the holding of important offices of trust. Especially was this the case after the public establishment of Christianity. Many of the later inscriptions recount in pompous and inflated terms, strongly contrasting with the brevity and simplicity of the earlier examples, the civil dignities and distinctions of the departed. We have already seen the epitaph of an Imperial Procurator.[747] The following are examples of later date. [Pg 458]

IVN BASSVS · V̄ · C · QVI VIXIT ANNIS · XLII MEN · II IN IPSA PRAEFECTVRA VRBI NEOFITVS IIT AD DEVM—"Junius Bassus, a most distinguished man, who lived forty-two years, two months. Whilst holding the office of Præfect of the City, he, a neophyte, went to God." (A. D. 359.) ADVENIT HOSPES ROMANVS PRINCEPS IN VRBEM CVI FVIT HIC PRIMVM IVRISCONSVLTOR AMICVS—"The Roman Emperor (Constantine) came a stranger to the City, whose first friend was this lawyer." HIC REQVIESCINT (*sic*) IN PACE PRAETEXTATVS V̄Ī · EX QVESTOR S̄C̄P̄ ET FILIA EIVS PRAETEXTATA CF—"Here rest in peace Prætextatus, an illustrious man, ex-quaestor of the Sacred Palace, and his daughter Prætextata, a most distinguished woman." (A. D. 486.) IVLIVS FELIX VALENTINIANVS · VC · ET (SP ·) EX SILENTIARIO SACRI PALATII EX COM · CONSISTORII · COM · DOM—"Julius Felix Valentinianus, a man of the highest distinction and consideration,[748] ex-Silentiary of the Sacred Palace, ex-Count of the Consistory, Count of the Household Troops." (A. D. 519.)

MAIORVM LONGA VENIENS DE STIRPE SENATOR
AVXISTI MENTIS NOBILITATE GENVS
IVDICIS IMPERIVM SERVANS BONITATE MAGISTRA
CVM TIBI SVBIECTIS TV QVOQVE MILES ERAS
VRBANOS FASCES GAVDENS TIBI ROMA PARABAT. (A. D. 533.)

A Senator, coming from a long line of ancestors, thou didst dignify thy family by nobility of mind, preserving the authority of the judge by the power of goodness. Thou wast also a soldier with those subject to thee, and Rome rejoicing, was preparing for thee the fasces of the city.

We have also such examples as SCRINARIVS PATRICIAE SEDIS, "Secretary of the Patrician order;" PRIMICERIVS MONETARIORVM, "Chief of the bankers;" ARGENTARIVS, "A money dealer;" VIATOR AD AERARIVM, "Sergeant to the Exchequer;" PRAEFECTVS ANNONAE, "Prefect of the market;" VESTITOR IMPERATORIS, "Master of the imperial wardrobe;" MAGISTER SCOLAE TERTIAE, "Master of the Third School;" MEDICVS, "A physician," etc. [Pg 459]

The great body of the Christians, however, were of lowly rank, many of them probably slaves, as most of the arts of life were carried on by that oppressed class. It was the sneer of Celsus that "wool-workers, leather-dressers, cobblers, the most illiterate of mankind, were zealous preachers of the Gospel;" but Tertullian retorts that every Christian craftsman can teach truths loftier than Plato ever knew.[749] The inscriptions of the Catacombs indicate that not many wise, not many mighty, joined that phalanx of heroic souls; but they teach, too, that the lowliest toil may be dignified and ennobled by being done to the glory of God. We have seen represented on the tombs emblems of the occupation of the carpenter, mason, currier, wool-comber, shoemaker, vine-dresser, and fossor. We find also such records of trade as PISTOR REGIONIS XII, "A baker of the Twelfth District;" ORTVLANVS, for *hortulanus*, "A gardener;" PATRONVS CORPORIS PASTILLARIORVM, "Patron of the Corporation of Confectioners;" PRIMICERIVS CENARIORVM, "Chief of the cooks;" HORREARIVS, "A granary-keeper;" CARBONARIVS, "A charcoal seller;" POPINARIVS, "A victualler;" BVBVLARIVS DE MACELLO, "A flesher from the shambles;" CAPSARARIVS (*sic*) DE ANTONINIA, "A keeper of clothes at the Antonine Baths;" QVADRATARIVS, "A stone-dresser;" POLLICLA QVI (H)ORDEVM BENDIT (*sic*) DE BIA NOBA (*sic,*) "Pollicla, who sells barley in the New Street;" IOHANNES VH. OLOGRAFVS (*sic*) PROPINE ISIDORI, "John, a respectable man, a book-keeper in the tavern of Isidorus;" also, less reputable still, VRBANVS VH. TABERNARIVS, "Urban, a respectable man, a tavern keeper." This, however, was in the year A. D. 584, when purity of faith and practice had greatly degenerated. These lowly records are preserved and studied with interest, when many of Rome's proudest monuments have crumbled away.[750] [Pg 460]

Very often some phrase expressive of the Christian character or distinguished virtues of the deceased is recorded in loving remembrance by his sorrowing friends. These testimonies are calculated to inspire a very high opinion of the purity, blamelessness, and nobility of life of the primitive believers; all the more striking from its contrast with the abominable corruptions of the pagan society by which they were surrounded. With many points of [Pg 461]

external resemblance to heathen inscriptions there is in these Christian epitaphs a world-wide difference of informing spirit. Instead of the pomp and pride of pagan panegyric, we have the celebration of the modest virtues, of lowliness, gentleness, and truth. The Christian ideal of excellence, as indicated by the nature of the praises bestowed on the departed, is shown to be utterly foreign to that of heathen sentiment. The following are characteristic examples:

FELIX SANCTAE FIDEI VOCITVS (*sic*) IIT IN PACE
CVIVS TANTVS AMOR ET CARITAS RETENETVR AB AMICIS IN AEVO
QVI CVM ESSET FVIT SOLACIVS MISERICORS OMNIBVS NOTVS.

Felix of sacred honour, when called away went in peace, whose love and affection are so warmly cherished by his friends; who, when he was in life was known to all for sympathy with the afflicted and compassion toward the distressed.

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IN SIMPLICITATE VIXIT AMICVS PAVPERVM INNOCENTIVM MISERICORS SPECTABILIS ET PENITENS—"He lived in simplicity, a friend of the poor, compassionate to the innocent, a man of consideration and penitent." INFANTIAE AETAS VIRGINITATIS INTEGRITAS MORVM GRAVITAS FIDEI ET REVERENTIAE DISCIPLINA—"Of youthful age, of spotless maidenhood, of grave manners, well disciplined in faith and reverence."

More frequent than any other expression was the phrase, common also to pagan epitaphs, BENE MERENTI,—"To the well-deserving," generally indicated by the letters B. M. But many others of a more distinctively Christian character occur, as, SERVVS DEI, FAMVLVS DEI, "Servant of God;" ΔΟΥΛΟC ΠΙCTOC ΘΕΟΥ, "Faithful Servant of God;" ΑΓΙΟC · ΘΕΟCΕΒΕC, "A holy worshipper of God;" ΓΛΥΚΕΡΑΝ ΑΓΙΑΝ, "An amiable and holy person;" SANCTISSIMVS, "A most holy person;" ANIMA DVLCIS ET INNOCENS, "Sweet and innocent soul;" AMICVS OMNIVM, "Friend of all men;" ΠΑCΙΦΙΛΟC ΚΑΙ ΟΥΔΕΝΙ ΕΧΘΡΟC, "Friend of all and enemy of none;" SEMPER SINE CVLPA, "Ever without fault;" AMATOR PAVPERVM, "A lover of the poor;" HOMO BONVS, "A good man;" STVDIOSVS, "Zealous;" SPIRITO SANCTO, "To a holy soul;" INNOCENTISSIMVS, "A most innocent person;" and the like. Others are of a more general character, as HONESTES RECORDATIONES (*sic*) VIR, "A man worthy to be remembered with honour;" AEIMNHCTOC, "Ever to be remembered;" ΘΕΟΦΙΛΕCΤΑΤΟC, "The most devout or God-loving;" MIRE (*sic*) SAPIENTIAE, "Of wonderful wisdom;" LAVDABILIS FEMINA, "A praiseworthy woman;" CONIVX DIGNISSIMA, "A most worthy wife;" CASTISSIMAE ADQVE PVDICISSIMAE FEMINAE, "To a most chaste and modest woman;" MIRAE PVLCHRITVDINIS ATQVE IDONEITATIS, "Of wonderful beauty and ability;" MIRAE INTEGRITATIS ET FIDEI ATQVE CONSTANTIAE, "Of wonderful integrity, faith, and steadfastness;" SAPIENS PIVS ATQVE BENIGNVS, "Wise, pious, and kind;" HOMO FIDEI ET INTEGRITATIS OPINIONIS BONAE MENTIS INTEGRAE AMICVS AMICORVM, "A man of sound faith and integrity, of good judgment, of a sound mind, a friend of his friends;" SVABIS (*sic*) SEMPERQVE PVDICA VERA LOQVENS, "Agreeable and ever modest, speaking the truth;" BONITATIS EXIMIAE ET MIRAE VERECVNDIAE ET VLTRA AETATEM SAPIENTIAE, "Of remarkable goodness and wonderful modesty, and wise beyond her years;" ANIMA DVLCIS, INNOCVA (*sic*) SAPIENS ET PVLCHRA, "A sweet spirit, guileless, wise, beautiful;" AMATRIX PAVPERORVM (*sic*) ET OPERARIA, "A lover of the poor, and attentive to her work;" FIDELIS IN $\overline{\text{XPO}}$ EIVS MANDATA SERVANS MARTYRVM OBSEQVIIS DEVOTA, "Faithful in Christ, keeping his commands, devoted in attention to the martyrs;" PVRVS AMICITIAE CVLTOR SERVATOR HONESTI ELOQVIO MISEROS PIETATE IVVANS, "A guileless preserver of friendship and observer of honour, helping the wretched by words and by affectionate care;" TE CARVM SVVOLES TE FIXVM SENSIT AMICVS TE LEVITAS TORVVM DVLCEM COGNOVIT HONESTVS, "Thee thy son felt beloved, thy friend attached, thee the frivolous found stern, but the upright knew to be gentle;" ΕΥΤΕΡΠΙΕ Η ΤΩΝ ΜΟΥCΩΝ CΥΝΤΡΟΦΟC ΒΙΩCΑCΑ ΑΠΛΟC ΟCΙΩC ΚΑΙ ΑΜΕΜΠΤΩC, "Euterpe, a companion of the Muses, having lived simply, piously, and irreproachably." The last is from Sicily, the others are from Rome. Other examples will be given in treating the domestic and ecclesiastical relations of the primitive Christians.

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In these memorials of the departed we have a striking portraiture of the Christian graces and domestic virtues of the early believers. The existence of such a pure and blameless community in a base and sensual age is one of the noblest chapters in the history of the race. It was also an eloquent protest, a living testimony against the abominations of pagan society and the manifold corruptions which were in the world through lust. From these the Christian community recoiled with utter abhorrence, and, in the early centuries, lived unspotted amid surrounding pollution.[751]

Although some of the pagan epitaphs betray a light and sportive epicurean vein even in the solemn presence of death, yet others indicate an appreciation of the domestic and civic virtues, as in the following example: MIRAE BONITATIS ADQVE INIMITABILIS SANCTITATIS TOTIVS CASTITATIS RARI EXEMPLI FEMINA CASTE BONE BITE ET PIETOSE (*sic*) IN OMNIBVS ... VIXIT SINE LESIONE ANIMI MEI MECVM ANNOS XV. FILIOS AVTEM PROCREAVIT VII—"Of wonderful goodness and inimitable piety, of entire modesty, a woman of rare example, of a chaste, virtuous, and pious life in all things. She lived with me without any annoyance of my mind fifteen years, and bore me seven children."

Often they are expressed with admirable brevity, as, TANTIS VIRTVTIBVS NVLLVM PAR ELOGIVM, "Of so great virtue there is no equal praise;" MORIBVS PARITER ET DISCIPLINA CAETERIS FEMINIS EXEMPLVM, "She was equally in manners and education an example to

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other women;" DE CVIVS PVDORE NEMO DICERE POTVIT, "Against whose modesty no one could say aught;"[752] and this noble testimony to a magistrate, QVID ESSET MALEDICERE NESCHT NON TANQVAM, "What it was to speak evil he did not even know."

But it is especially in the domestic relations that the tender and pure affections of the Christians are most beautifully exhibited. His heart must be callous indeed, who can read without emotion these humble records of love and sorrow, which have survived so many of the proudest monuments of antiquity. In the hour of tearful parting from the dearly loved, the richest affections of the soul are breathed forth, as the flower when crushed exhales its sweetest fragrance. These rude inscriptions speak to our hearts with a power and pathos all their own. Their mute eloquence sweeps down the centuries, and touches chords in every soul that thrill with keenest sympathy. The far severed ages are linked together by the tale of death and sorrow—old as humanity yet ever new. The bleaching skeletons in their stony beds seem clothed again with human flesh and warm with living love. The beauty and tenderness of Christian family life is vividly exhibited—the hallowing influence of religion making earthly love the type of love eternal in the skies. The tie that knits fond hearts together becomes the stronger as death smites at it in vain. The language of affection becomes more fervent as the barrier of the grave is interposed.

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Especially is this the case when sorrowing parents mingle their tears at the tiny *loculus* of their babe, consigned to earth's cold keeping from their loving arms—their bud of promise blighted, and hope's blossom withered to bloom only in the skies. The warmest expressions of endearment are lavished on the tombs of little children. Thus we have such tender epithets as DVLCIOR MELLE, "Sweeter than honey;" ΓΛΥΚΥΤΕΡΟC ΦΩΤΟC ΚΑΙ ΖΩΗC, "Sweeter than light and life;" AGNELLVS DEI, "God's little lamb;" PALVMBVLVS SINE FELLE, "Little dove without gall;" PARVVLVS INNOCENS, "Little innocent;" MEAE DELICIAE, "My delight;" DVLCISSIMVS CARISSIMVS, "Most sweet, most dear;" ΕΙΡΗΝΗ ΣΟΙ ΦΟΡΤΟΥΝΑΤΗ ΘΥΓΑΤΡΙ ΓΛΥΚΥΤΑΤΗ, "Peace to thee, O Fortunata, our very sweet child;" INNOCENTISSIMO PAVLO QVI · VIX · M · X · D · XIIII, "To the most innocent Paul, who lived ten months, fourteen days;" ANIMA DVLCIS INNOCVA SAPIENS ET PVLCHRA, "A sweet spirit, guileless, wise, and beautiful," (a child aged three years); MIRAE INNOCENTIAE AC SAPIENTIAE PVERO, "A boy of wonderful innocence and intelligence," (aged four years.) Sometimes a reference is made to the brief sojourn of the little pilgrim to life's shores, as PARVM STETIT APVD NOS, "He stayed but a short time with us."

The following is from Sicily: ΕΝΘΑΔΕ ΚΙΤΕ (*sic*) ΕΝ ΕΙΡΗΝΗ ΜΑΡΙΑ ΕΖΗCΕΝ ΕΤΗ ΜΙΚΡΟΝ ΠΡΟC Β (ΚΑΙ) ΕΤΕΛΕΙΩΘΗ, "Here lies Mary in peace: she lived a little more than two years (and) finished her course." Of another it is said, that she died INTER MANVS PARENTVM, "In the arms of her parents." In an epitaph at Naples is the exquisite utterance of a sorrowing heart: IN SOLIS TV MIHI TVRBA LOCIS, "In lonely places thou art crowds to me." Generally, however, the grief of the parents is speechless, and we read merely, PARENTES FECERVNT FILIAE, "The parents made (this tomb) for their child," or perhaps, MATER INCOMPARABILI FILIAE PECIT, "The mother made this for her incomparable daughter."

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Sometimes the praise of the deceased is more elaborate, as in the following, which is probably of late date; DALMATIO FILIO DVLCISSIMO TOTIVS INGENIOSITATIS AC SAPIENTIAE PVERO QVEM PLENIS SEPTEM ANNIS PERFRVI PATRI INFELICI NON LICVIT QVI STVDENS LITTERAS GRAECAS NON · MONSTRATAS SIBI LATINAS—"To Dalmatius, a very sweet son, of the utmost genius and wisdom, whose unhappy father was not permitted to enjoy him for seven full years, who, while studying the Greek language, acquired Latin without being taught."[753]

Sometimes a natural expression of sorrow occurs, as PARENTES DOLENTES, "The parents grieving;" PATER INFELIX, "The unhappy father;" CONTRA VOTVM, "Regretfully;" PARENTES MISERI FVNEBRIS ACERVITATE (*sic*) PERCVSSI TITVLVM ERIGI IVSSERVNT, "The wretched parents, smitten by the bitterness of her death, commanded this tablet to be set up," (A. D. 464;) EREPTA EX OCVLIS GENITORIS, "Snatched from the eyes of her parent;" QVIS NON DOLVIT AETATI TVAE PIASQVE LACRIMAS FVDIT IN TE SPES FVTVRA EXPECTABATVR PER TE PER TE GLORIA PERENNIS CELERINE FILI, FIDELIS QVIESCIS IN PACE QVI VIXIT ANN. I. M. VIII—"Who did not grieve for thy (immature) age and pour affectionate tears? In thee was future hope. Through thee, through thee, O son Celerinus, perennial glory was expected. Faithful one, thou restest in peace, who lived one year eight months," (A. D. 381).

In the following, of later date, the expressions of grief are more elaborate and artificial, and indicate the influence of pagan thought and diction, especially in the last line:

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QVOD DVLCES NATI QVOD CARA PIGNORA PRAESTANT
ABSTVLIT ATRA DIES ET FVNERE MERSIT ACERVO
HAEC MATER ET GENITOR CONSCRIBVNT CARMINA BVSTO
QVO LEGENTI SIMVL REDEAT SVB CORDE FIGVRA
ET SICCATA SAEPE MADESCANT LVMINA FLETV
SIC MEDICATVR AMOR NEC CVRANT CARMINA MANES.

"What sweet children, what dear pledges promise, a dire day has borne away, and plunged in bitter death. The father and mother, together, write these verses on the tomb, in order that to any one reading, the image may at once return to the soul, and the eyes, long dry, may moisten with tears. Thus love administers relief, nor do the spirits care for songs."

No less fervent expressions of affection are employed toward their adult offspring by

surviving parents. Indeed they are, if possible, still more intense, as if wrung from the bleeding heart by grief for the fallen column of the house—the broken staff of their declining years. In the following, from the Lapidarian gallery, the epithets of endearment are lavishly heaped upon the beloved object: ADSERTORI FILIO KARO DVLCI INNOCO ET INCOMPARABILI QVI VIXIT ANNIS XVII · M · VII · DIEBVS VIII · PATER ET MATER FECER(VNT)—"To Adsertor, our dear, sweet, guileless, and incomparable son, who lived seventeen years, seven months, eight days. His father and mother made this."

Of similar character are the following: PAVLA CLARISSIMA FAEMINA DVLCIS BENIGNA GRATIOSA FILIA—"Paula, an illustrious woman, a sweet, kind, and gracious daughter;" NIMIVM CITO DECIDISTI CONSTANTIA MIRVM PVLCHRITVDINIS ATQVE IDONEITATIS—"Too soon hast thou fallen, Constantia, wonderful (example) of beauty and ability."

Similar evidences of parental affection and grief occur in pagan inscriptions, though often overshadowed by a deep and dark despair. Thus we read such tender epithets of little children as FILIAE DVLCISSIMAE IAM GARRVLAE BIMVLAE NONDVM—"To a very sweet daughter now prattling, not yet two little years of age;" OBSEQVENTISSIMAE FILIAE—"To a most obedient daughter;" MATER MOERENS FILIO EX QVO NIHIL VNQVAM DOLVIT NISI CVM IS NON FVIT—"The grieving mother to her son, from whom she never received any pain but when he was not,"—that is, when he died; PARVAE BVSTA PVELLAE THREPTVS PATER FECIT QVIS NON VVLTVM RIGAT LACRIMIS MAERORE COACTVS QVIS NON TRISTITIAM PECTORE CONCIPIT—"Her foster-father made this tomb of a little girl. Who does not moisten his face with tears, compelled by grief? Who does not cherish sorrow in his bosom?" ADOLESCENTVLAE DVLCISSIMAE PATER PIISSIMVS ET INFELICISSIMVS FECIT—"To a most sweet young maiden, her most affectionate and unhappy father gave this tomb;" FLEVIT ET ASSIDVO MAESTVS VTERQVE PARENS—"Both the sorrowful parents wept incessantly." [Pg 469]

We have also such examples as, MATER AD LVCTVM ET GEMITVM RELICTA EVM LACRIMIS ET OPOBALSAMO VDVM HOC SEPVLCHRO CONDIDIT—"His mother, left to sorrow and groaning, buried him, moist with tears and balsam, in this tomb;" QVAE OB DESIDERIVM FILI SVI PIISSIMI VIVERE ABOMINAVIT ET POST DIES XV FATI EIVS ANIMO DESPONDIT—"Who, on account of her yearning for her most affectionate son, hated life, and, fifteen days after his death, also died."

Sometimes in their passionate grief the heathen parents reproach themselves for surviving their children, as in the following.

CRVDELIS IMPIA MATER CARIS SVIS DVLCISSIMIS ... INFELICISSIMA MATER QVI (*sic*) VIDIT FVNVS SVVM CRVDELISSIMVM QVAE SI DEVM PROPITIVM HABVISSET HOC DEBVERA (*sic*) EOS PATI.

The cruel, impious mother, to her dear, most sweet children. The most unhappy mother, who saw (in theirs) her *own* most cruel death, who, if she had had a propitious deity, ought to have suffered this for them—(that is, have died in their stead.) [Pg 470]

HIC IACET EXTINCTVS CRVDELI FVNERE NATVS
VLTIMA VIVENDI QVI MIHI CAVSA FVIT.

Here lies, destroyed by cruel fate, a son, who was my only reason for living.

Often the expressions in Christian epitaphs of filial affection to deceased parents are exceedingly tender and beautiful, as for example: PATRI DVLCISSIMO BENEMERENTI IN PACE—"To our sweetest father, well-deserving, in peace," (A. D. 356); TIGRITI BENEMERENTI.... FILIVS FECI MATRI—"To the well-deserving Tigris.... I, her son, made this for my mother," (A. D. 393;) HOC TVMVLVM PATRIS FILIVS FIERI VOLVIT CAVSA AMORIS PATERNI RECORDATIONIS—"This tomb of his father the son wished to be made on account of his remembrance of paternal affection;" TE PARENS SOBOLES CONIVNXQVE FIDELIS TE MIXTIS LACRIMIS LVGET AMATA DOMVS—"Thee thy parent, thy offspring, thy faithful consort, thee a loved home, with mingled tears, lament," (A. D. 533.)

HEV MEMORANDE PATER LONGI MIHI CAVSA DOLORIS
OPTASTI IN MANIBVS FILIORVM SAEPE TVORVM
SVMERE ET AMPLEXV DVLCI TENVARE NEPOTVM.
ADFVIT HIS VOTIS EXCELSI GRATIA CHRISTI
FELIX VITA FVIT FELIX ET TRANSITVS IPSE. (A. D. 534.)

Alas, O father, ever to be remembered, cause of long grief to me, thou didst often desire to die in the arms of thy children, to gently pass away in the sweet embrace of thy offspring. These wishes the grace of the exalted Christ fulfilled. Happy was thy life, and happy also thy passing away.

We find also the epitaphs of foster-parents and adopted children, showing the exercise, under the influence of Christian sentiment, of the beautiful charity of rescuing foundlings and orphans[754] from poverty, infamy, or death. The following example is of date A. D. 392: [Pg 471]

PERPETVAM SEDEM NVTRITOR POSSIDES IPSE
HIC MERITVS FINEM MAGNIS DEFVNCTE PERICLIS
HIC REQVIEM FELIX SVMIS COGENTIBVS ANNIS
HIC POSITVS PAPASANTIMIO QVI VIXIT ANNIS LXX.

"You yourself who reared (us) now occupy a lasting resting-place. Here you have reached

the end that you deserved, of a course fraught with great perils. Here, in happiness, you take the repose that age compels. Here is laid foster-father Antimio, who lived seventy years."[755]

The conjugal affections especially have their beautiful and tender commemoration. The mutual love of husband and wife finds in these inscriptions affecting record, which attests the happiness of the marriage relation among the primitive Christians. Frequently the bereaved husband recounts with grateful recollection the fact that his wedded life was one of perfect harmony, unmarred by a single jar or discord—SEMPER CONCORDES SINE VLLA QVERELA. [Pg 472]

The posthumous praise of these Christian matrons recalls the inspired portraiture of the virtuous woman of Scripture. The intensity of conjugal grief is shown by the expressions, MALE FRACTVS CONIVX—"The sore broken husband;" and GEMITV TRISTI LACRIMIS DEFLET—"He bewails in tears with bitter lamentation." Often occurs the phrase INCOMPARABILIS CONIVX—"Incomparable wife," frequently with the addition, OPTIMAE MEMORIAE—"Of most excellent memory." Sometimes we find the tender expression, with such depth of meaning in its simple words, QVI AMAVIT ME—"Who loved me;" also the phrase, CARVS SVIS—"Dear to his friends;" or, PERDVLCISSIMO CONIVGI SVO—inadequately rendered, "To her most dearest husband." The utterance of a grief into the secret of which none can enter but those who have known its bitterness, is often extremely pathetic.

The spirit of these inscriptions will be best seen in the concrete. The following are characteristic examples: DEO FIDELIS DVLCIS MARITO NVTRIX FAMILIAE HVMILIS CVNCTIS AMATRIX PAVPERVM—"Faithful to God, endeared to her husband, the nurse of her family, humble to all, a lover of the poor;" BIXIT MECVM ANNIS XXII · MENS · IX · DIES V IN QVIBVS SEMPER MIHI BENE FVIT CVM ILLA—"She lived with me for twenty-two years, nine months, five days, during which time it ever went well with me in her society;" CONIVGE VENERANDE BONE INNOCVA FLORENTIA DIGNA PIA AMABILIS PVDICA (*sic*)—"To my wife Florentia, deserving of honour, good, guileless, worthy, pious, amiable, modest."

HIC REQVIESCIT IN PACE TERTVRA CF DVLCIS PETRONII CONIVX
DEO SERVIENS VNICAE FIDEI AMICA PACIS CASTIS MORIBVS ORNATA
COMMVNIS FIDELIBVS AMICIS FAMILIAE GRATA NVTRIX NATORVM
ET NVMQVAM AMARA MARITO. [Pg 473]

"Here reposes in peace Tertura, an illustrious woman, the sweet wife of Petronius, serving God, of matchless faith, a friend of peace, adorned with modest manners, affable toward the faithful friends of her family, a loving nurse of her children, and never bitter to her husband."

HIC MIHI SEMPER DOLOR ERIT IN AEVO
ET TVVM BENERABILEM VVLTVM FVAT VIDERE SOPORE
CONIVNX ALBANAQVE MIHI SEMPER CASTA PVDICA
RELICTVM ME TVO GREMIO QVEROR
QVOD MIHI SANCTVM TE DEDERAT DIVINITVS AVCTOR.

"This grief will always weigh upon me. May it be granted me to behold in sleep your revered countenance. My wife Albana, always chaste and modest. I grieve over the loss of your support, whom our divine author had given to me as a sacred (boon.)"

In the following a disconsolate husband mourns the wife of his youth with the pleasing illusion that such love as theirs the world had never known before: DOMNINAE INNOCENTISSIMAE ET DVLCISSIMAE CONIVGI QVAE VIXIT ANN · XVI · M · IIII · ET FVIT MARITATA · ANN DVOBVS · M · IIII · D · VIIII CVM QVA NON LICVIT FVISSE PROPTER CAVSAS PEREGRINATIONIS NISI · MENSIB · VI · QVO · TEMPORE · VT EGO SENSI ET EXHIBVI AMOREM MEVM MVLLIS VALII (*sic*) SIC DELIXERVNT—"To Domnina, my most guileless and sweet wife, who lived sixteen years and four months, and was married two years, four months, and nine days; with whom I was not able to live on account of my travelling more than six months: during this period as I felt and showed my affection no others ever loved."[756]

Similar expressions of affection are applied by bereaved wives to their deceased husbands. [Pg 474] In the following a widowed heart dwells with fond complacency on the thought that no rankling recollection of estranged regard embitters her remembrance of the lost: AGRIPPINA FECIT · DVLCISSIMO SVO MARITO CVM QVEM VIXIT SINE LESIONE ANIMI · ANNOS III ET M · X. —"Agrippina made this to her very sweet husband, with whom she lived, without jarring, three years and ten months." Of similar import is this also: DIGNO MERITOQVE IVGALI MEO TETTIO FILICISSIMO DIACONO · MARCIA DECENTIA DVLCISSIMO MIHI DIEM DEPOSITIONIS LAPIDEMQVE DESCRIPSI · MERITO VIXIT ANNVS NON MINVS LXX—"To my husband, Tettius Felicissimus, worthy and deserving, a deacon. I, Marcia Decentia, inscribed this stone to him (who was) most sweet to me, on the day of his burial. He lived in honour not less than seventy years."

Similar language of mingled love and grief occurs in pagan inscriptions, but without the [Pg 475] chastening influence of Christian resignation. The domestic life of the Romans, especially in the days of republican simplicity, seems to have been remarkably free from discord or strife. Thus we find frequent record of over half a century passed in marriage, SINE IVRGIO, SINE AEMVLATIONE, SINE DISSIDIO, SINE QVERELA—"Without contention, without emulation, without dissension, without strife." With ceaseless iteration the virtues of the deceased are

lovingly recorded, as in the examples which follow: CONIVGEM FIDELISSIMAM—"Most faithful wife;" OPTIMA DOMINA SANCTISSIMA—"Best and most revered lady;" MARITAE PIISSIMAE DVLCISSIMAE RARISSIMAE—"To a most pious and sweet wife of rarest excellence;" OPTIMA ET PVLCHERRIMA LANIFICA PIA PVDICA CASTA DOMESEDA—"Best and most beautiful, a spinner of wool, pious, modest, chaste, home-abiding;" VXORI OBSEQVENTISSIMAE—"To a most obedient (or obsequious) wife;" T. FL. CAPITO CONIVGI CASTISSIMAE PIISSIMAE ET DE SE OPTIME MERITAE DE QVA NVLLVM DOLOREM NISI ACERBISSIMAE MORTIS EIVS ACCEPERAT—"Titus Flavius Capito, to his most chaste and pious wife, deserving well of him, from whom he received no cause of grief, except that of her most bitter death;" TEMPIVS HERMEROS CONIVGI CARISSIMAE ... CVIVS DESIDERIO IVRATVS EST SE POST EAM VXOREM NON HABITVRVM —"Tempius Hermeros, to his most dear spouse, on account of his love for whom he swore that he would have no other wife." Once we meet the strange remark by a husband of his wife, CVIVS IN DIE MORTIS GRATIAS MAXIMAS EGI APVD DEOS ET APVD HOMINES—"On the day of whose death I gave the greatest thanks to gods and men." It was probably on account of her release from suffering.

In the accompanying epitaph a bereaved widow laments her irreparable loss: CONIVGI DESIDERATISSIMO ... NVNC NEQVE TE VIDEO NEC AMOR SATIATVR AMANTIS ET CONIVX MISERA FINEM DEPOSCO DOLORI—"To my most deeply regretted husband.... For neither do I now see thee, nor is the affection of thy loving spouse satisfied; and I, a miserable wife, implore an end of my sorrow." [Pg 476]

Such examples of conjugal affection recall to mind the immortal love of Alcestis in the Greek myth, dying for her bosom's lord; and of Arria, in Roman story, refusing to survive her husband, and having plunged the dagger into her own breast, with dying smile exclaiming, *Pæte, non dolet*—"It hurts not, my Pætus."[757]

Another interesting class of Christian inscriptions are those commemorating fraternal affection. The following are typical examples: IOVIANO KARISSIMO FECIT (*sic*) FRATRES PIENTISSIMAE (*sic*)—"To dearest Jovianus, his most affectionate brothers made this;" ΤΩ ΜΑΚΑΡΙΩ ΠΑΥΛΩ ΗΔΥΛΑΛΟC ΑΔΕΛΦΟΣ—"To the blessed Paul, his brother Hedulalos."

In the accompanying poetical tribute to a sister the melancholy consolation of mourning the lost is beautifully referred to:

SVME SOROR CARMEN SOLATIA TRISTA (*sic*) FRATRIS
QVI SOLVS GEMITV HEC (*sic*) TIBI VERBA DEDIT
QUAE TEGITVR TVMVLO SI VIS COGNOSCERE LECTOR
SVBLIMES GESSIT SANGVINIS HAEC TITVLOS
MORIBVS HEC CRISTVM SEMPER COMITATA SVPERSTES
QVEM POST FATA SIBI CREDIDIT ESSE DVCEM.

Sister, take these verses, the sad comfort of your brother, who, in lonely lamentation, has given these words to you. Reader, if you desire to know who is covered by this tomb, she bore names which told her high descent. She, when alive, always followed, in her conduct, Christ, who she believed would be her guide after death. [Pg 477]

Frequently members of the same family were buried in the same grave—lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death not divided. Thus we read of a brother and sister who died in one day, and were buried together—VNA DIE MORTVI ET PARITER TVMVLATI SVNT; of a certain Antigonus who occupied the same tomb with his sister—LOCVM HABET CVM SORE (*sic*) SVA; and of a mother who shared her daughter's grave—FELICIA CVM FILIA IN PACE; also of Claudia and Julia, who had secured their places by the side of their sweet friend Calpurnia. The same custom sometimes obtains in pagan sepulture, as indicated by the following epitaph of a husband and wife who, not to be divorced even in death, mingled their ashes in one urn:

PARATO HOSPITIO CARA IVNGVNT CORPORA
HAEC RVRSVM NOSTRAE SED PERPETVAE NVPTIAE.

In a prepared rest they join their dear bodies. These are our second but our perpetual nuptials.[758]

Sometimes the funeral tablet was erected by the hand of friendship, probably when there were none of kin to pay this last sad tribute of affection. De Rossi thinks that which follows one of the most ancient in Rome: DORMITIONI T. FLA. EVTYCHIO. HVNC LOCVM DONABIT M. ORBIVS AMICVS KARISSIMVS KARE BALE—"As a resting place for Titus Flavius Eutychius, his dearest friend, Marcus Orbius, gave this spot. Farewell, beloved." One fair friend thus commemorates the loss of another: AELIA VICTORINA POSVIT AVRELIAE PROBAE—"Ælia Victorina erected this stone to Aurelia Proba." We find also such expressions as, "Best friend," "Dear and faithful companion," "Constant in love and truth." Sometimes a lowly servant or freedman records a master's virtues, as in the epitaph of Gordianus, erected by his handmaid Theophila—ΥΘΦΗΛΑ ΑΝCΗΛΛΑ ΦECIT (*sic*); and that of Prosenes, which Ampelius, his freedman, wrote—SCRIPSIT AMPELIVS LIB. Another was buried by her sweet and holy nurse in Christ—ΘΡΕΠΤΕΙΡΑΝ ΓΛΥΚΕΡΗΝ ΑΓΙΑΝ ΕΝ $\overline{\text{ΧΡΩ}}$. [Pg 478]

The duration of sickness, or cause of death, is sometimes, though very rarely, mentioned in Christian inscriptions. Thus we have such particulars as PERIT IN DIES V—"He died in five days;" ENOCHCEN HMEPAC IB—"He was ill twelve days." A pagan epitaph complains of the

death of the deceased by magical incantations: CARMINIBVS DEFIXA IACVIT PER TEMPORA MVTA VT EIVS SPIRITVS VI EXTORQVERETVR QVAM NATVRAE REDDERETVR—"Overcome by charms she lay at times dumb, so that her spirit was torn from her by force rather than given back to nature." Another was snatched away while she too sedulously nursed a sick husband—DVM FOVIT NIMIA SEDVLITATE VIRVM. Another died of internal burnings, which medical skill was powerless to cope with—ARDENTES INTVS VINCERE QVOS MEDICAE NON POTVERE MANVS. Of another we read that after long and various infirmities she is freed from [Pg 479] human things—POST LONGAS ET VARIAS INFIRMITATES HVMANIS REBVS EXEMPTA EST.[759] Like this is the expression in a Christian epitaph—POST VARIAS CVRAS POST LONGAE MVNERA VITAE—"After various cares, after the duties of a long life."

The same spirit which thus commemorated the departed would lead also to the decoration of their sepulchres with pious frescoes or elaborate sculpture, limned or carved often as a last offering of love by the hand of affection or of friendship—now for fifteen centuries kindred dust with that whose resting-place it so fondly sought to beautify.

We should do scant justice, however, to the blameless character, simple dignity, and moral purity of the primitive Christians, as indicated in these posthumous remains, if we forgot the thoroughly effete and corrupt society by which they were surrounded. It would seem almost impossible for the Christian graces to grow in such a fetid atmosphere. Like the snow-white lily springing in virgin purity from the muddy ooze, they are more lovely by contrast with the surrounding pollutions. Like flowers that deck a sepulchre, breathing their fragrance amid scenes of corruption and death, are these holy characters, fragrant with the breath of heaven amid the social rottenness and moral death of their foul environment.

It is difficult to imagine, and impossible to portray, the abominable pollutions of the times. "Society," says Gibbon, "was a rotting, aimless chaos of sensuality." It was a boiling Acheron of seething passions, unhallowed lusts, and tiger thirst for blood, such as never provoked the wrath of heaven since God drowned the world with water, or destroyed the Cities of the [Pg 480] Plain by fire. Only those who have visited the secret museum of Naples, or that house which no woman may enter at Pompeii, and whose paintings no pen may describe; or who are familiar with the scathing denunciations of popular vices by the Roman satirists and moralists and by the Christian Fathers, can conceive the appalling depravity of the age and nation. St. Paul, in his epistle to the church among this very people, hints at some features of their exceeding wickedness. It was a shame even to speak of the things which were done by them, but which gifted poets employed their wit to celebrate. A brutalized monster was deified as God, received divine homage,[760] and beheld all the world at his feet and the nations tremble at his nod, while the multitude wallowed in a sty of sensuality.[761]

Christianity was to be the new Hercules to cleanse this worse than Augean pollution. The pure morals and holy lives of the believers were a perpetual testimony against abounding iniquity, and a living proof of the regenerating power and transforming grace of God. For they themselves, as one of their apologists asserts, "had been reclaimed from ten thousand vices."[762] And the Apostle, describing some of the vilest characters, exclaims, "Such were some of you, but ye are washed, ye are sanctified." They recoiled with the utmost abhorrence from the pollutions of the age, and became indeed "the salt of the earth," the [Pg 481] sole moral antiseptic to prevent the total disintegration of society.

The Christians were daily exposed to contact with idolatry. The whole public and private life of the heathen was pervaded with the spirit of polytheism. Idolatrous usages were interwoven with almost every act. The courts of justice, the marts of trade, the highways and gardens, the fountains and rivers, the domestic hearth, and the very doors and hinges, were under the protection of their respective deities. The implements of labour, the household utensils, the military ensigns, the achievements of art, the adornments of beauty, were all consecrated to idol worship. The daily meals and rites of hospitality, the social banquets and public amusements, the common language and salutations of friendship, had all a religious significance.

The Christians were therefore especially exhorted to "keep themselves from idols." They believed that their images were the abodes of dæmons who delighted in the reek of blood and the fetid odour of sacrificial flesh.[763] Against image-makers the severest ecclesiastical censures were denounced. They were the foster fathers of devils,[764] to whom they offered not the sacrifice of a beast, but immolated their mind, poured the libation of their sweat, kindled the torch of their thought, and slew the richer and more precious victim of their salvation.[765] The believers might not wreath their gates, nor illuminate their houses, nor attend the public festivals, nor witness a sacrifice, nor accept a heathen salutation, nor sell incense, nor eat meat polluted with idolatrous lustration.[766] Thus amid pagan usages and [Pg 482] unspeakable moral degradation the Christians lived: a holy nation, a peculiar people. "We alone are without crime," says Tertullian; "no Christian suffers but for his religion." "Your prisons are full," says Minutius Felix, "but they contain not one Christian." And these holy lives were an argument which even the heathen could not gainsay. The ethics of paganism were the speculations of the cultivated few who aspired to the character of philosophers. The ethics of Christianity were a system of practical duty affecting the daily life of the most lowly and unlettered. "Philosophy," says Lecky, "may dignify, but is impotent to regenerate man; it may cultivate virtue, but cannot restrain vice."[767] But Christianity introduced a new sense of sin and of holiness, of everlasting reward, and of endless condemnation. It planted a sublime, impassioned love of Christ in the heart, inflaming all its affections. It transformed

the character from icy stoicism or epicurean selfishness to a boundless and uncalculating self-abnegation and devotion.[768]

This divine principle developed a new instinct of philanthropy in the soul. A feeling of common brotherhood knit the hearts of the believers together. To love a slave, to love an enemy! was accounted the impossible among the heathen; yet this incredible virtue they beheld every day among the Christians. "This surprised them beyond measure," says Tertullian, "that one man should die for another."[769] Hence, in the Christian inscriptions no [Pg 483] word of bitterness even toward their persecutors is to be found. Sweet peace, the peace of God that passeth all understanding, breathes on every side.

One of the most striking results of the new spirit of philanthropy which Christianity introduced is seen in the copious charity of the primitive church. Amid the ruins of ancient palaces and temples, theatres and baths, there are none of any house of mercy. Charity among the pagans was, at best, a fitful and capricious fancy. Among the Christians it was a vast and vigorous organization, and was cultivated with noble enthusiasm. And the great and wicked city of Rome, with its fierce oppressions and inhuman wrongs, afforded amplest opportunity for the Christ-like ministrations of love and pity. There were Christian slaves to succour, exposed to unutterable indignities and cruel punishment, even unto crucifixion for conscience' sake. There were often martyrs' pangs to assuage, the aching wounds inflicted by the rack or by the nameless tortures of the heathen to bind up, and their bruised and broken hearts to cheer with heavenly consolation. There were outcast babes to pluck from death. There were a thousand forms of suffering and sorrow to relieve, and the ever-present thought of Him who came, not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many, was an inspiration to heroic sacrifice and self-denial. And doubtless the religion of love won its way to many a stony pagan heart by the winsome spell of the saintly charities and heavenly benedictions of the persecuted Christians. This sublime principle has [Pg 484] since covered the earth with its institutions of mercy, and with a passionate zeal has sought out the woes of man in every land, in order to their relief. In the primitive church voluntary collections[770] were regularly made for the poor, the aged, the sick, the brethren in bonds, and for the burial of the dead. All fraud and deceit was abhorred, and all usury forbidden. Many gave all their goods to feed the poor. "Our charity dispenses more in the streets," says Tertullian to the heathen, "than your religion in all the temples."[771] He upbraids them for offering to the gods only the worn-out and useless, such as is given to dogs.[772] "How monstrous is it," exclaims the Alexandrian Clement, "to live in luxury while so many are in want."[773] "As you would receive, show mercy," says Chrysostom; "make God your debtor that you may receive again with usury."[774] The church at Antioch, he tells us, maintained three thousand widows and virgins, besides the sick and poor. Under the persecuting Decius the widows and infirm under the care of the church at Rome were fifteen hundred. "Behold the treasures of the church," said St. Lawrence, pointing to the aged and poor, when the heathen prefect came to confiscate its wealth. The church in Carthage sent a sum equal to four thousand dollars to ransom Christian captives in Numidia. St. Ambrose sold the sacred vessels of the church of Milan to rescue prisoners from the Goths, esteeming it their truest consecration to the service of God. "Better clothe the living temples of Christ," says Jerome, "than adorn the temples of stone."[775] "God has no need of plates and dishes," said Acacius, bishop of Amida, and he ransomed therewith a number of poor captives. For a similar [Pg 485] purpose Paulinus of Nola sold the treasures of his beautiful church, and it is said even sold himself into African slavery.[776] The Christian traveller was hospitably entertained by the faithful; and before the close of the fourth century asylums were provided for the sick, aged, and infirm. During the Decian persecution, when the streets of Carthage were strewn with the dying and the dead, the Christians, with the scars of recent torture and imprisonment upon them, exhibited the nobility of a gospel revenge in their care for their fever-smitten persecutors, and seemed to seek the martyrdom of Christian charity, even more glorious than that they had escaped.[777] In the plague of Alexandria six hundred Christian *parabolani* periled their lives to succour the dying and bury the dead.[778] Julian urged the pagan priests to imitate the virtues of the lowly Christians.

Christianity also gave a new sanctity to human life, and even denounced as murder the heathen custom of destroying the unborn child. The exposure of infants was a fearfully prevalent pagan practice, which even Plato and Aristotle permitted. We have had evidences of the tender charity of the Christians in rescuing these foundlings from death, or from a fate more dreadful still—a life of infamy. Christianity also emphatically affirmed the Almighty's "canon 'gainst self-slaughter," which crime the pagans had even exalted into a virtue. It taught that a patient endurance of suffering, like Job's, exhibited a loftier courage than Cato's renunciation of life.

Out of eleven thousand Christian inscriptions of the first six centuries, scarce half a dozen [Pg 486] make any reference to a condition of servitude, and of these, as Dr. Northcote remarks, two or three are doubtful. Yet of pagan epitaphs at least three fourths are those of slaves or freedmen. The conspicuous absence of recognition of this unhappy social distinction is no mere accident. We know that the Christians were largely drawn from the servile classes, but in the church of God there was no respect of persons. The gospel of liberty smote the gyves at once from the bodies and the souls of men. In Christ Jesus there was neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free. The wretched slave, in the intervals of toil or torture, caught with joy the emancipating message, and sprang up enfranchised by an immortalizing hope. Then "trampled manhood heard and claimed his crown." The victim of human oppression exulted

in a new-found liberty in Christ which no wealth could purchase, no chains of slavery fetter, nor even death itself destroy. To him earth's loftiest palace was but a gilded prison of the soul, his lowly cot became the antechamber of the skies, and his emancipated spirit passed from his pallet of straw to the repose of Abraham's bosom.

In the Christian church the distinctions of worldly rank were abolished.[779] The highest spiritual dignities were open to the lowliest slave. In the ecclesiastical hierarchy were no rights of birth, and no privileges of blood. In the inscriptions of the Catacombs no badges of servitude, no titles of honour appear. The wealthy noble—the lord of many acres—recognized in his lowly servant a fellow-heir of glory. They bowed together at the same table of the Lord, saluted each other with the mutual kiss of charity, and side by side in their narrow graves at length returned to indistinguishable dust. The story of Onesimus may have [Pg 487] often been repeated, and the patrician master have received his returning slave, "not now as a servant, but above a servant—a brother beloved." Nay, he may have bowed to him as his ecclesiastical superior, and received from his plebeian hands the emblems of their common Lord. The lowly arenarii and fossors, the rude Campagnian husbandmen and shepherds, and they "of Cæsar's household," met in common brotherhood, knit together by stronger ties than those of kinship or of worldly rank, as heirs of glory and of everlasting life.

The condition of the slave population of Rome was one of inconceivable wretchedness. Colossal piles built by their blood and sweat attest the bitterness of their bondage. The lash of the taskmaster was heard in the fields, and crosses bearing aloft their quivering victims polluted the public highways. Vidius Pollio fed his lampreys with the bodies of his slaves. Four hundred of these wretched beings deluged with their blood the funeral pyre of Pedanius Secundus. A single freedman possessed over four thousand of these human chattels. They had no rights of marriage nor any claim to their children. This dumb, weltering mass of humanity, crushed by power, led by their lusts, and fed by public dole, became a hot-bed of vice in which every evil passion grew apace. The institution of slavery cast a stigma of disgrace on labour, and prevented the formation of that intelligent middle class which is the true safeguard of liberty. Christianity, on the contrary, dignified, ennobled, and in a sense hallowed labour by the example of its Divine Founder. It consecrated the lowly virtues of humility, obedience, gentleness, patience, and long-suffering, which paganism contemned. It did not, indeed, at once subvert the political [Pg 488] institution of slavery, but it mitigated its evils, and gradually led to its abolition.

One of the noblest triumphs of Christianity was its suppression of the bloody spectacles of the amphitheatre. The early Christians had good reason to regard with shuddering aversion those accursed scenes within that vast Coliseum which rears to-day its mighty walls, a perpetual monument of the cruelty of Rome's Christless creed. Many of their number had been mangled to death by savage beasts or still more savage men, surrounded by a sea of pitiless faces, twice eighty thousand hungry eyes gloating on the mortal agony of the confessor of Christ, while not a single thumb was reversed to make the sign of mercy.[780] There the maids and matrons, the patricians and the "vile plebs" of Rome, enjoyed the grateful spectacle of cruelty and blood. Even woman's pitiful nature forgot its tenderness, and the honour was reserved for the vestal virgin to give the signal for the mortal stroke that crowned the martyr's brow with fadeless amaranth. These hateful scenes, in which the spectacle of human agony and death became the impassioned delight of all classes, created a ferocious thirst for blood and torture throughout society.[781] They overthrew the altar of pity, and impelled to every excess and refinement of barbarity. Even children imitated the cruel sport in their games, schools of gladiators were trained for the work of slaughter, and women fought in the arena, or lay dead and trampled in the sand.

From the very first Christianity relentlessly opposed this horrid practice, as well as all [Pg 489] theatrical exhibitions. The mingled cruelty, idolatry, and indecency of the performances were obnoxious alike to the humanity, the piety, and the modesty of the Christians.[782] They were especially included in the pomps of Satan which the believer abjured at his baptism. Hence their abandonment was often regarded as a proof of conversion to Christianity. The theatre was the devil's house, and he had a right to all found therein.[783] Christianity, soon after it ascended the throne of the Cæsars, suppressed the gladiatorial combats. The Christian city of Constantinople was never polluted by the atrocious exhibition. A Christian poet eloquently denounced the bloody spectacle, and a Christian monk, at the cost of his life, protested, amid the very frenzy of the conflict, against its cruelty. His heroic martyrdom produced a moral revulsion against the practice, and the laws of Honorius, to use the language of Gibbon, "abolished forever the human sacrifices of the amphitheatre."

It is remarkable that so few references to military life occur in Christian epitaphs, whereas [Pg 490] they form a prominent feature in those of heathen origin. In ten thousand pagan inscriptions analyzed by M. Le Blant, over five hundred, or, more precisely, 5·47 per cent., were of military character; while in four thousand seven hundred of Christian origin, most of which were after the period of Constantine, only ·57 per cent., were military, or one tenth the proportion of those among the pagans. But even if in the army, the Christians, whose higher dignity was that of soldiers of Christ, would be less likely than the heathen to mention it in their epitaphs. Although Tertullian inveighs against the military service,[784] he yet admits that the Christians engaged in that as well as in other pursuits,[785] and asserts that they were found even in the camps.[786] It is probable, however, that the number in the army was insignificant, and these, it is most likely, were converted after their enlistment. There could

be little affinity between the bronzed and hardened ruffians who were the instruments of the reigning tyrant's cruelty, and the meek and gentle Christians. We know that the latter had often to choose between the sword and the gospel; and many resigned their office, and even embraced martyrdom, rather than perjure their consciences.[787] They could not take the military oath, nor deck their weapons with laurel, nor crown the emperor's effigy, nor celebrate his birthday, nor observe any other idolatrous festival. Hence they were accused of [Pg 491] the dreaded crime of treason, and announced as the enemies of Cæsar and of the Roman people.[788] Tertullian repels the charge, and demonstrates their loyalty to the emperor and to their country.[789]

Feeling that their citizenship was in heaven, the Christians took no part in the troubled politics of earth. "Nothing is more indifferent to us," says Tertullian, "than public affairs."[790] If only their religious convictions were unassailed they would gladly live in quiet, unaffected by civic ambition or by worldly strife. "Themselves half naked," sneered the heathen, "they despise honours and purple robes."[791] But although accused of being profitless to the state,[792] they were nevertheless diligent in business while fervent in spirit. "We are no Brahmins or Indian devotees," says their great apologist, "living naked in the woods, and banished from civilized life."[793] They were no drones in the social hive, but patterns of industry and thrift. Inspired with loftier motives than their heathen neighbours, they faithfully discharged life's lowly toils, sedulously cultivated the private virtues, and followed blamelessly whatsoever things were lovely and of good report.

In nothing, however, is the superiority of Christianity over paganism so apparent as in the vast difference in the position and treatment of woman in the respective systems. It is difficult to conceive the depths of degradation into which woman had fallen when Christianity came to rescue her from infamy, to clothe her with the domestic virtues, to [Pg 492] enshrine her amid the sanctities of home, and to employ her in the gentle ministrations of charity. The Greek courtesan, says Lecky, was the finest type of Greek life—the one free woman of Athens. But how world-wide was the difference between the Greek *hetæra*—a Phryne or an Aspasia, though honoured by Socrates and Pericles—and the Christian matrons Monica, Marcella, or Fabiola. So much does woman owe to Christianity! In Rome her condition was still worse. The heathen satirists paint in strongest colours the prevailing corruptions, and the historians of the times reveal abounding wickedness that shames humanity. The vast wealth, the multiplication of slaves, the influx of orientalism with its debasing vices, had thoroughly corrupted society. The relations of the sexes seemed entirely dislocated. The early Roman ideas of marriage were forgotten; it had no moral, only a legal character. Woman, reckless of her "good name," had lost "the most immediate jewel of her soul." The Lucretias and Virginias of the old heroic days were beings of tradition. A chaste woman, says Juvenal, was a *rara avis in terra*. The Julias and Messalinas flaunted their wickedness in the high places of the earth, and to be Cæsar's wife was *not* to be above suspicion. Alas, that in a few short centuries Christianity should sink so low that the excesses of a Theodora should rival those of an Agrippina or a Julia! Even the loftiest pagan moralists and philosophers recklessly disregarded the most sacred social obligation at their mere caprice. Cicero, who discoursed so nobly concerning the nature of the gods, divorced his wife Terentia that he might mend his broken fortunes by marrying his wealthy ward. Cato ceded his wife, with the consent of her father, to his friend Hortensius, taking her back [Pg 493] after his death. Woman was not a *person*, but a *thing*, says Gibbon. Her rights and interests were lost in those of her husband. She should have no friends nor gods but his, says Plutarch. It was the age of reckless divorce. In the early days of the Commonwealth there had been no divorce in Rome in five hundred and forty years. In the reign of Nero, says Seneca, the women measured their years by their husbands, and not by the consuls. Juvenal speaks of a woman with eight husbands in five years;[794] and Martial, in extravagant hyperbole, of another who married ten husbands in a month.[795] We must also regard as an exaggeration the account given by Jerome of a woman married to her twenty-third husband, being his twenty-first wife.[796]

Nevertheless, God did not leave himself without a witness in the hearts of the people; and we have seen many illustrations of conjugal happiness in previous inscriptions.[797] But Christianity first taught the sanctity of the marriage relation, as a type of the mystical union between Christ and his church; and enforced the reciprocal obligation of conjugal fidelity, which was previously regarded as binding on woman alone. In their recoil from the abominable licentiousness of the heathen, the Christians regarded modesty as the crown of all the virtues, and against its violation the heaviest ecclesiastical penalties were threatened. This regard was at length intensified into a superstitious reverence for celibacy.[798]

The absolute sinfulness of a divorce was maintained by the early councils.[799] The Fathers [Pg 494] admit of but one cause, that which Christ himself assigns, as rendering it lawful.[800] They also denounced second marriage, or bigamy, as it was called, which excluded from the clerical order, and from a share in the charities of the church.[801] The marriage relation was regarded as the union of two souls for time and for eternity.[802]

The church, following the principle laid down by St. Paul, strongly opposed mixed marriages [Pg 495] with the heathen; and the Fathers denounced them as dangerous and immoral. Cyprian regards them as a prostitution of the members of Christ.[803] Tertullian also designates them spiritual adultery.[804] Where conversion occurred after marriage, the Christian partner was exhorted, in the spirit of the apostolic counsel, to strive by gentleness and love to win the

unbelieving companion to Christ. Thus Monica, the mother of Augustine, and Clotildis, the wife of Clovis, both brought their heathen husbands to embrace Christianity.

The rites and benedictions of the church were early invoked to give sanction to Christian marriage;[805] and doubtless in the dim recesses of the Catacombs, and surrounded by the holy dead, youthful hearts must have plighted their troth, and been the more firmly knit together by the common perils and persecutions they must share. Here, too, the wedded pair may have paced the silent galleries, by holy converse inspired with stronger faith and more fervent love. How sweet must discourse of heaven have been in those sunless depths of earth! How thrilling those partings when before another meeting each might win a martyr's crown. [Pg 496]

When the church emerged from the Catacombs the marriage rites assumed a more festive character, and were frequently attended with nuptial processions, songs, music, and feasting. Some of the gilded glasses previously described seem to commemorate these occasions. Thus we occasionally find representations of the man and woman standing with clasped hands before the marriage altar, while Christ crowns the newly wedded pair. Sometimes the glass used in the marriage rite was immediately broken, as if to denote the transient nature of even the highest human bliss. The innocent festivities of these occasions gradually degenerated into convivial excesses; and, in conformity to heathen usages, were contaminated by licentiousness of speech and action unbecoming to Christian modesty. These abuses called for the strong denunciations of the Fathers and the early councils, and at length the clergy were forbidden to attend such festivals. The early Christians were required, in all their entertainments and festivals, by temperance,[806] by purity, by piety, to adorn the doctrines of the Gospel. Prayer hallowed their daily lives, and every act was done to the glory of God.

In their apparel and households the primitive believers were patterns of sobriety and godliness. The pomps and vanities of the world were renounced at their baptism. They eschewed all sumptuous and gaudy clothing as unbecoming the gravity and simplicity of the Christian character. Although many by social rank were entitled to wear the flowing Roman toga, yet by most it was regarded as too ostentatious in appearance; and, disdaining all assumption of worldly honour, they wore instead the common pallium or cloak. They rejected also, as the epicurean enticements of a world the fashion whereof was passing away, the luxurious draperies, the costly cabinets and couches, the golden vessels and marble statuary that adorned the abodes of the wealthy heathen. [Pg 497]

The strong instinct of the female mind to personal adornment was suppressed by religious convictions and ecclesiastical discipline; and Christian women cultivated rather the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit than the meretricious attractions of the heathen. "Let your comeliness be the goodly garment of the soul," says Tertullian. "Be arrayed in the ornaments of the apostles and prophets, drawing your whiteness from simplicity, your ruddy hue from modesty, painting your eyes with bashfulness, your mouth with silence, implanting in your ears the word of God, fitting on your neck the yoke of Christ. Clothe yourself with the silk of uprightness, the fine linen of holiness, the purple of modesty, and you shall have God himself for your lover and spouse."[807]

"Let woman breathe the odour of the true royal ointment, that of Christ, and not of unguents and scented powders," writes Clement of Alexandria, warning the faithful against another heathen practice. "Let her be anointed with the ambrosial chrism of industry, and find delight in the holy unguent of the Spirit, and offer spiritual fragrance. She may not crown the living image of God as the heathen do dead idols. Her fair crown is one of amaranth, which groweth not on earth, but in the skies."[808] The simple and modest garb of the Christian matron is exhibited in many of the representations of *oranti*, or praying figures, in the chambers of the Catacombs. See one beautiful example from a sarcophagus in Fig. 88. [Pg 498]

With the corruption of the church and decay of piety under the post-Constantinian emperors came the development of luxury and an increased sumptuousness of apparel. The refined classic taste was lost, and barbaric pomp and splendour were the only expression of opulence. The mosaics in the vestibules of the more ancient basilicas, and an occasional representation from the Catacombs of the period of their latest occupation, illustrate the increased luxury of dress. The primitive simplicity has given place to many-coloured and embroidered robes. The hair, often false, was tortured into unnatural forms, and raised in a towering mass on the head, not unlike certain modern fashionable modes, and was frequently artificially dyed. The person was bedizened with jewelry—pendents in the ears, pearls on the neck, bracelets and a profusion of rings on the arms and fingers. St. Jerome inveighs with peculiar vehemence against the attempt to beautify the complexion with pigments. "What business have rouge and paint on a Christian cheek?" he asks. "Who can weep for her sins when her tears wash bare furrows on her skin? With what trust can faces be lifted to heaven which the Maker cannot recognize as his workmanship?"[809] The mosaic portrait of St. Agnes is richly adorned with gems, and even the earliest examples of the Madonna is bedizened in Byzantine style with a necklace of pearls.[810] The following engraving from D'Agincourt illustrates the tasteless drapery and coiffure which awakened such intense patristic indignation. [Pg 499]

Fig. 129.—Bellicia fedelissima virgo qve vixit annos xviii, (*sic.*)

Belicia, a most faithful virgin who lived eighteen years.

The simplicity of the funeral rites of the primitive Christians is indicated by the character of the sepulchral monuments of the Catacombs. No “storied urn or animated bust,” nor costly mausolea, were employed to commemorate those who slept in Christ. A narrow grave, undistinguished from the multitude around save by the name of the deceased, or by the emblem of his calling, or symbol of his faith, and most frequently not even by these, sufficed, [Pg 500] in the earlier and purer days of the church, for the last resting-place of the saints. As wealth increased and faith grew cold, more attention was given to the external expression of grief or regard for the departed; and the chambers, at first rudely hewn from the tufa, became ornamented with stucco and frescoes, and lined with marble slabs, and the inscriptions [Pg 501] became more turgid and artificial. The superstitious veneration paid to the relics of the saints in later days led to the adornment of their sepulchres; and during the period of the temporal supremacy of Christianity, the posthumous ostentation of the rich was manifested in their costly sarcophagi and funeral monuments.[811]

All immoderate grief for the departed was regarded as inconsistent with Christian faith and hope. “Our brethren are not to be lamented who are freed from the world by the summons of the Lord,” says Cyprian, “for we know they are not lost, but sent before us. We may not wear the black robes of mourning while they are already clothed with the white raiment of joy. Nor may we grieve for those as lost whom we know to be living with God.”[812] Nay, the day of their death was celebrated as their *Natalitia*, or their true birthday—their entrance into the undying life of heaven. The primitive believers were not, however, insensible to natural affection, as many of the inscriptions already given fully prove; but they were sustained by a lofty hope and serene confidence in God.

The early Christian burial rites were entirely different from the pomp and pageantry of grief which characterized pagan funerals. When the spirit had departed, the body was washed with water and robed for the grave in spotless white, to represent, Chrysostom suggests, the soul’s putting on the garment of incorruption. In later times costly robes of silk and cloth of [Pg 502] gold were employed for the burial of the wealthy, against which practice Jerome strongly inveighs. “Why does not your ambition cease,” he exclaims, “in the midst of mourning and tears? Cannot the bodies of the rich return to dust otherwise than in silk?”[813] The body was also frequently embalmed, or at least plentifully enswathed with myrrh and aromatic spices, after the manner of the burial of Our Lord. This was especially necessary in the Catacombs on account of the frequent proximity of the living to the dead. We find frequent allusions to this practice in the Fathers.[814] It was a pagan reproach that the Christians bought no odours for their persons nor incense for the gods.[815] “It is true,” says Tertullian, “but the Arabs and Sabeans well know that we consume more of these costly wares for our dead than the heathen do for the gods.”[816]

The nearest relatives or pious friends bore the corpse to the grave, and committed it as the seed of immortality to the genial bosom of the earth, often strewing the body with flowers, in beautiful symbolism of the resurrection to the fadeless summer of the skies.[817] [Pg 503] In times of persecution the privilege would often be purchased with money of gathering the martyrs’ mangled remains, and bearing them by stealth, along the pagan “Street of Tombs,” to the silent community of the Christian dead.[818] Instead of employing the pagan *nænia*, or funeral dirge, and *præficæ*, or hireling mourners, the Christians accompanied the dead to their

repose with psalms and hymns,[819] chanting such versicles as, “Return to thy rest, O my soul;” “I will fear no evil, for thou art with me;” “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.”[820] Frequently, as will be hereafter seen, the *agape* or eucharist was celebrated at the grave.

The heathen buried their dead by night on account of the defilement the very sight of a funeral was supposed to cause. The Christians repudiated this idolatrous notion, and, except when prevented during times of persecution, buried openly by day, that the living might be reminded of their mortality and led to prepare for death.

[Pg 504] We have thus seen the immense superiority, in all the elements of true dignity and excellence of primitive Christianity to the corrupt civilization by which it was surrounded. It ennobled the character and purified the morals of mankind. It raised society from the ineffable slough into which it had fallen, imparted tenderness and fidelity to the domestic relations of life, and enshrined marriage in a sanctity before unknown. Notwithstanding the corruptions by which it became infected in the days of its power and pride, even the worst form of Christianity was infinitely preferable to the abominations of paganism. It gave a sacredness previously unconceived to human life. It averted the sword from the throat of the gladiator, and, plucking helpless infancy from exposure to untimely death, nourished it in Christian homes. It threw the ægis of its protection over the slave and the oppressed, raising them from the condition of beasts to the dignity of men and the fellowship of saints. With an unwearied and passionate charity it yearned over the suffering and sorrowing every-where, and created a vast and comprehensive organization for their relief, of which the world had before no example and had formed no conception. It was a holy Vestal, ministering at the altar of humanity, witnessing ever of the Divine, and keeping the sacred fire burning, not for Rome, but for the world. Its winsome gladness and purity, in an era of unspeakable pollution and sadness, revived the sinking heart of mankind, and made possible a Golden Age in the future transcending far that which poets pictured in the past. It blotted out cruel laws, like those of Draco written in blood,[821] and led back Justice, long banished, to the judgment [Pg 505] seat. It ameliorated the rigours of the penal code, and, as experience has shown, lessened the amount of crime. It created an art purer and loftier than that of paganism; and a literature rivaling in elegance of form, and surpassing in nobleness of spirit, the sublimest productions of the classic muse. Instead of the sensual conceptions of heathenism, polluting the soul, it supplied images of purity, tenderness, and pathos, which fascinated the imagination and hallowed the heart. It taught the sanctity of suffering and of weakness, and the supreme majesty of gentleness and ruth.

[740] Some of these occur also on pagan tombs.

[741] This, it will be remembered, was the name of Augustine’s son, whose early death he so pathetically laments.

[742] Compare also the classic names Diodorus, Herodotus, Athenadorus, Heliodorus, Apollodorus, Isidorus—the gift of Zeus, of Here, of Athene, of the Sun, of Apollo, of Isis; and Diogenes, Hermogenes—born of Zeus, of Hermes; also the beautiful German names Gottlieb, Gottlob—Beloved of God, Praise God, etc.

[743] Compare the Puritan names: Accepted, Redeemed, Called, More Fruit, Kill Sin, Fly Debate, and even lengthy texts of Scripture. See Neal’s *Puritans*, ii, 133, third foot note. In New England graveyards may still be found such names as Assurance, Faith, Hope, Charity, Patience, Perseverance, and all the cardinal virtues, together with Tribulation, and others still more ominous. Mr. Wellbeloved is the name of a living person. See also the French *Bien Aimé*, etc.

[744] Compare the funeral totems, the beaver, the bear, or eagle, of the American Indians. The Greeks also had similar names: Lycos, a wolf; Moschos, a calf; Corax, a raven; Sauros, a lizard, etc.

[745] Sometimes a sort of pun or play upon words occurs, as the following: HIC IACET GLYCONIS DVLCIS NOMINE ERAT ANIMA QVOQVE DVLCIOR VSQVE—“Here lies Glyconis. She was sweet by name, her disposition also was even sweeter.” HEIC EST SEPVLCHRVM PVLCRVM PVLCRAE FEMINAE—“Here is the beautiful tomb of a beautiful woman.” Much of the paronomasia is lost in translation. Another conceit is giving the name of the deceased acrostically in the initial letters of the lines, an invariable symbol of degraded taste. See De Rossi, No. 677, A. D. 432.

A few examples of Gothic names occur, as Bringa, Uviliaric, Erida, (is it Freda?) Ildebrand. In Gaul these are more striking, as Ingomir, Hagen, and the like.

[746] Quia solum in libro vitæ describi avebant.—*Inscrip. Antiq.*, p. 545.

[747] See chap. ii, p. 419.

[748] Various titles of honour occur in these epitaphs, generally applied to the Consuls, occasionally to the deceased, and indicated by initial letters as above, and as follows: VI., *Vir Illustris*, “An Illustrious Man;” VD., *Vir Devotus*, or *Devotissimus*, “A Devout, or Very Devout Man;” VC., *Vir Clarissimus*, FC., *Femina Clarissima*, “A Most Distinguished Man or Woman;” VH., *Vir Honestus*, FH. *Femina Honesta*, “An Honourable Man or Woman;” VSP., *Vir Spectabilis*, “A Very Notable Man;” VP., *Vir Perfectissimus*, “A Most Eminent Man;” VD., *Vir Doctissimus*, “A Most Learned Man.”

[749] *Apol.*, 46.

[750] It may not be uninteresting to notice some of the trades and occupations mentioned in pagan epitaphs. They are of a much wider range than those of the Christians, indicating that the latter

were a "peculiar people," excluded from many pursuits on account of their immoral or idolatrous character. Besides occupations like those above mentioned, we find such examples as QVADRIGARIVS, "A charioteer;" CVRSOR, "The runner;" MAGISTER LVDI, "Master of the Games;" MINISTER POCVLI, "Toast master;" DOCTOR MYRMILON, "Teacher of the gladiators," DERISOR, or SCVRRA CONVIVIORVM, "Buffoon, or clown of the revels;" STVPIDVS GREGIS VRBANAE, "Clown of the city company of mountebanks." We have also official titles, as NABICVLARIVS CVR. CORPORIS MARIS HADRIATICI, "Commissioner of the Hadriatic Company;" CVRATOR ALVEI ET RIPARVM MARIS, "Curator of the river channel and sea banks;" MENSOR PVBLICVS, "Public measurer;" VILICVS SVPRA HORTOS, "Steward over gardens;" CAESARIS PRAESIGNATOR, "Imperial Notary;" INVITATOR, "Agent." We notice, too, others, as NVMVLARIVS, "A banker;" MEDICVS IVMENTARIVS, "Mule doctor;" MEDICVS OCVLARIS, "Oculist;" EXONERATOR CALCARIVS, "Lime dealer;" LANARIVS, "Wool-worker;" PECTINARIVS, "Comb-seller;" NEGOTIANS SALSAMENTARIVS ET VINEARIVS "Salt and wine merchant;" CVBICVLARIVS, "Keeper of the Couch;" GRAMMATICVS LECTORQVE, "Grammarian and reader;" COMPARATOR MERCIS SVTORIAE, "Shoemaker's furnisher;" FVNARIVS, "Rope maker;" NEGOTIATOR LENTIC · ET CASTRENIAR · "A Camp Grocer and Sutler;" REDEMPTOR AB AERE, "Contractor in Brass;" FABER FERRARIVS, "Iron Worker;" NEGOTIATOR LVGDVNENSIS ARTIS, "A Dealer in Lyons wares," not silks, as the phrase would now mean, but pottery; EXACTOR TRIBVTORVM, "Tax gatherer;" and the FANATICVS in the temple of Isis, *i. e.*, one hired to stimulate the zeal of the votaries by wild and frantic gestures, attributed to the inspiration of the deity. We find also epitaphs of actors, dancers, pantomimists, of one of whom, a young girl, it is said, CVIVS IN OCTAVA LASCIVIA SVRGERE MESSE COEPERAT—a horrible circumstance to mention on her tomb.

[751] Tertullian bases his apology for the Christians on the blamelessness of their character, refutes the accusations against them, and challenges proof. The unworthy members of the community, he says, are only as moles or freckles on the body, or as a fleecy cloud on a sunny sky, affecting not its general character.—*Ad Nationes*, 5.

[752] Compare, in Propertius' elegy on Cornelia, the line

Viximus insignes inter utramque facem.

"I lived spotless from the kindling of my marriage torch to that which lit my funeral pyre."

[753] The text and translation are as given by Burgon.

[754] Dr. Northcote indeed asserts that "there are actually more instances of *alumni* among the sepulchral inscriptions of the Christians than among the infinitely more numerous sepulchral inscriptions of the pagans." (Page 136.) The accompanying Greek examples are characteristic of the class: ΠΡΟΚΛΗ ΘΡΕΠΤΗ, "To Procla, an adopted daughter;" ΠΕΤΡΟC ΘΡΕΠΤΟC ΓΛΥΚΥΤΑΤΟC ΕΝ ΘΕΩ, "Peter, a most sweet adopted son, in God."

The titles *mamma* and *tata*, sometimes in their diminutive forms *mamula* and *tatula*, equivalent to our mamma and papa, occur in Christian and pagan epitaphs.

[755] The expression *papasantimio* was erroneously translated "most holy Pope" by Paoli and Fea, but their mistake was long since pointed out. Maitland, and Bishop Kip who followed him, fell into the same error. De Rossi severely criticises the former as "most ignorant of the whole controversy, known even to blear-eyed and barbers."—Totius controversiæ, vel lippis ac tonsoribus notæ, ignarissimus.—*Inscrip. Antiq.*, p. 177. The translation above given is that of Dr. McCaul.

[756] This example and translation are from Maitland. It will be observed that Domnina must have been married before her fourteenth birthday. Several notices of early marriages occur, as e.g.

VISCILIVS NICENI · COSTAE · SVAE QVAE FVIT ·
ANNOR · P · M · XXXI · EX QVIBVS DVRABIT · MECVM ANNOS XV—

"Viscilius to Nice, his rib, who was of thirty-one years (of age) more or less, of which she passed with me fifteen years." The use of *costa* for *uxor* is doubtless an allusion to Genesis ii, 21. We read also of Felicissima, QVAE VIXIT ANNVS LX · QVAE FECIT CVM VIRO SVO ANNVS XLV—"Who lived sixty years, who passed with her husband forty-five years;" and of Januaria, L · F · QVAE VIXIT PL · M · ANN · XXVIII · C · MARITV · FEC ANN XV · M · XI · D · X—"A praiseworthy woman, who lived twenty-eight years, more or less; she passed with her husband fifteen years, eleven months, ten days." She was, therefore, married when about twelve years of age. The earliest date of marriage we have noticed is the following: CONSTANTIAE BENEMERENTI BERGINIVS CASTAE CONPARAE · CVM QVA · FECIT ANNIS VIII. QVE VICSIT (*sic*) ANNIS XVIII · MENSES VIIII · DIES XVII.—"Virginius, to the well-deserving Constantia, his chaste consort, with whom he lived eight years, who lived eighteen years, nine months, seventeen days." She was less than eleven years old when married. It must be borne in mind, however, that marriage still occurs at a very early age in these southern latitudes, as both sexes attain nubile years much sooner than in northern climates. But this precocious maturity is followed, especially in females, by a premature decline. Like the brilliant flowers of their own fervid clime, they early bloom and quickly fade.

[757] We have also illustrations of the fatal facility of divorce under the Empire, and of the domestic strife and crime resulting therefrom. In the following epitaph a discarded wife laments the murder of her child by the usurper of her rights: MATER FILIO PIISSIMO MISERA ET IN LVCTV ETERNALL VENEFICIO NOVERCAE—"To her most affectionate son, the wretched mother, plunged in perpetual grief by the poison of his step-mother, (raised this slab.)" There is also a curious inscription, written jointly by two living husbands to the same deceased wife, in which she is designated, CONIVX BENE MERENTA (*sic*)—"A well-deserving consort." Another slab is dedicated to both the wife and the concubine—VXORI ET CONCVBINAE—of a Roman lictor.

[758] In like manner, with more tender sentiment than we would have expected in the stolid monarch, George II. was, in accordance with his own request, laid in death beside his good and gentle consort long deceased, and the partition between them removed, "that their dust might blend together."

[759] Several of these examples are translated from Kenrick.

[760] While yet alive, Domitian was called, Our Lord and God—*Dominus et Deus noster*.

[761] A licentious poet, recognizing this moral corruption as the cause of national decay, exclaims:

> Hoc fonte derivata clades
> In patriam populumque fluxit.

[762] Origen, *Contra Cels.*, i, 67. Cf. Jus. Mar., *Apol.*, ii, 61, and Tert. *Apol.*, and *Ad. Nat.*, passim.

[763] Tertul., *Apol.*, 22.

[764] Fabri deorum vel parentes numinum.—Prudentius, *Peristeph.*, Hymn x, 293.

[765] Tertul., *De Idol.*, vi.

[766] The martyr Lucian chose to die rather than to eat things offered to idols.

[767] *Hist. of Eur. Morals*, ii, 34.

[768] The *Pædagogus* of Clement of Alexandria was prepared as a guide or "Instructor" to those who were striving to free themselves from pagan customs, and to conform their lives to the Christian character.

[769] *Apol.*, c. 39.

[770] Nemo compellitur, sed sponte confert.—*Apol.*, c. 39.

[771] *Ibid.*, 42.

[772] *Ibid.*, 14.

[773] *Pædag.*, ii, 13.

[774] *Hom.* in 2 Tim.

[775] *Epitaph. Paulæ.*

[776] Greg., *Dial.*, iii.

[777] *Vita Cypr.*

[778] Euseb., *H. E.*, ix, 8.

[779] Apud nos inter pauperes et divites, servos et dominos, interest nihil.—Lactant., *Div. Inst.*, v. 14, 15.

[780] The arena, once crimson with human gore, is now consecrated by the cross of Christ, and a Christian service is weekly celebrated on the spot where a pagan emperor sought to crush the infant church.

[781] Under Trajan, renowned for his clemency, ten thousand men fought in the games which lasted one hundred and twenty-three days. To stimulate the jaded minds of the spectators men were impaled, crucified, and burned to death.

[782] The *De Spectaculis* of Tertullian is an elaborate argument concerning the idolatrous origin and character of the theatre. He describes, in language applicable to much of the "sport" of modern times, the human wild beasts, passion-blind, agitated by bets, and out of themselves with excitement. "You have nobler joys," he says to the Christians. "Be startled at God's signal, roused at the angel's trump, glory in the palms of martyrdom. Would you have blood too? There is Christ's," (sec. 29.) "He expatiates on the grandeur of the spectacle when the world, hoary with age, shall be consumed; contrasts with the theatre the sight of poets, players, philosophers, and kings in agonies and flames; and exults in the triumph of Christ," (sec. 30.)

[783] Tertul., *De Spectac.*, sec. 26.

[784] *De Idol.*, c. 19.

[785] Navigamus ... et militamus, et rusticamus, et mercamur.—*Apol.* c. 42.

[786] Implevimus ... castra ipsa.—*Ibid.*, c. 37. The story of the Thundering Legion, composed entirely of Christians, is unable to withstand the destructive criticism of modern times. The following is the epitaph of a military commander: VITALIANVS MAGISTER MILITVM, QVIESCIT IN DOMINO. We have already seen that of an officer—DVX MILITVM—who suffered martyrdom under Adrian.

[787] Euseb., *H. E.*, viii, 4. No one in either the civil or military service of the emperor was eligible for ordination even as a deacon.—Bingham, *Orig. Eccl.*, iv, 3, sec. 1.

[788] Hostes Cæsarum, hostes populi Romani.—*Celsus*, lib. viii.

[789] Christianus nullius est hostis, nedum imperatoris.—*Ad Scapulum*, i.

[790] Nec ulla res aliena magis quam publica.—*Apol.*, c. 38.

[791] Honores et purpuras despiciunt ipsi seminudi.—In *Munic. Felix*, viii.

[792] Infructuosi in negotiis dicimur.—Tert., *Apol.*, 42.

[793] *Ibid.*

[794] Sat., vi, 20.

[795] Epig., vii, 6.

[796] Epist., cxi.

[797] The names of Penelope, Andromache, Alcestis, and Antigone will be forever illustrious types

of the domestic virtues.

[798] The Fathers frequently contrasted the few heathen vestal virgins with the multitude of Christian celibates. The Christian emperors and the early councils resolutely repressed harlotry, drunkenness, wanton dancing, and immodest plays and books.

[799] Conc. Nic., 8; Ancyra, 19; Laodic., 1; Neo Caes., 3.

[800] Tertul., *Contr. Marc.*, iv, 34, etc.

[801] Tertullian wrote a special treatise on the subject—*De Monogamia*. The injunction that a bishop should be the husband of *one* wife was regarded as a prohibition of a second marriage. Some of the Fathers, however, dissented from this view, as Hermes, (*Pastor*, ii, 4); Augustine, (*De Bono Viduitatis*, 12). On many pagan tombs occurs the word *univiræ*—"Once married." There are several examples of wives in the prime of their youth and beauty devoting themselves to retirement on the death of their husbands, as the wives of Pompey, of Drusus, and of Lucan.

[802] The beauty and dignity of Christian wedlock are nobly expressed by Tertullian in the following passage, addressed to his own wife: "How can I paint the happiness," he exclaims, "of a marriage which the church ratifies, the sacrament confirms, the benediction seals, angels announce, and our heavenly Father declares valid! What a union of two believers—one hope, one vow, one discipline, one worship! They are brother and sister, two fellow-servants, one spirit and one flesh. They pray together, fast together, exhort and support one another. They go together to the house of God, and to the table of the Lord. They share each other's trials, persecutions, and joys. Neither avoids nor hides any thing from the other. They delight to visit the sick, succour the needy, and daily to lay their offerings before the altar without scruple or constraint. They do not need to keep the sign of the cross hidden, nor to express secretly their Christian joy, nor receive by stealth the eucharist. They join in psalms and hymns, and strive who best can praise God. Christ rejoices at the sight, and sends his peace upon them. Where two are in his name he also is; and where he is, their evil cannot come"—*Ad Uxorem*, ii, 8. He thus describes the difficulties which a Christian woman married to an idolater must encounter in her religious life: "At the time for worship the husband will appoint the use of the bath; when a fast is to be observed he will invite company to a feast. When she would bestow alms, both safe and cellar are closed against her. What heathen will suffer his wife to attend the nightly meetings of the church, the slandered supper of the Lord, to visit the sick even in the poorest hovels, to kiss the martyr's chains in prison, to rise in the night for prayer, to show hospitality to stranger brethren?"—*Ibid.*

[803] Jungere cum infidelibus vinculum matrimonii prostituere gentilibus membra Christi.

[804] *Ad Ux.*, ii, 2-9. Jerome says that women married to heathen become part of that body whose ribs they are.—*Cont. Jovin.*, i, 5.

[805] Secret marriages were forbidden, nor might this union take place without the approbation of the earthly as well as of the heavenly parent.—Tert., *Ad. Ux.*, ii, 9.

[806] "Guard against drunkenness as against hemlock," says Clement of Alexandria, "for both drag down to death."—*Pædag.*, i, 7.

[807] *De Cultu Feminarum*, ii, 3-13: "The wife should weave her own apparel," says Clement of Alexandria, referring to Prov. xxxi, 10-31. This is also the etymological meaning of the English word wife.

[808] *Pædag.*, ii, 8.

[809] *Ep.* 54: "Polire faciem purpurisso" he exclaims, "et cerusa ora depingere, ornare crinem, et alienis capillis turritam verticem struere." Cyprian suggests that the Almighty might not recognize them at the resurrection. They should not dye their hair or clothes, as violating the saying that "thou canst not make one hair white or black;" and God had not made sheep scarlet or purple.—*De habitu Virginum*, 14-16. "Nevertheless," says Clement, "they cannot with their bought and painted beauty avoid wrinkles or evade death." Tertullian denounces their flame-coloured heads, "built up with pads and rolls, the slough perhaps of some guilty wretch now in hell."—*De Velendis Virginibus*, ii, 17. "One delicate neck," he says, "carries about it forests and islands"—*saltus et insulæ*; that is, their price.—*Ibid.*, i, 9. At the court of the Eastern Empire, effeminacy and oriental luxury still further degraded the Christian character. Clement of Alexandria denounces with indignation the extravagance and vice of the so-called Christian community of that city. The wealth that should have been devoted to the poor was expended in gilded litters and chariots, splendid banquets and baths, in costly jewelry and dresses. Wealthy ladies, instead of maintaining widows and orphans, wasted their sympathies on monkeys, peacocks, and Maltese dogs.—*Pæd.*, iii, 4. "Riches," he adds, "is like a serpent which will bite unless we know how to take it by the tail."—*Ibid.*, 6. He compares the Alexandrian women to "an Egyptian temple, gorgeous without, but enshrining only a cat or crocodile: so beneath their meretricious adorning were concealed vile and loathsome passions." The sumptuary laws of the Theodosian code prohibited the use of gold brocade or silken tissue, (x, tit. 20; xlv, 10.)

[810] See Fig. 90. See also *oranti* in Fig. 82.

[811] This lapidary extravagance was censured, as seeming to imply that the sepulchres were the receptacles of the souls rather than of the bodies.—Ambr., *De Bono Mortis*.

[812] Cypr., *De Mortal.*, 20. See also Augustine's pathetic account of the death of his mother, Monica—Premebam oculos ejus et confluebat in præcordia mœstitudo ingens, etc.—*Conf.*, ix, 12.

[813] Father Marchi found, along with some charred bones, supposed to be relics of St. Hyacinth, some threads of gold tissue, as if the martyr's remains had been wrapped in this costly material. He also perceived an aromatic odour on opening some graves. Occasionally large lumps of lime have been found bearing the marks of the linen in which they were wrapped. Its caustic nature would hasten the destruction of animal tissue.

[814] An cadavera divitum nisi in serico putrescere nesciunt.—*Vit. Pauli.* Arringhi has a chapter on the subject, (lib. i, c. 23,) Cadavera unguentis et aromatibus condiuntur.

[815] Non corpus odoribus honestatis.—Ap., *Minuc.*, p. 35. Jerome urges the substitution of the balsam of alms-deeds and charity.

[816] Thura plane non emimus, etc.—*Apol.*, 42. "You expect your women will bury your body with ointments and spices," said the heathen judge to the martyr Tarachus; to prevent which he condemned him to be burned.

[817] In later times similar rites were paid to the tomb. "We will adorn the hidden bones," sings Prudentius, "with violets and many a bough; and on the epitaphs and the cold stones we will sprinkle liquid odours."—*Cathem.*, x.

[818] See Euseb., *H. E.*, vii, 16 and 22. They were often denied the privilege.—*Ibid.*, v, 1. Eutychianus, a Roman Christian, is said to have buried three hundred and forty-two martyrs with his own hands.

[819] Ψάλλοντες προπέμπετε αὐτοὺς, κ. τ. λ.—*Constit. Apos.*, vi, 30. Hymnos et Psalmos decantans, etc.—Hieron., *Vit. Pauli*.

[820] Chrys., *Hom.*, 4, *in Hebr.* The following inscription indicates that the corpse was sometimes brought to the Catacombs some time before burial; probably immediately after death, as in Italy it is now taken to the church. *Pecora dulcis anima benit in cimitero Marturorum, vii, idus Jul. Dp. Postera die*—"Pecora, a sweet soul, came (was brought) to the cemetery of the martyrs on the 9th of July; was buried the following day."

[821] The Christian emperors prohibited the branding of felons on the forehead on the ground "that the human countenance, formed after the image of heavenly beauty, should not be defaced." They also exempted widows and orphans from taxation, and contributed to their support.

CHAPTER IV.

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THE MINISTRY, RITES, AND INSTITUTIONS OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH.

We gain from the testimony of the Catacombs most important information as to the organization of the church during the early Christian centuries. We see on every side records of an efficient ministry of different grades and dignities, yet wholly unlike that vast hierarchical system which claims to be its lineal descendant. We discern also evidences of a well-ordered administration of the sacraments and ordinances of religion, simple and unadorned, yet instinct with spiritual life and power, compared with which the gorgeous ritual and lifeless pomp of Romanism are more akin, in outward form at least, to the pagan homage of the Bona Dea, or to the mysteries of Mithras, than to Christian worship. So complete is this testimony as to the ministry and rites of the primitive church, that Dr. Northcote remarks that, "even if all the writings of the Fathers had altogether perished, we might almost reconstruct the whole fabric of the ecclesiastical polity from the scattered notices of these sepulchral inscriptions."[822]

The somewhat complex ecclesiastical organization which we discover was probably a gradual development with the growth of the church, and not in its entirety the creation of the earliest times; the inscriptions referring to the subject, it must be remembered, being all or chiefly of post-Constantinian origin. The earlier books of the Apostolical Constitutions, [Pg 507] which are probably of the second century, say almost nothing about the different grades of the ministry; but in the later ones, probably of the fifth century, a full blown sacerdotalism appears. Cornelius, bishop of Rome in the middle of the third century, records the existence of a graduated clergy like that indicated in the inscriptions of the Catacombs,[823] whose gradations Clement of Alexandria compares to the different ranks of the hierarchy of heaven.[824]

The highest office in the church of the Catacombs was that of the bishop—the chief pastor[825] or overseer of the flock of Christ. But this position was rather a preeminence of toil and peril than of dignity and honour. The supreme head of the Roman hierarchy, who lays claim to the attributes of deity himself, and sits in the seat of God as his vicegerent and infallible representative on earth, finds no precedent for his lofty assumptions in his humble predecessors of the primitive ages. These were in reality what he is only in name—*servi servorum Dei*. Even the title of bishop occurred but seldom. Neither Bosio, Fabretti, Boldetti, nor any other of the early explorers of the Catacombs, found a single example of it. The tomb of the first Roman bishop bore simply the name LINVS. In the so-called "papal [Pg 508] crypt" the title first appears, but in the contracted form, ЕПІ and ЕПІС, and without any symbol of superior dignity whatever. The name of a bishop was first made a note of time in the latter part of the fourth century, as in the epigraphic formulæ *Sub Liberio Episcopo*—*Sub Damaso Episcopo*—During the episcopate of Liberius, (A. D. 350-366,) of Damasus, (A. D. 366-384.) But this distinction was also conferred on other bishops than those of Rome. Thus, in the year A. D. 397, we find the expression *Pascasio Episcopo*. Now, as there was no Roman bishop of that name, Pascasius must have presided over some of the adjacent sees, of which we know that there were many independent of Rome.[826]

The word *papa*, or pope, does not occur in the Catacombs till at least the latter part of the [Pg 509] fourth century. It appears first spelled *pappas*, and applied to Damasus, in the margin of an inscription by that bishop, in honour of Eusebius.[827] But De Rossi admits that this is a badly executed reproduction, of the sixth or seventh century, of a previous inscription; so this title may very well belong to that late period. This is all the more probable from the phraseology of the very first line of this inscription: DAMASVS EPISCOPVS FECIT EVSEBIO EPISCOPO ET MARTYRI—"Damasus, bishop, (not pope,) to Eusebius, bishop and martyr." Hilary (461-467) calls himself bishop and servant of Christ—"*Episcopus et famulus Christi*." In an epitaph of A. D. 523, Hormisdas is called merely DOMINVS PAPA—that is, "honoured father," or "pope," which is probably the first application of this phrase in Christian epigraphy. In another, of date A. D. 563, John III. is designated as the "most blessed father John"—*Beatissimus papa Joannes*.[828]

But even this title, invested with such awful dignity and supreme authority in later days, was at first only an expression of familiar and affectionate respect, not peculiar to the bishop of [Pg 510] Rome, nor indeed first applied to him. Its earliest use is attributed to Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, in the latter part of the third century.[829] The Roman clergy address the bishop of Carthage in their letters as "the blessed pope Cyprian."[830] Tertullian applies the name to any Christian bishop.[831] Jerome addresses Augustine, bishop of the little African diocese of Hippo, as the *Beatissimus papa Augustinus*,[832] and applies the same phrase to the superior of a monastery.[833]

The rapid extension of Christianity in the metropolis of the empire enhanced the influence and dignity of the Roman bishops.[834] With the increase of wealth and decay of piety these dignitaries became ambitious and worldly, arrogant and aspiring, and laid the foundations of that vast system of spiritual despotism which for centuries crushed the civil and religious liberties of Europe. Nevertheless, as late as the end of the sixth century, Gregory the Great, [Pg 511] although zealous for the episcopal dignity, resents the claim of John of Constantinople to the title of œcumenical bishop in the striking words: "This I declare with confidence, that whoso

designates himself universal priest, or, in the pride of his heart, consents to be so named, he is the forerunner of Antichrist."[835] His successors of Rome have not shrunk from this malediction, but, in assumption of this universal supremacy, have placed their feet on the neck of kings, parcelled out empires, and conferred crowns at their pleasure.[836]

The next rank in ecclesiastical dignity was that of the Presbyters.[837] There was not that distinction in the primitive ages between their office and that of the bishops that afterward arose. Bishop Pearson represents their power and dignity as greater the nearer we ascend to the apostolic times. Their principal functions were the administration, in association with the bishops, of the sacraments, the enforcement of discipline, the preaching of the word, and the pastorate of the church. Their epitaphs in the Catacombs and basilicas are frequently very brief, as the following: LOCVS GERONTI PRESB—"The place of Gerontus, a presbyter;" POSITVS EST HIC LEONTIVS PRESBITER (*sic*)—"Here is placed Leontius, a presbyter." Sometimes the title is expressed in a contracted form, thus: HIC QVIESCIT ROMANVS PBB. QVI SEDIT PBB · ANN · XXVIII · M · X.—"Here reposes Romanus, a presbyter, who sat a presbyter twenty-eight years ten months."[838] Boldetti gives the epitaph of ACATIVS PASTOR, who was probably a presbyter, his title expressing his pastoral office. The following, of date A. D. 471, which is more elaborate than usual, is of some historical interest:[839]

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PRESBYTER HIC POSITVS FELIX IN PACE QVIESCIT
CVIVS PVRA FIDES PROBITAS VIGILANTIA SOLLERS
PONTIFICVM CLARO PLACVIT SIC NOTA LEONI
POST LABSVM VT REPARANS VENERANDI CVLMINA PAVLI
HVIC OPERIS TANTI RENOVANDAM CREDERET AVLAM.

Felix, the presbyter, placed here, reposes in peace, whose pure faith, probity, sagacious vigilance, when known, so pleased the illustrious Leo of the pontiffs,[840] that, repairing the roof of the venerable St. Paul's after its fall, he trusted to him the renewal of the hall of so great a work.

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It appears that sometimes the primitive presbyters engaged in secular callings. Thus, an inscription from the Catacomb of Callixtus reads, ΔIONYCIOC ΠPECBYTEPOC IATPOC —"Dionysius, presbyter and physician." Another, of date A. D. 533, commemorates a deacon, who was also, perhaps before ordination, a senator and soldier. One found in Galatia mentions ΘEOΔΩPOC ΠPECBYTEPOC KAI APΓYPOKOΠOC—"Theodorus, a presbyter and silversmith." Hyacinthus, a Roman presbyter of the third century, was also an officer of the imperial household. Tertullian complains that some engaged in idolatrous trades were promoted to ecclesiastical offices.[841] Eusebius mentions a presbyter of Antioch who was head-master of one of the principal schools of the city.[842] Sozomen tells of bishops Zeno and Spiridion, who continued, the one to weave linen, the other to keep sheep, after elevation to the episcopal office.[843] Indeed, the fourth council of Carthage (A. D. 398) decreed that the clergy might devote their leisure to trade or husbandry, that the church might have greater resources for charity.[844]

The next grade in ecclesiastical rank was that of the deacons. They acted generally as assistants of the bishops and presbyters, especially in the distribution of the charities of the church.[845] They also took part in the administration of the eucharist, but not in its consecration. Before the appointment of lectors they read, and occasionally expounded, the Scriptures to the congregation, like the modern lay preachers. They also acted as instructors or catechists of the catechumens of the church. They are frequently designated *Levitæ*,[846] from the fancied analogy of their functions to those of the Levitical order among the Jews. In the church at Rome there were only seven deacons, in accordance with the number originally appointed in the church at Jerusalem; but in other cities the number was not thus limited.[847] Of inferior dignity were the ὑποδιάκονοι, or sub-deacons, who assisted the deacons in the discharge of their lower functions, as the care of the sacramental vessels, and the like.

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Several epitaphs of both these classes have been found among the early Christian inscriptions. They are generally very brief, as the following: IVL DIACONVS—"Julius, the deacon;" DEPS · FELIX · DIAC—"Felix, the deacon, buried (Mar. 11, A. D. 435);" LOCVS EXVPERANTI DIACON—"The place of Exuperantus, the deacon." Beneath the church of Sts. Cosmo and Damien was found the following: HIC REQVIESCIT $\overline{\text{SCVS}}$ HABVNDANTIVS DIAC ET MARTYR—"Here reposes holy Abundantius, deacon and martyr."[848]

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The following are characteristic epitaphs of sub-deacons: HIC QVIESCIT APPIANVS SVBDIACONVS QVI VIXIT ANNVS XXXII DIES XXVIIII—"Here rests Appianus, a sub-deacon, who lived thirty-two years, twenty-nine days;" LOCVS MARCELLI SVBD · REG · SEXTAE CONCESSVM (*sic*) SIBI ET POSTERIS EIVS A BEATISSIMO PAPA IOANNE QVI VIXIT ANN · PLM · LXVIII—"The place of Marcellus, a sub-deacon of the sixth district,[849] conceded to him and his posterity by the most blessed Father John,[850] who lived sixty-eight years, more or less." (A. D. 564.)

The first rank of the inferior officers of the church was that of the lectors or readers. It was their duty to read in the congregations the appointed lessons from the Holy Scriptures.[851] The office was held in peculiar honour, young men of noble family, especially, aspiring to its dignity. Thus the Emperor Julian, in his youth, was a reader of the church at Nicomedia, as was also his brother Gallus.[852] Candidates for the office were ordained by the ceremony of delivering the Gospels into their hands. According to one of the Novels of Justinian,[853] they were required to be not less than eighteen years of age, but examples occur of their

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appointment as early as seven or eight years old.[854] Probably the latter were dedicated by their parents, like Samuel, to the service of God from their infancy,[855] and graduated through the inferior offices to those of greater dignity and influence. In the Western church they soon ceased as a distinct rank, but they lingered in the conventual orders till a comparatively late period.

The following are epitaphs of lectors from the Catacombs and basilicas: EQ HERACLIVS QVI FVIT IN SAECVLVM ANN · XVIIII · M · VII · D · XX · LECTOR R · SEC · FECERVNT · SIBI ET FILIO SVO BENEMERENTI · INP—"Equitius Heraclius, who was in this world nineteen years, seven months, twenty days, a reader of the second district. (His parents) made this for themselves and their well-deserving son, in peace;" CINNAMIVS OPAS LECTOR TITVLI FACIOLI AMICVS PAVPERVM—"Cinnamius Opas, a reader of the church of Faciolus, a friend of the poor;" MIRAE INNOCENTIAE ADQ · EXIMIAE BONITATIS HIC REQVIESCIT LEOPARDVS LECTOR DE PVDENTIANA QVI VIXIT ANN. XXIIII—"Here rests Leopardus, of wonderful innocence and remarkable goodness, a reader of the church of Pudentiana, who lived twenty-four years;" [Pg 517] HIC REQVIESCIT IN SOMNO PACIS CAELIVS LAVRENTIVS LECTOR SANCTAE ECCLESIAE AECLANENSIS QVI VIXIT ANNOS PLM · XLVIII—"Here rests, in the sleep of peace, Cælius Laurentius, a reader of the holy church of Æclanum, who lived forty-eight years, more or less."

The acolytes were another class which is discontinued in the protestant communion. As the name implies,[856] they were the servitors of the church, and had charge of the lamps and other ecclesiastical furniture. They were probably the offspring of the increasing pomp and dignity of the bishops, to whom they acted as personal attendants, especially in public processions and religious festivals. The only dated epitaphs of acolytes extant are of a comparatively late period. De Rossi thinks the following of the sixth or seventh century.[857] The simplicity of the primitive church had long since passed away. (P)ACE ABVNDANTIVS ACOL · REG · QVARTAE TT VESTINAE QVI VIXIT ANN · XXXIII DEP · INP · D NAT · SCI MARCI—"In peace, Abundantius, an acolyte of the fourth district, of the church of Vestina, who lived thirty-three years. Buried in peace on the birthday of St. Mark."

The office of exorcist, from the occult and mysterious nature of its functions, was one that from the first was liable to abuse. It appears to have been known in the synagogue, and even there to have been usurped for base and venal purposes.[858] A battle between supernal and [Pg 518] infernal powers seems to have been coincident with the conflict between Christianity and paganism. The Christians believed the oracles and idols of the gods to be animated by dæmons, who frequently usurped possession also of human beings. Tertullian,[859] Origen,[860] and others of the Fathers, claim that any private Christian could exorcise these dæmons by faith and prayer. It was probably a spiritual gift like that of "tongues," which was granted for a special purpose and afterward withdrawn, perhaps on account of its abuse. This mysterious function did not become a distinct office till the latter part of the third century, when the exorcists were set apart by special ordination, and furnished with special forms of adjuration. This rite was then generally performed with solemn ceremonial before the baptism of converts from paganism. It was accompanied by prayer, insufflation, imposition of hands, and the sign of the cross, in order to deliver the subject from the dominion of the Prince of Darkness, and to consecrate him to the service of God. In later days this office became subject to frightful abuse, and all the grotesque and horrible adjuncts of exorcism of the Roman church—the charms, conjurations, wearing of scapulars and relics, incensings and sprinklings, were introduced—rites which find their analogues only in the magical incantations of the medicine-men of the Caffre Kraal or the Indian lodge.[861] [Pg 519] "The best exorcism," says Tertullian, "is by watchfulness and prayer to resist the devil, and cast out evil thoughts." The following are epitaphs of exorcists: IANVARIVS EXORCISTA—"Januarius the exorcist;" HIC REQVIESCIT · IN · SOMNO · PACIS · CAELIVS · IOHANNIS EXHORCISTA (*sic*)—"Here rests, in the sleep of peace, Cælius John, an exorcist."

The energumens, or possessed persons, were committed to the especial care of the exorcists, who employed them in the secular service of the sanctuary, as sweeping and cleaning the church, "lest idleness should become a temptation for Satan to molest them." There is no indication of the existence of this unhappy class of persons in the church of the Catacombs, at least so far as monumental evidence is concerned.

A very numerous class in the economy of the primitive church was that of the fossors, or grave-diggers, by whose labours these vast labyrinths were excavated. They seem to have had especial charge of the subterranean cemeteries, and we have had numerous examples of the transfer and sale of graves under their authority.[862] They had also a quasi-ecclesiastical rank, and were subject to ecclesiastical discipline. "The first order of the clergy," says Jerome, "is that of the fossors, who, after the manner of holy Tobit, are employed in burying the dead."[863] [Pg 520] They probably also assisted the regular clergy in the celebration of the funeral rites. The melancholy office of this pious confraternity, always a sad necessity of humanity, was particularly so to the persecuted church of the Catacombs.

The excavations were evidently under one directorate, so symmetrical and uniform is their character. A considerable degree of architectural skill is exhibited in the construction and adornment of the subterranean chapels, many of which are of quite ornamental design, and in the excavation of the multitude of galleries and different levels of this vast city of the dead, proving that the fossors were no mean civil engineers. They were also probably the artists of the rude inscriptions. The office seems sometimes to have been hereditary, as we

find as many as three generations of fossors in the same family. We have seen examples of the numerous frescoes representing these lowly diggers at work, often like miners, by the light of a lamp, or surrounded by the implements of their calling.[864] The following are characteristic epitaphs of this class: MAIO FOSSORI—"To Maius, the fossor;" FELIX FOSSOR VIXIT ANNIS LXII—"Felix, the fossor. He lived seventy-two years;" DIOGENES · FOSSOR · IN · PACE · DEPOSITVS—"Diogenes, the fossor, buried in peace."

With these were probably confounded in the earlier ages the ostiarii, or door-keepers. Their office was one of great trust and responsibility in times of persecution, when the Christian worship had often to be celebrated in secret, and protected from the intrusion of spies or of the profanely curious heathen. It was their duty to distinguish between the faithful and scoffers and traitors, and to give private notice of the secret assemblies of the Christians. The following inscription of the sixth century, as restored by De Rossi, commemorates a [Pg 521] similar office in the basilica: LOC · DECI · CVBICVLARI · HVIVS · BASILICAE—"The place of Decius, custodian of this basilica." We have also the epitaph of a *mansionarius*, a similar officer.[865]

[Pg 522] An exaggerated commendation of the supposed superior sanctity of single life has long been a prominent characteristic of Romanism. A natural corollary of this notion was the enforced celibacy of the clergy.[866] Upon the Procrustean bed of this iron rule Rome has not scrupled to bind the tenderest and most sacred affections of the human soul. This cherished, but, as all history proves, most pernicious practice, has been the secret of much of the marvellous power of the priesthood and of the religious orders. The suppression of the domestic affections but intensified their devotion to the cause of the church, which took the place of both wife and child, and engrossed all their thoughts and all their energies. They became a priestly caste, animated by a strong *esprit de corps* superior to the claims of kindred or of country. But, as might have been anticipated, this anti-natural system led to frightful abuses and corruptions, and to the most flagrant innovations.

The notion of the greater sanctity of celibacy was derived, not from the teachings of our Lord or the apostles, who recognized the essential purity of marriage; but probably, as Milman suggests, from the early heresy of the Gnostics, of which this doctrine was a [Pg 523] prominent characteristic.[867] "There was no enforced celibacy during the first three centuries," says the judicious Bingham.[868] Indeed, marriage was regarded as enjoined on bishops, elders, and deacons, by the counsel of St. Paul.[869] The occasional passages of Scripture, in which for temporary and special reasons a single life is recommended, were in course of time wrested from their obvious meaning to a more general application; and in the writings of some of the Fathers, marriage was regarded as a necessary evil, only to be tolerated for the perpetuation of the race, and on account of the infirmity of the weak. It was not till the fourth century that the church adopted the doctrine of devils spoken of by St. Paul as "forbidding to marry." The earliest ecclesiastical legislation on the subject was at the Spanish council of Elvira, A. D. 305, which commanded ecclesiastics who were married to separate from their wives—*abstinere se a conjugibus suis*—thus ruthlessly putting asunder those whom God had joined. The synods of Ancyra and Neo Cæsarea, held ten years later, and also one of the so-called apostolic canons of the same date, reversed this decree, and forbade any ecclesiastic to put away his wife on the plea of religion, under penalty of excommunication, which action was confirmed by the great council of Nice.[870] Successive attempts to extirpate the tenderest human instincts only led to their illicit gratification, and [Pg 524] to the scandals arising from the admission of *mulieres subintroductæ*, or, in other words, of concubines. So demoralized did the clergy thereby become, that during the Middle Ages, as Mr. Lea remarks, "though, the ancient canons were still theoretically in force, they were practically obsolete every-where."[871] At length Luther led the great emancipation of the clergy from this burden, so unutterably grievous to many a tender conscience; and removed the stigma of disgrace from those domestic relations which God, who setteth the solitary in families, so signally blesses.

There is no trace of the ascetic spirit or celibate clergy of the Church of Rome in the inscriptions of the Catacombs. On the contrary, numerous epitaphs commemorate the honourable marriage of members of every ecclesiastical grade. Thus, in the highest rank, Gruter[872] gives the following, which is thought to be that of Liberius, bishop of Rome, who died A. D. 366, and who was sometimes known by the name of Leo:

HVNC MIHI COMPOSVIT TVMVLVM LAVRENTIA CONIVX
MORIBVS APTA MEIS SEMPER VENERANDA FIDELIS
INVIDIA INFELIX TANDEM COMPRESSA QVIESCIT [Pg 525]
OCTOGINTA LEO TRANSCENDIT EPISCOPVS ANNOS.

My wife Laurentia made me this tomb; she was ever suited to my disposition, venerable and faithful. At length disappointed envy lies crushed; the bishop Leo survived his eightieth year.

De Rossi gives the following, of a bishop's son, of date A. D. 404. The relationship is boldly acknowledged, and not yet disguised under the phrase *nepos* or nephew: VICTOR IN PACE FILIVS EPISCOPI VICTORIS CIVITATIS VCRENSIVM—"Victor, in peace, son of Bishop Victor, of the city of the Ucrenses." The following, of date A. D. 445, was found at Narbonne: RVSTICVS · $\overline{\text{EPIS}}$ · $\overline{\text{EPI}}$ · BONOSI · FILIVS.... "Bishop Rusticus, son of Bishop Bonosus."

There are also numerous inscriptions in which presbyters and deacons lament the death of

their wives, “chaste, just, and holy.” “Would to God,” exclaims a writer in the *Revue Chrétienne*, “that all their successors had such.” The following are examples: GAVDENTIVS · PRESBYTER · SIBI ET CONIVGI SVAE SEVERAE CASTAE HAC (*sic*) SANCTISSIMAE FEMINAE —“Gaudentius the presbyter, for himself and his wife Severa, a chaste and most holy woman;” LOCVS BASILI PRESB ET FELICITATI EIVS.... “The place of Basil the presbyter, and of Felicitas, his (wife).” Observe also the tender recognition of family ties in the following: OLIM PRESBYTERI GABINI FILIA FELIX HIC SVSANNA IACET IN PACE PATRI SOCIATA—“Once the happy daughter of the presbyter Gabinus, here lies Susanna, joined to her father in peace.”

We have already seen the epitaph of “Petronia, the wife of a deacon, the type of modesty,” with whom were buried two of her children.[873] The following, of similar character, is accompanied by the epitaph of a deacon on the same stone, probably the husband who so tenderly lamented the loss of his faithful consort. [Pg 526]

LEVITAE CONIVX SEMPER MIHI GRATA MARIA
EXITVS ISTE TVVS PROSTRAVIT CORDA TVORVM
PERPETVAS NOBIS LACRIMAS LVCTVMQVE RELINQVENS
CASTA GRAVIS SAPIENS SIMPLEX VENERANDA FIDELIS
COMPLEVIT TVA VOTA DEVS TE NAMQVE MARITVS
TE NATI DEFLENT NEC MORS TIBI SVSTVLIT VLLVM.

Maria, the wife of a deacon, ever well-pleasing to me. That departure of thine prostrated the hearts of thy friends, leaving perpetual tears and grief to us. Chaste, grave, wise, simple, venerable, faithful. God fulfilled thy wishes; for thee thy husband, thee thy children bewail, nor did death bear any away from thee. (A. D. 451.)

Epitaphs are also found indicating the prevalence of marriage in the inferior ecclesiastical ranks, as in the following examples: CLAVDIVS ATTICANVS LECTOR ET CLAVDIA FELICISSIMA CONIVX—“Claudius Atticanus, the reader, and Claudia Felicissima, his wife;”[874] IANVARIVS EXORCISTA · SIBI · ET · CONIVGI · FECIT—“Januarius, the exorcist, made this for himself and his wife;” TERENTIVS · FOSOR · (*sic*) · PRIMITIVE (*sic*) · CONIVGI · ET · SIBI ·—“Terentius, the fossor, for Primitiva, his wife and himself.”

The primitive church early availed itself of the services of godly women, a sort of female diaconate, for the administration of charity, the care of the sick, the instruction of the young, and of their own sex, and to carry the light and consolations of the gospel into the most private and delicate relations of life, for which these gentle ministrants possessed facilities denied to the other sex. They are frequently mentioned in the writings of the Fathers under the names of διάκονοι,[875] deaconesses, *viduæ*, widows, or *ancillæ Dei*, handmaids of God. In apostolic times they were required to be of the mature age of sixty years;[876] but widows, and even the unmarried, were subsequently admitted into this class as early as forty,[877] or even twenty,[878] years of age. The unmarried, however, assumed no vow of perpetual celibacy,[879] nor of conventual life, but lived privately in their own homes, employed in offices of piety and mercy. The growing esteem of celibacy, however, in the fourth and fifth centuries, invoked ecclesiastical censure for the abandonment of the lofty vantage ground of virginhood;[880] but the Imperial law granted liberty of marriage, if the order had been entered before the age of forty. How different the practice of Rome in binding young girls, in the first outburst of religious enthusiasm, or the first bitterness of disappointed hope, by irrevocable vows to a death-in-life, and indissolubly riveting those bonds, no matter how the chafed soul may repudiate the rash vow, and writhe beneath the galling yoke. The consecrated virgin of the early church, instead of the ghastly robings, like the cerements of the grave, in which the youthful nun is swathed, the symbol of her social death, wore a *sacrum velamen*, or veil, differing but little from that of Christian matrons, and a fillet of gold around her hair. The custom, now part of the Romish ritual, of despoiling the head of its natural adorning, was especially denounced by some of the ancient councils. [Pg 527] [Pg 528]

There are several of the early Christian inscriptions illustrative of these various classes of consecrated women, of which the following are examples: OC · TA · VI · AE · MA · TRO · NAE · VI · DV · AE · DE · I.—“To the matron Octavia, a widow of God;” HIC QVIESCIT GAVDIOSA $\overline{\text{CF}}$ ANCILLA DEI QVAE VIXIT ANNOS $\overline{\text{XL}}$ ET MEN V—“Here rests Gaudiosa, a most distinguished woman, a handmaid of God, who lived forty years and five months,” (A. D. 447); IN HOC SEPVLCHRO REQVIESCIT PVELLA VIRGO SACRA B · M · ALEXANDRA—“In this tomb rests a girl, a sacred virgin, Alexandra, well deserving;” HOC EST SEPVLCRVM SANCTAE LVCINAE VIRGINIS —“This is the sepulchre of the holy virgin Lucina”—this, however, may not indicate a special class. AESTONIA VIRGO PEREGRINA QVAE VIXIT ANNOS XLI; ET · DS · VIII (*sic*)—”Æstonia, a travelling virgin, who lived forty-one years and eight days”—she was probably a member of a distant church, received on a letter of recommendation, FVRIA HELPHIS (*sic*) VIRGO DEVOTA —“Furia Elpis, a consecrated virgin.” In the fifth century this consecration sometimes took place at an early age, as the following example, of date A. D. 401: PRIE (*sic*) IVNIAS PAVSABET (*sic*) PRAETIOSA ANNORVM PVLLA (*sic*) VIRGO XII TANTVM ANCILLA DEI ET CHRISTI—“On the day before (the Calends of) June Prætiosa went to her rest, a young maiden of only twelve years of age, a handmaid of God and of Christ.”[881] [Pg 529]

There is no trace in the inscriptions of the Catacombs of that ascetic spirit from which, in the fourth and following centuries, sprang the strange phenomena of monachism, with its important influence for blended good and evil on the future of Christendom. *That* was rather the result of the decay and corruption of primitive Christianity, and of the despair of

mankind as to its regenerative power upon the world. Hence, multitudes fled from the immedicable evils of society to the solitude of the desert or the mountain.[882] Primitive Christianity, on the contrary, was eminently cheerful and social in its character. It consecrated the family life, and developed, to a degree before unknown, the domestic virtues.

The care of the primitive church for the religious teaching of the young and of heathen converts is abundantly exemplified in the inscriptions of the Catacombs. The catechumens, or learners, as the word signifies—the "Cadets of Christianity"—were a distinctly recognized class for whose instruction especial provision was made. It consisted of the children of believers born in the church, and therefore peculiarly under its care; and also of converts from paganism, who needed to be weaned from their errors, and taught the doctrines of Christianity before admission to the sacraments of baptism and the holy eucharist. For the latter, as a safeguard against the rash assumption of the Christian vows and the danger of subsequent apostacy, a certain probation was prescribed.[883] The candidates were taught the Holy Scriptures, and a formal confession of faith, probably similar to the ancient creed in which the Christian belief of the church has for so many centuries been expressed. These instructions were given by the bishop himself as chief catechist; and also by the presbyters, deacons, lectors, and other members of the inferior ministry. Deaconesses and aged women acted as instructresses of their own sex; and one of these was always present during the questioning of the female catechumens by the male catechists. [Pg 530]

The following engraving represents a chamber in the Catacomb of St. Agnes, which, it is conjectured, was employed for the instruction of the female catechumens. On either side of the doorway are seats or chairs hewn out of the solid tufa, which were probably occupied by the catechist and the presiding deaconess. The low stone bench running around the remaining walls of the chamber would conveniently accommodate the *audientes*, or hearers, as they were called. [Pg 531]

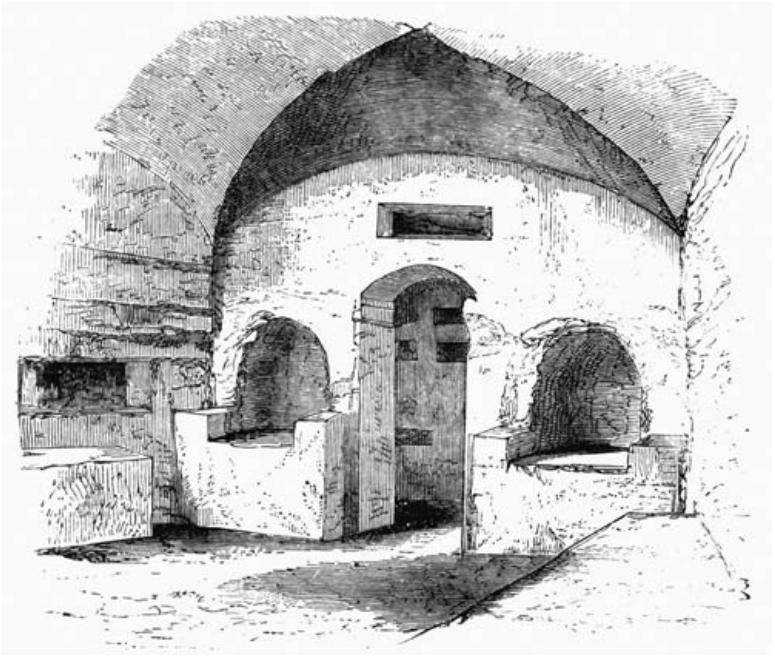

Fig. 130.—Chamber in the Catacomb of St. Agnes, with seats for Catechists and Catechumens.

Some Roman Catholic writers have asserted that these chambers were confessionals: but the chairs are too far apart if one was for the confessor and the other for the penitent, especially with an open door between; and too near, from the liability of the confessions being overheard, if each was a confessional; and in either case the necessity for the stone bench cannot be conceived. In some chambers, probably for the male catechumens, there is only one tufa chair, no deaconess being present.

Another curious chamber in the Catacomb of St. Agnes communicates with the one adjacent to it by a circular opening cut through the tufa wall about breast-high. It is conjectured that this was for the purpose of allowing the catechumens to hear the public instructions of the faithful without witnessing the celebration of the sacraments. The zeal of the candidates would thus be the more inflamed,[884] that they might be found worthy of admission to the fulness of Christian privilege and to the sacred mysteries hidden from the uninitiate and the unworthy. The following epitaph from the Lapidarian Gallery commemorates a youthful catechumen: VCILIANVS BACIO VALERIO QVE BISET ·(*sic*) ANN VIIII · MEN · VIII · DIES XXII CATECVM—"Ucilianus to Bacius Valerius, a catechumen, who lived nine years, eight months and twenty-two days." [Pg 532]

The ordinance of baptism receives several illustrations from the monumental evidences of the Catacombs. There are numerous epitaphs of neophytes—a term applied only to newly

baptized persons—which indicate that this Christian rite was administered at all ages from tender infancy to adult years; in the latter case the subjects being probably recent converts from heathenism. The following are examples of this class: TEG · CANDIDIS NEOF Q · VXT · M · XXI—"The tile of Candidus, a neophyte, who lived twenty-one months;" FL · IOVINA · QVAE · VIX · ANNIS · TRIBVS · D · XXX · NEOFITA · IN PACE—"Flavia Jovina, who lived three years and thirty days, a neophyte, in peace;" MIRAE INDVSTRIAE ADQVE BONITATIS ... INNOCENTIA PREDITVS FL · AVR · LEONI. NEOFITO QVI VIXIT ANN VI · MENS · VIII DIES XI....—"Innocentia Preditus to Flavius Aurelius Leo, a neophyte of wonderful industry and goodness, who lived six years, eight months, eleven days;" ROMANO NEOFITO BENE MERENTI QVI VIXIT · ANNOS · VIII · D · XV · REQVIESCIT IN PACE—"To the well-deserving neophyte Romanus, who lived eight years and fifteen days; he rests in peace." We have already seen the epitaph of Junius Bassus, who died a neophyte at the age of forty-one, and shall presently observe other instances of adult baptism.[885] We find also the epitaph of "two innocent brothers, one a neophyte, the other, one of the faithful."

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In course of time the rite of baptism degenerated into a superstitious charm, and was regarded as a mystical lustration which washed away all sin and was essential to salvation.[886] This change probably resulted from a reaction against the Pelagian heresy, which denied the necessity of baptism, and from the rhetorical exaggeration by the Fathers of the spiritual efficacy of this sacrament.[887] The church of the Catacombs, while duly administering the rite of baptism, did not, after the manner of the Church of Rome and other modern extreme sacramentalists, invest it with regenerative power, nor regard its involuntary omission as excluding the body from consecrated ground and the soul from heaven.[888]

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Sometimes, by a beautiful metonyme derived from its spiritual significance, baptism is indicated as the palingenesis, or new birth, of which it is the appropriate symbol. The following is a characteristic example of this usage: ... CAELESTE RENATVS AQVA (*sic*)—... "Born again of heavenly water," (A. D. 377.)[889] We read also of a certain Mercurius, who is described as a boy born and dying in the same year, aged twenty-four. The allusion is to the spiritual regeneration symbolized by baptism. With reference to this he was but a boy—*puer*—at the time of his death.[890] This rite was also called illumination, and we find in the Catacombs the epitaphs of persons said to be thus "newly illuminated."

The testimony of the Catacombs respecting the mode of baptism, as far as it extends, is strongly in favour of aspersion or affusion. All their pictured representations of the rite indicate this mode, for which alone the early fonts seem adapted; nor is there any early art evidence of baptismal immersion. It seems incredible, if the latter were the original and exclusive mode, of apostolic and even Divine authority, that it should have left no trace in the earliest and most unconscious art-record, and have been supplanted therein by a new, unscriptural, and unhistoric method. It is apparent, indeed, from the writings of the fourth and fifth century, that many corrupt and unwarranted usages were introduced in connection with this Christian ordinance that greatly marred its beauty and simplicity. It is unquestionable that at that time baptism by immersion was practised with many superstitious and unseemly rites. The subjects, both men and women, were divested of their clothing, to represent the putting off the body of sin; which, notwithstanding the greatest efforts to avoid it, inevitably provoked scandal. They then received trien immersion, to imitate, says Gregory Nyssen,[891] the three days' burial of Christ; or, according to others, as a symbol of the Trinity. The rite was accompanied by exorcism, insufflation, unction, confirmation, the gift of milk and honey, the administration of the eucharist even to infants, the clothing in white garments, and carrying of lighted tapers, to all of which a mystical meaning was attached.

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But in the evidences of the Catacombs, which are the testimony of an earlier and purer period, there is no indication of this mode of baptism, nor of these dramatic accompaniments.[892] The marble font represented in the accompanying engraving, now in the crypts of St. Prisca within the walls, is said to have come from the Catacombs, and to have been used for baptismal purposes by St. Peter, himself; in corroboration of which legend it bears the somewhat apocryphal inscription—SCI · PET · BAPTISMV · (*sic.*) The tradition at least attests its extreme antiquity; and its basin is quite too small for even infant immersion. Other fonts have been found in several of the subterranean chapels, among which is one in the Catacomb of Pontianus, hewn out of the solid tufa and fed by a living stream. It is 1·45 metres long, ·92 metres wide, and 1·11 metres deep, but is seldom near full of water. It is obviously too small for immersion, and was evidently designed for administering the rite as shown in the fresco which accompanies it. (See Fig. 132.) The following inscription, from the Lapidarian Gallery, seems to have come from some such font, and perhaps contains a reference to the scripture, "Arise and be

Fig. 131.—Baptismal Font.

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baptized, and wash away thy sins:” CORPORIS ET CORDIS MACVLAS VITALIS PVRGAT ET OMNE SIMVL ABLVIT VNDA—“The living stream cleanses the spots of the body as well as the heart, and at the same time washes away all (sins).”[893]

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Fig. 132.—The Baptism of Our Lord.

Immediately over the font in the Catacomb of Pontianus is the elaborate fresco of the baptism of Our Lord, figured above. He is represented standing in the river Jordan, while John pours water upon his head, and the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove. An angel stands by as witness of the rite, and in the foreground a stag, the emblem of a fervent Christian, is drinking at the pure stream.[894]

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In a very ancient crypt of St. Lucina is another partially defaced baptism of Christ, attributed to the second century, in which St. John stands on the shore and our Saviour in a shallow stream, while the Holy Spirit descends as a dove. On the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus Christ is also symbolically represented as baptized by affusion. The annexed rude example from the Catacomb of Callixtus, probably of the third century, also clearly exhibits the administration of the rite by pouring.[895] It is accompanied by a representation of Peter striking water from the rock, an emblem, according to De Rossi, of the waters of baptism sprinkling the sinful souls that come thereto. A similar example also occurs in the cemetery of St. Prætextatus.

Fig. 133.—Baptismal Scene.

[Pg 540]

In ancient sarcophagal reliefs in the Vatican are representations of small detached baptisteries of circular form, crowned with the Constantinian monogram. These were necessarily of sufficient size to accommodate the number of persons who were baptized at one time, generally at Easter,[896] and were placed outside of the basilica to indicate the initiatory character of baptism as the entrance to the church of Christ.[897] In the early mosaics representing baptismal scenes, the rite is invariably administered by affusion, as in the baptistery of San Giovanni at Ravenna, in the beginning of the fifth century, in Sta. Maria in Cosmedin, at Ravenna, in the beginning, and in the ivory relief on the episcopal chair of Maximinus, at the end, of the sixth century.[898] So, also, a later example in the Lateran basilica represents Constantine kneeling naked in a laver, and Sylvester pouring water on his head.[899] This is also the method indicated in several medals, bas reliefs, frescoes, and mosaics, in almost every century from the fourth, through the Middle Ages, indicating a continuous tradition, even when immersion may have been practised, of a different mode of baptism.

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The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was the most sacred and consoling rite of the primitive church. It was at once the emblem of the Christian’s highest hopes, and the sublime commemoration of the ineffable sacrifice on which those hopes depend. It was the focus in which concentrated all their holiest thoughts, kindling the whole soul into a flame of adoring love.[900] It was the central act of worship, around which all their solemn devotions gathered,

and to which they all looked. The sublime thought of the atonement of Christ and of salvation through his death, shone ever star-like over their souls, illumining even the sepulchral gloom of these subterranean crypts. Daily,[901] or as often as the vigilance of their foes in times of persecution would permit, the faithful met in the silent halls of death, far from the "madding crowd's ignoble strife," to nourish and strengthen their souls for fiery trial, and often for the red baptism of martyrdom, by meditation on the passion of their Lord and partaking of the emblems of his death. [Pg 542]

Therefore, in ever-recurring and appropriate symbolism, was this holy rite set forth upon the walls of the Catacombs. Its direct representation, however, was carefully avoided; and its sacred meaning was hidden from the profane gaze of the heathen under a veil of allegory and emblem, which was, nevertheless, instinct with profoundest significance to the initiated. Thus, we find representations of seven men eating bread and fish, which are interpreted as the repast of the disciples by the sea-shore when Our Lord manifested himself in the breaking of bread, and, indirectly, as symbols of the holy eucharist.[902] They are not at all analogous to the pictures of pagan funeral banquets, to which they have been compared, but which are entirely foreign to Christian thought. The miracles of turning water into wine, and of the multiplication of the loaves, were also regarded as types of the eucharist, which was, doubtless, frequently symbolized under these figures. We have seen a copy of the remarkable fresco, twice repeated in the Catacomb of St. Lucina, of a fish bearing a basket of bread on its back, and in the midst what seems to be a chalice of wine.[903] This is considered one of the most ancient emblems of this sacred rite. This view derives singular corroboration from a passage in Jerome, which speaks of carrying the body of Christ in a basket made of twigs, and his blood in a chalice of glass.[904] The eucharist is also evidently symbolized in the representations of fish and sheep carrying small loaves of bread in their mouths. These are sometimes marked with a decussate cross, as was done to facilitate fracture during administration. [Pg 543]

The first Christian altars were tables of wood, which, in times of persecution, could be easily removed from house to house in which worship was celebrated. The entire absence of any thing corresponding to the pagan sacrificial altar was made the subject of heathen reproach.[905] In a painting found in the Catacomb of Callixtus, which Dr. Northcote describes as "the sacrifice of the Mass, symbolically depicted," a man stands with hands outstretched, as if in act of consecration, over a three-legged table, on which are bread and a fish, while opposite stands a female figure in the attitude of prayer. In an adjoining chamber a precisely similar table is represented, but without the accompanying figures.[906] These tables were placed, not against the wall like a Romish altar, but set out from it, so that the ministrant could stand behind it looking toward the congregation. In the "papal crypt" of the Callixtan Catacomb the sockets for the four feet of the table thus set out from the wall are distinctly visible, and Bosio and Boldetti both found examples of altars standing in the middle of the *cubicula*. This was also their position in the oldest basilicas of Rome. [Pg 544]

In the sixth century a general council decreed that the altars should be of stone. This transition had already taken place in the Catacombs, and arose from the employment of the slab covering the grave in an *arcosolium* for the administration of the eucharist. This practice led to an increased veneration for the relics of the saints; and soon the presence of these relics became essential to the idea of an altar.[907] To this custom Prudentius refers in his hymn for Hippolytus' day.

> "Illa sacramenti donatrix mensa, eademque
> Custos fida sui martyris apposita:
> Servat ad æterni spem Judicis ossa sepulchro
> Pascit item sanctis Tibricolas dapibus.
> Mira loci pietas, et prompta precantibus ara."

> "That slab gives the sacrament, and at the same time faithfully guards the martyr's remains; it preserves his bones in the sepulchre in hope of the Eternal Judge, and feeds the dwellers by the Tiber with sacred food. Great is the sanctity of the place, and it offers a ready altar for those who pray."

After the consecration of the elements by the presbyter or bishop, the communion in both kinds was administered to the faithful by the deacons in the formula of its institution which we still use.[908] The consecrated elements[909] were sent to any who were sick, by the hands of deacons or acolytes, as is still the practice in the Greek and Armenian churches. In the Acts of St. Stephen, we read of a young martyr who chose to be beaten to death by a Roman mob, rather than disclose the sacred treasure entrusted to his care. This practice in time degenerated into the superstitious administration of the *viaticum* as a preparation for the soul's journey to the spirit-world. Some of the gilt glasses, before described, are thought to have been used as patens and chalices for the celebration of the eucharist. With the increasing wealth and more gorgeous ritual of the church, gold and silver vessels, adorned with costly gems and rarest workmanship, took the place of the humbler material of the primitive ages.[910] [Pg 545]

Another beautiful institution generally associated with the celebration of the eucharist in primitive times is that of the *agape*, or love-feast. In a subterranean chapel in the Catacomb of Marcellinus and Peter is an exceedingly interesting representation of the observance of this custom, shown in the following engraving. [Pg 546]

Fig. 134.—Ancient Agape.

Three guests, it will be perceived, sit at the semicircular table, at the ends of which preside two matrons personifying peace and love, with their names written above their heads. An attendant supplies them with food from a small table in front, on which are a cup, platters, and a lamb. The inscriptions, according to Dr. Maitland, should be expanded thus: IRENE DA CALDA[M AQVAM]—"Peace, give hot water;" and AGAPE MISCE MI [VINVM CVM AQVA]—"Love, mix me wine with water;" the allusion being to the ancient custom of tempering wine with water, hot or cold.

Numerous other representations of this devout feast at which Love and Peace preside attest its general observance. It would be a touching symbol of Christian unity to the persecuted saints, and would unite still closer hearts bound together by common dangers and a common [Pg 547] hope. All the distinctions of rank were then forgotten. Gathering by stealth in these subterranean crypts from the imperial palace and the lowly abode of poverty, they break bread together in the solemn presence of the dead in token of their common brotherhood in Christ. The slave of a Roman master, but the freedman of Christ, and the patrician convert, the intellectual Greek and the once bigoted Jew, together

Celebrate the feast of love,
Antedate the joys above.

This beautiful institution, first mentioned by Jude as the "feasts of charity,"[911] was usually observed in connexion with the eucharist, though not necessarily a part of it. It dates from the earliest period of the church,[912] and its corruptions among the Corinthians called forth the sharp rebuke of the Apostle Paul.[913]

Tertullian thus describes its character in the second century: "Our supper, which you accuse of luxury, shows its reason by its very name; for it is called *agape*, which, among the Greeks, signifies love. It admits of nothing vile or immodest. We eat and drink only as much as hunger and thirst demand, mindful that the evening is to be spent in the worship of God. We so speak as knowing that God hears. After washing our hands and bringing lights, each is asked to sing to God according to his ability, either from Scripture or from his own mind. Prayer also concludes the feast."[914] He calls it also a supper of philosophy and discipline, rather than a corporeal feast. At the close collections were made for widows and orphans and for the poor, many of whom would be thrown out of employment by their renunciation of [Pg 548] idolatrous trades; also for prisoners and for persons who had suffered shipwreck.[915] It is doubtless the *agape* which Pliny describes as "the common and harmless meal"[916] of the Christians, and at which, according to Lucian, their "sacred conversations"[917] were held. Clement of Alexandria calls the *agape* "the banquet of reason, a celestial food, and the supper of love; the pledge and proof of mutual affection."[918]

The primitive church carefully guarded the celebration of the eucharist and *agape* from the pryings of idle curiosity or the perfidy of heathen malevolence, lest the name of God should be blasphemed, or the goodly pearls of salvation be trampled beneath swinish feet. But this very secresy and mystery became the occasion of the vilest slanders and aspersions. The Christians were accused of celebrating these rites with the most abominable orgies—feasting on human flesh and infants' blood, and committing nameless crimes of still deeper dye. "They charge us," say the martyrs of Lyons, "with feasts of Thyestes, and the crimes of Œdipus, and such abominations as are neither lawful for us to speak nor think." The blameless believers were denounced as the very dregs of society, a skulking and darkness-loving race, meeting by night for profane conjuration and unhallowed banquets, as despisers of the gods, haters of mankind, and mockers at holy things,[919] and were confounded with [Pg 549] pestilent sorcerers who in midnight caves practiced their foul incantations against human life.[920] These accusations arose partly, it is probable, from distorted accounts of the holy communion of the body and the blood of Christ, interpreted as a literal partaking of the corporeal substance; partly from the vile practices of the Carpocratians and other heretics;

but chiefly from the malice of the heathen themselves, judging the character of the Christian mysteries from the obscene orgies of Venus and Bacchus.

Tertullian indignantly resents the vile calumnies, and shows them to be monstrous and absurd. “We are daily beset by foes,” he exclaims, “we are daily betrayed, we are often surprised in our secret congregations; yet who ever came upon a half-consumed corpse among us, or any other corroborations of the accusations against us?”[921] He retorts upon the heathen the charge of infanticide, human sacrifice, and unnatural crimes, and contrasts therewith the purity of the Christian character. Minucius Felix also attests the modest and sober character of the Christian feasts, which they celebrated with chaste discourse and chaster bodies.[922]

In course of time the *agapæ* lost in great measure their religious character, and were employed for the anniversaries of the martyrs, and for marriage and funeral occasions.[923] [Pg 550] They were still further desecrated by their substitution for pagan festivals, in order, as St. Augustine remarks, “that the heathen might feast with their former luxury, though without their former sacrilege.”[924] These “pious hilarities” thus degenerated, in the fourth and fifth centuries, into convivial banquets and wanton revelry—a scandal and disgrace to Christendom, and provoked the indignant censure of the Fathers. “It is absurd,” says St. Jerome, “to honour with feasting the saints who pleased God with their fasts.” St. Augustine vehemently condemns those “who inebriate themselves in honour of the martyrs, and place even their gluttony and drunkenness to the account of religion.”[925] “These drunkards persecute the saints as much with their cups,” he says, “as the furious pagans did with stones.”[926] The good bishop of Nola, greatly scandalized at these semi-pagan revelries, painted with holy pictures the church of St. Felix, that as the ignorant peasants gazed more they might drink the less. It has been suggested that probably the pious figures in the gilt glasses of the Catacombs were designed for the same purpose; but many of their mottoes were of a highly convivial character, calculated rather to promote the revelry in which they were doubtlessly employed. Both the *natalitia* and the *agapæ* at length became so obnoxious in character as to excite the taunts of the pagans and the condemnation of the more devout [Pg 551] and thoughtful Christians. The abuse of the latter beautiful institution became so intolerable that it became the object of repressive decrees of successive councils till it was finally abolished. The council of Elvira (A. D. 305) prudently forbade the presence of females at these nocturnal meetings in the Catacombs.[927] That of Laodicea (A. D. 361) enacted that the *agapæ* should not be celebrated in churches. The council of Carthage (A. D. 397) forbade the clergy attending them, and the council of Trullo (A. D. 706) prohibited their celebration at all, under penalty of excommunication.

This beautiful symbol of Christian unity was revived in spirit by the founder of Methodism; but, to guard against the corruptions into which it had previously fallen, the elements of its celebration were restricted to bread and water. A similar custom is also observed among the Moravian brethren, from whom, probably, Wesley borrowed it. It has also been transmitted from primitive times by the Nestorian Christians of the Malabar coast.[928]

We have thus endeavoured to give a faithful transcript of the testimony of the Catacombs relative to primitive Christianity. We have seen how consonant it is with the teachings of Holy Scripture, how opposed to all the institutions and dogmas of Rome. We have only to compare the buried relics of the past with the living present above ground to see at a glance the infinite contrast between the church of Christ and that of Antichrist. Could the simple [Pg 552] bishops of the primitive ages behold the more than regal state and oriental pomp in which, surrounded by armed halberdiers, amid the blare of martial music and thunder of the guns of St. Angelo, their successor of to-day rides in his golden chariot from his stately palace to the majestic fane of St. Peter—the grandest temple in the world—they would feel it difficult to perceive therein any resemblance to their own humble and often persecuted estate, or to the pure and spiritual religion of the meek and lowly Nazarene. Could they witness the almost idolatrous homage which he receives, throned in state, tiaraed with a triple crown, presenting his foot for the humiliating osculation of bishops, cardinals, ambassadors, and pilgrims from every land; could they behold him summoning from the ends of the earth the prelates of Roman Catholic Christendom to record a decree of his personal infallibility and freedom from human error; they would regard as blasphemous these unhallowed assumptions, and denounce, as the prophetic Antichrist, him who laid claim to these awful attributes.[929]

Above the lowly sleepers in the crypts of the Vatican swells the mighty dome which Michael Angelo hung high in air; lofty chant and pealing anthem thrill through the vast expanse; [Pg 553] polished shafts of porphyry, jasper, and costliest marble gleam around; priceless paintings and rarest sculpture by the hand of genius afford a still richer adorning; at an altar blazing with gold and gems a human priest in many-coloured vestments daily repeats, as he dares assert, the ineffable sacrifice of Christ; from four hundred cross-crowned campaniles baptized and consecrated bells ring forth the hours of prayer; at a thousand shrines the multitude adore, they vainly think, the real presence of the Redeemer; and perfumed incense evermore ascends, not to the many gods of the Pantheon, but to the still more numerous saints of the Roman calendar. But we feel that all the kingdoms of the world, and all the glory of them, were a poor compensation for the loss of the primitive simplicity, purity, and spiritual power of the humble service of the Catacombs. We turn away from the gorgeous ritual and hollow pomp to those lowly crypts where the Christian hymn of a

persecuted remnant of the saints ascended from beside the martyr's grave, as the truer type of Christ's spiritual temple upon earth. In these chambers of silence and gloom we find the evidences of that undying life of Christianity which we seek in vain amid the living death of that city of churches and of priests—the Apostolic See of Christendom—the vaunted seat of Christ's vicegerent upon earth. With a deeper significance than that with which it was first uttered, we adopt the language of Tertullian, and exclaim, ID ESSE VERUM, QUODCUNQUE PRIMUM; ID ESSE ADULTERUM, QUODCUNQUE POSTERIUS.[930]

[822] Northcote's *Catacombs*, p. 140.

[823] Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, vi, 43. The hierarchical subdivisions in the Greek church are vastly more elaborate. Thus we have the patriarch, metropolitan, archbishop, bishop, proto-presbyter, super-dean, dean, presbyter, proto-deacon, deacon, sub-deacon, and common priest, besides a host of inferior grades.

[824] *Strom.*, vi, 13. "The succession of the early Roman bishops," says Stillingfleet, "is as muddy as the Tiber itself."—*Irenicum*, ii, 7. It is an historical riddle of which it is difficult or impossible to find the solution.

[825] Eusebius gives this very title, ποιμήν, to Cyprian, (vii, 3.) They were also called πρόεδροι, προεστώς, and *præsides*, or presidents.

[826] Hippolytus, bishop of Portus, only fifteen miles from Rome, and a saint of the Roman calendar, strongly opposed both Zephyrinus and Callixtus, bishops of Rome. In the fifth century Milan took precedence of Rome, and many other places were of equal dignity. The episcopal office was very different from what is now implied by the name, and its functions varied little from those of the presbyter, save in the general oversight of a comparatively limited diocese. Thus in Northern Africa alone were four hundred and sixty-six bishops, beside sixty-six vacant sees. Clement, bishop of Rome, (*Ep. ad Cor.*, 74,) Justin Martyr, and other early writers, seem to imply that the terms bishop and presbyter were at first permutable. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, addresses his clergy as his co-presbyters—*compresbyteros*. Jerome, jealous for his order, asserts the original identity of the offices (*idem est presbyter qui et episcopus*) and the gradual development of episcopal dignity, from custom rather than from primitive appointment, (*Comment. in Titum.*) Chrysostom asserts the original convertibility of the titles of bishop and presbyter—οἱ πρεσβύτεροι τὸ παλαιὸν ἐκαλοῦντο ἐπίσκοποι, καὶ οἱ ἐπίσκοποι πρεσβύτεροι. —*Homil.* i, *in Phil.*, i. Lord King compares the two to the offices of rector and curate, (*Prim. Ch.*, c. 4,) but Bingham's High Church notions led him to magnify the essential difference between the two, (*Orig. Eccl.*, ii, 3.) The bishops were elected by the presbyters and the laity jointly. Eusebius states that Fabian was indicated for the office by the divine portent of a dove descending upon him, (*H. E.*, vi, 29.) They generally attained this dignity not *per saltum*, but having passed through the inferior grades. Cyprian, however, was but a neophyte, Eusebius a catechumen, and Ambrose a layman, when appointed to the office of bishop. In the course of time, in the East the emperors, in the West the kings, usurped the power of appointment, a relic of which is seen in the royal *congé d'élire* in Great Britain, so strongly satirized by Carlyle, (*Latter-day Pamphlets*.)

[827] See *ante*, p. 95.

[828] We have already seen that the inscription of date A. D. 392, regarded as the epitaph of a "most holy Pope Felix," was in reality that of a foster-father. See *ante*, p. 471. The phrase "Apostolic See," now restricted to Rome, was originally applied to every bishop's seat.—*Bingham*, ii, 2, § 3.

[829] He speaks of his predecessor in office as "our father, (πάπα,) the blessed Hereclas."—Eu., *H. E.*, vii, 7. In like manner an epitaph of an African bishop, of date A. D. 475, designates him "our father of holy memory"—*Sanctæ memoriæ pater noster*.

[830] Ep. 8. *Cler. Rom. ad Cler. Carth.*

[831] *De Pudicit.*, c. 13.

[832] Ep. 17, 18, 30, etc.

[833] The synonymous title of abbot is still used in this sense. It was applied to the hermit monks of the Orkneys and Iceland, and gave the name Papa Strona and Papa Westra to islands of the Orkney group.

[834] Optatus says there were forty churches in Rome in the third century. Ammianus describes the almost regal pomp of the bishops in the latter part of the fourth century, and records the sanguinary struggle for the episcopal dignity between Damasus and Ursicinus. The streets were strewn with the slain, and one hundred and thirty-seven corpses polluted the sacred precincts of a Christian basilica. The primitive church stigmatized simony as χριστεμπορείαν, or "selling Christ."

[835] Ego autem fidenter dico quia quisque se universalem sacerdotem vocat, vel vocari desiderat, in elatione suâ Antichristum præcurrit.—*Greg. Max.*, Epis. vii, 7-33.

[836] Gregory III. (731-741) styles himself "the most holy and blessed Apostolic Pope"—Sanctissimus ac Beatissimus Apostolicus Papa. Boniface VIII. adopted the triple-crowned tiara, to indicate the Pope's dominion over heaven, earth, and hell.

Dante represents the pope as an all-powerful griffin, symbolical of his spiritual and temporal functions, drawing the triumphal car of the church.—*Purgatorio, Can.* xxix. Yet in a fresco of the seventh or eighth century, of Cornelius, bishop of Rome, he is in no way distinguished by costume, insignia, or title from Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, who stands beside him.

[837] The name was not always indicative of age, but of office, like the Jewish זְקֵנִים or elders, the Latin *senatores*, and the Saxon aldermen.

Rheinwal, Geisler, Neander, and other eminent German scholars, agree that the term bishop originally was merely the official title of the presbyter who was chosen to rule or oversee the church; and that the latter sat in consistory with the bishop, forming the ecclesiastical senate, in which the bishop was simply the presiding officer—*primus inter pares*.

It is worthy of note that the word ἱερεύς, "priest," that is, one who offers sacrifice, is nowhere applied to any ecclesiastical rank in the Catacombs, or in the writings of the primitive Fathers. It has been left for Romanism, and a Romanizing sacerdotalism, to apply to the Christian minister this phrase, so opposed to the genius of the New Testament.

[838] The letters *Pbb.*, according to De Rossi, stand for *Presbyter benedictus*.

[839] Felix was probably presbyter of the basilica of St. Paul, founded by Constantine A. D. 324, rebuilt by Theodosius and Honorius, A. D. 388-395, restored by Leo I., A. D. 440, and again by the present Pope, in its ancient dimensions, (four hundred and eleven feet by two hundred and seventy-nine.) It is one of the noblest basilicas of Rome.

[840] According to Bingham, *Pontifex maximus* was a title common to all bishops in primitive times.—*Orig. Eccl.*, ii, § 6.

There is here possibly a paronomasia on the word "Leo," lion of the pontiffs. There were sometimes several presbyters attached to one church. See De Rossi, *Inscr. Christ.*, No. 975.

[841] Adleguntur in ordinem ecclesiasticum artifices idolorum.—*De Idol.*, vii.

[842] *Hist. Eccles.*, c. vii, 29.

[843] *Sozomen*, i, 27, and vii, 28.

[844] Clericus quantumlibet verbo Dei eruditus, artificio victum quærat.—*Conc. Carth.*, 4, can. 51. The example of Paul, the tentmaker, who, though asserting the right of the ministry to a support, yet "wrought with labour and travail night and day," that he might not be chargeable to the church, will occur to the reader. Chrysostom, speaking of the rural bishops of Antioch, says: "These men you may see sometimes yoking the oxen and driving the plough, and again ascending the pulpit and cultivating the souls under their care; now uprooting the thorns from the earth with a hook, and now purging out the sins of the soul by the word."—*Hom. ad Pop. Antioch.*, xix. "How glorious to see the gray-haired pastor approach, like Abraham, his loins girt, digging the ground and working with his own hands."—*Hom. in Act.*, xviii.

[845] A similar office obtained in the Jewish synagogue, the פַּרְנָסִים.

[846] This was especially the case in verse, as the word *diaconus* was unsuitable for hexameters.

[847] In Constantinople there were more than one hundred deacons, and more than ninety sub-deacons.—Justin., *Nov.*, iii, 1.

[848] This was probably a memorial of a later period than the times of persecution. The epithet *sanctus* was not applied till comparatively late. The office of deacon, however, was particularly obnoxious to persecuting greed. Witness the martyrdom of Lawrence the deacon, *antea*.

[849] Rome was divided into seven ecclesiastical districts corresponding to its seven deacons.

[850] John III., bishop of Rome.

[851] They are mentioned by Tertullian (*De Præscrip.*, c. 41) and Cyprian, (*Ep.*, 24, 33,) and by many later writers. The office was possibly derived from the Synagogue.

[852] *Socrat.*, iii, 1. *Sozom.*, v. 2.

[853] cxxiii, c. 54.

[854] Leo X. was a priest at seven and a cardinal at ten. Among the five hundred clergy destroyed by the Vandal persecution in Carthage were many infant readers—quam plurimi erant lectores infantuli.—Victor *de Persec. Vandal.*, lib. iii.

[855] On the tomb of a youth of fourteen occurs the words, VOTVS DEO, "Dedicated to God."

[856] Ἀκόλουθος, "A servant."

[857] Cornelius, bishop of Rome in the third century, says there were in that church forty-two acolytes, (Euseb., *H.E.*, vi, 43;) and, according to Eusebius, a great number attended the bishops at the council of Nice.

[858] See the vagabond Jew exorcists of Acts xix, 13. They were probably also magicians and soothsayers. Exorcism was common also among the pagan soothsayers, with whom the Christians were sometimes confounded. It is probable against them that a law of Ulpian was directed, condemning those who used incantations, imprecations, or, to use the common word of impostors, exorcisms—Si incantavit, si imprecatus est, si (ut vulgari verbo impostorum utar) exorcisavit.

[859] *Apol.*, 23.

[860] *Cont. Cels.*, vii. Gregory Thaumaturgus, the Wonder-worker, won especial fame by his exploits of this nature.—*Socrates*, iv, 27. Antony, of Egypt, could detect dæmons by the sense of smell!

[861] A somewhat analogous practice to the ancient exorcism was that of touching for king's evil, for which there was a recognized form in the prayer-book of the time of George II.—*De Strumosis Attrectandis*. Charles II. "touched" one hundred thousand persons.

[862] See *ante*, p. 132.

[863] Primus in clericis fossariorum ordo est, etc.—*De Sept. Ord. Eccles.* They were also called *lecticarii*, from their carrying the corpse on a lectica or bier, and *copiatæ*, a word of uncertain

origin. Constantine organized the *copiatæ* into a corporation at Constantinople, where they numbered four hundred. Compare the *Parabolani* of Alexandria.

[864] See Figs. 23, 24.

[865] With the increase of wealth and the progress of learning in the Christian community, the number and variety of clerical offices was greatly multiplied, and all the paraphernalia of pomp and gorgeous ritual were added. A multitude of inferior ecclesiastical dependants hung upon the church, absorbing its strength, corrupting its virtue, and degrading its character. The knowledge of their very names and offices has become a difficult task. Thus we have *sacristarii*, or keepers of the sacred vestments and vessels; *cappellani*, or attendants on the altar; *matricularii*, or marshals of the public processions; *staurophori*, or cross bearers; *ceroferarii* and *thuriferarii*, the bearers of tapers and incense; and *parafrenarii*, or coachmen of the higher ecclesiastics—the latter, according to Mabillon, being themselves reckoned among the clergy. There were also *œconomi*, or stewards of church lands; *thesaurii*, or treasurers of ecclesiastical funds; *notarii*, or secretaries; *apocrisiarii*, or legates; *cancellarii*, or chancellors; *syndici*, or syndics; and *hermeneutai*, or interpreters, chiefly in the Syrian and African churches, where the congregation used different languages—speaking to the people in an unknown tongue is a Romish innovation. Even the offices of highest dignity were indefinitely multiplied. There were several orders of bishops:—metropolitans, archbishops, patriarchs, primates, and exarchs; bishops diocesan, bishops *quiescentes*, that is, without charges, and titular bishops with charges *in partibus infidelium*; suffragan bishops and *chorepiscopi*; cardinals and vicars general; and many other officers of lordly titles, princely wealth, and vast political power. But of these we find no examples, no prototypes in the epitaphs of the Catacombs, nor in the lowly pastors of the persecuted flock of Christ in the primitive ages of the church. The application of the title of pope with its present signification to the early bishops is a ludicrous anachronism and misnomer, as nothing could be further from the reality than the idea which it now suggests.

Like the vine, which, twining round some noble elm, seems to enhance its beauty, but in time completely stifles its strength in its strangling embrace, so the rank growth of human institutions has strangled the life of the goodly tree of Roman Christianity, and blighted the promise of its early years. Forms of ritual should be but the trellis for the support of a spiritual worship; else, better that, like the brazen serpent, they be broken in pieces, and, like the body of Moses, buried in an unknown sepulchre, than become the objects of idolatrous homage or of superstitious veneration.

[866] It was a primitive and probably correct opinion that all the apostles were married except Paul and John—Omnes apostoli, exceptis Johanne et Paulo, uxores habuerunt.—Ambros., *ad Hilar.*; Clem. Alex., *Strom.*, iii; Euseb., *H. E.*, iii, 30; Orig., *Com. in Rom.*

[867] It was probably derived by them from the Essenes and other ascetic communities of the East.

[868] *Orig. Eccles.*, iv, 4.

[869] 1 Tim. ii, 2, 12; Titus i, 6. So the Greek Church still understands him, requiring the marriage of its clergy. Tertullian, Cyprian, Gregory of Nyssa, Hilary of Poitiers, Spyridon, Synesius, and many other distinguished ecclesiastics of early times, are recorded to have been married.

[870] *Socrat.*, i, 11; *Sozom.*, i, 23. “Marriage is the true chastity,” exclaimed the aged bishop Paphnutius.

[871] *Sacerdotal Celibacy*, p. 162. The satirical songs, tales, and scandalous anecdotes concerning the celibate clergy, and the denunciations of their vice by successive councils, attest the social depravity caused by this system. The ascetic depreciation of woman led also inevitably to her moral degradation. She was described by some of the monkish writers, who thus slandered the memory of their own mothers, as a noxious animal, the very essence of evil and gate of hell, whose beauty was a lure of the devil and perpetual temptation to sin, and her very presence a contamination. The tenderest family ties were severed at the fancied call of duty. In Roman Catholic countries woman is still immured with almost oriental jealousy, and is denied the intellectual emancipation her sex elsewhere enjoys. She may not enter the most sacred places of Rome, nor visit the pope, except in mourning. There is no music for the female voice in the service of the papal chapel.

[872] *Inscrip. Antiq.*, p. 1173.

[873] See *ante*, p. 428. The following is from Salonæ: FL · IVLIVS DIACONVS ET AVRELIA MERIA CONIVX EIVS HOC SARCOFAGVM (*sic*) SIBI VIVI POSVERVNT—“Flavius Julius, a deacon, and Aurelia Meria, his wife, while living, erected this sarcophagus for themselves.” See, also, the epitaph of Tettius Felicissimus, p. 474.

[874] The following is from the island of Salamis: Οἶκος αἰώνιος Ἀγάθωνος ἀναγνώστου καὶ Εὐφημίας.... “The everlasting dwelling of Agatho, a reader, and Euphemia....” She was probably his wife.

[875] Thus, St. Paul calls Phœbe a διάκονος, translated “servant,” of the church at Cenchria. —*Rom.*, xvi, 1. The Christian *ancillæ quæ ministræ dicebantur*, whom Pliny tortured, were probably of this class.

[876] 1 Tim. v, 9.

[877] *Concil. Chalcedon*, c. 14.

[878] Tertul., *de Veland. Virgin.*, c, 9. Olympias, a Christian matron of Constantinople, of noble rank, widowed at eighteen, became a deaconess, and devoted her immense fortune to charity. She was long the devoted patroness of the persecuted Chrysostom.

[879] Cypr., *Ep.*, 62.

[880] The Fathers are enthusiastic in the praise of perpetual virginity. “It has the higher dignity, as vessels of gold and silver compared to earthenware,” says Jerome.—*Adv. Jovin.* “The thirty-fold

increase of Scripture," he asserts, "refers to marriage, the sixty-fold to widowhood, but the hundred-fold to virginity."—*Ad Ageruchiam.* "Marriage replenishes earth," he adds; "but virginity, heaven"—Nuptiæ terram replent, virginitas paradisum. "These sacred virgins are the necklace of the church," says Prudentius, "and with these gems she is adorned"—Hoc est monile ecclesiæ! His illa gemmis comitur!—*Peristeph., H.*, 3. They became in a mystical sense the spouses of Christ, and Jerome blasphemously addresses the mother of Eustochium as the mother-in-law of God—Socrus Dei esse cœpisti—*Ad Eustoch.* Both Jerome and Chrysostom, however, acknowledged, and unsparingly lashed, the evils to which the celibate system in their time had led. "She is the true virgin," says the latter, "who careth for the things that belong to the Lord."

[881] In one example, of date A. D. 525, we find the phrase NONNAE ANCILLAE DEI, in which we see, perhaps, the origin of our word nun. Jerome had previously applied the word *nonnæ* to either widows or virgins professing chastity.—*Ad Eustoch.*, c. 6.

[882] See article on "The Rise of Monachism," by the present writer, in *London Quarterly Review*, October, 1873.

[883] This was not of uniform duration. The Council of Elvira, (c. 24,) indeed, prescribed two years, but the length of the period varied in different places.

[884] "Tanto ardentius concupiscantur, quanto honorabilius occultantur," says Augustine, of this very practice.—*In Johan.*, 96.

[885] The following *resumé* of the principal patristic evidence on the practice of infant baptism is corroborated by the testimony of the Catacombs. We omit the passages from Clement and Hermes Pastor, which imply its prevalence in the first century, as being rather vague. Justin Martyr, about A. D. 148, speaks of persons sixty and seventy years old who had been made disciples of Christ (ἐμαθητεύθησαν, the very word employed in Matt. xxviii, 19,) in their infancy, (*Apol.*, 2,) and compares the rite of baptism to that of circumcision.—*Dial. c. Tryph.* Irenæus expressly speaks of "infants, little ones, children, youth, and the aged, as regenerated unto God," which phrase he elsewhere applies to baptism—*Infantes* et parvulos, et pueros, et juvenes, et seniores.—*Lib.* ii, c. 39. Tertullian, indeed, in the third century, recommends the delay of baptism, especially in the case of infants—Cunctatio baptismi utilior est, præcipue tamen circa parvulos—an indication of the Montanist heresy, into which he fell, which regarded post-baptismal sins as inexpiable.—*De Baptis.*, c. 18. The practice, however, continued, and Origen expressly asserts that little children were baptized for the remission of sins (Parvuli baptizantur in remissionem peccatorum—*Hom.*, 14, *in Luc.*,) which custom, he says, the church handed down from the apostles—Ecclesia ab apostolis traditionem suscepit.—*Id., in Rom.*, v. 6. When the question arose, in the third century, not whether baptism should be administered to infants, but whether it should be administered before the eighth day, Cyprian and a council of sixty-six African bishops unanimously decreed that the rite should be denied to none, even in earliest infancy—Universi potius judicavimus, nulli hominum nato misericordiam Dei et gratiam denegandam.—*Cypr. Ep.* 59, *ad Fidum*. "And this," says Augustine, "is no new doctrine, but of apostolic authority"—Nec omnino credenda, nisi apostolica esse traditio.—*De Genesi ad Literam.*, x. The later Fathers abound in similar testimonies. The infant children of heathen converts were baptized *immediately*, and the older ones when instructed.—*Cod. Justin.*, i, 11, *Leg.* 10. Orphans, foundlings, and even the children of heathens, received this sacred rite. At an early period the eucharist was administered to infants, which was of necessity preceded by baptism.

[886] Hence, when a person died unbaptized, a living substitute sometimes received the rite in his stead. Fulgentius indeed asserts, that unbaptized children, even if they die "in uteris matrum," are punished with everlasting punishment in eternal fire—ignis æterni sempiterno supplicio puniendos.—*De Fide ad Petr.*, 27. But he alone of the Fathers expresses this abominable opinion. Augustine and Ambrose, though insisting on the importance of baptism, admit that the faith and repentance—fidem conversionemque cordis—of those who die while piously preparing therefor may suffice in its stead.—*Aug., de Bap.*, iv, 22.

[887] In bold and unwarrantable metaphor some of the Fathers speak of the waters of baptism as changed in mystical transubstantiation into the very cleansing blood of Christ.

The prevalence of the Montanist heresy, which regarded as inexpiable all sins committed after baptism, led many to postpone its reception, although this practice was strongly censured by the church. Thus, Constantine remained a catechumen till his sixty-fifth year, and received baptism —"ἐμυήθη," says Sozomen, (ii, 34,) literally, "was initiated,"—just before his death. An inscription at St. John's Lateran asserts his baptism by Sylvester many years previously: CONSTANTINVS PER CRVCEM VICTOR A S. SILVESTRO BAPTIZATVS CRVCIS GLORIAM PROPAGAVIT: but Dr. Döllinger has shown the entirely mythical character of the legend.—*Fables respecting the Popes*, etc., by Jn. G. Ign. von Döllinger. 1872.

[888] See the epitaph of an unbaptized catechumen already given.

[889] In a Christian epitaph from Aquileia, of date A. D. 734, we find the scriptural formula—ex aqua et $\overline{\text{Spu}}$ renatus—"born again of water and the Spirit."—Muratori, *Nov. Thesaur.*, p. 1849.

[890] See McCaul, *Christian Epitaphs*, p. 64.

[891] *De Bapt. Christ.*

[892] Cyprian argues for the validity of baptism by sprinkling, when immersion is inconvenient, as in the case of the sick, prisoners, etc., as follows: "In baptism the spots of sin are otherwise washed away than is the filth of the body in a secular and carnal washing, in which is need of a bath, soap, and the like. The heart of the believer is otherwise washed; the mind of man is cleansed by the merit of faith"—Neque enim sic in sacramento salutari delictorum contagia, ut in lavacro carnali et seculari sordes cutis et corporis abluuntur, etc.—*Ep. ad Magnum.*

Thus, we read that St. Lawrence baptized with only a pitcher of water—urceum afferens cum aqua—and by pouring water on the head of the subject—fundit aquam super caput.—*Acta Laurentii.* Tertullian also speaks of the "aspersion of water" in baptism—asperginem aquae.—*De*

Pœnitent., 6.

[893] The so-called *benitiers*, or holy water vessels of the Catacombs, were, it is likely, in some cases at least, baptismal vases. The Romish "holy water" is probably copied from the *aqua lustralis* of the pagans, which stood at the door of the temples, and into which the worshipper on entering and leaving dipped his fingers. In striking analogy to Romish usage, the pagan priest sprinkled the multitude with the holy dew by means of an aspergillum, or light brush—

> Idem ter socios pura circumtulit unda
> Spargens rore levi.

[894] The nimbus and other characteristics indicate the comparatively late date of this picture. De Rossi thinks it not earlier than the seventh or eighth century. The ravages of time since the above was copied by Bosio have defaced part of the angel figure. In a similar group in a Latin MS., of the ninth century, the river Jordan flows from two vessels held by two boys. In another group at Monza, of the seventh century, the baptismal water pours from a vase held in the beak of the divine dove upon the head of Christ.

[895] The figures are a light umber, the falling water a pale blue.

[896] The neophytes laid aside their white baptismal robes, or albs, on the Sunday after Easter, hence called *Dominica in albis*. In the following inscription Pascasius, a neophyte of six years, is said to have received baptism on Easter eve, and to have laid aside his albs one week thereafter in the tomb: PERCEPIT XI KAL. MAIAS ET ALBAS SVAS OCTABAS (*sic*) PASCAE (*sic*) AD SEPVLCHRVM DEPOSVIT. (A. D. 463.)

Dr. McCaul notes a striking analogy to Christian forms of expression in an epitaph describing pagan initiation: ARCANIS PERFVSIONIBVS IN AETERNVM RENATVS—"Born eternally by secret sprinklings." The sprinkling was that of the blood of a bull or ram, dripping on the bodies of the recipients of the lustration through perforations in a platform beneath which they stood. —*Christian Epitaphs*, p. 57.

[897] Although these in after times became vast buildings, with ample provision for baptismal immersion, in the earlier ages they were quite small; and, according to Smith's Classical Dictionary, the *baptisterium* was "not a bath sufficiently large to immerse the whole body, but a vessel or labrum containing cold water for pouring on the head."—Art., *Baths*. Eusebius speaks of baptisteries without the church "for those who require yet the purification and the *sprinklings* (περιῤῥαντήριον) of water and the Holy Spirit."—*E. H.*, x, 4.

[898] I am indebted for these references to the Rev. Prof. Bennett, D.D., of Syracuse University, late of Berlin, Prussia.

[899] *Ciampini*, Tab. ii, Figs. 3, 4.

[900] In later times the devout Bernard of Clairvaux thus eulogizes the eucharist: "It is," he exclaims, "the medicine of the sick, the way of the wandering; it comforts the feeble and delights the strong; it cures disease and preserves health; it makes man more submissive to correction, stronger to labour, more ardent to love, wiser in foresight, prompter in obedience, more devout in thanksgiving. It absolves from sin, destroys the power of Satan, gives strength for martyrdom, and, in fine, brings every good."—*Costeri. Institut. Chr.*, lib. i, c. 6. It was also described as "the bread of angels, spiritual food, the life of the soul, the perpetual health of the mind, the antidote of sin, and pledge of future glory."

[901] Alicubi quotidie alicubi certis intervallis dierum.—Aug., *Tr.*, 26, *in Johan.* It was, in a special sense, the "daily bread of the soul."

[902] "Christ who suffered is the fish which was broiled," says St. Augustine—Piscis assus, Christus passus.

[903] See Fig. 54.

[904] Nihil illo ditius, qui corpus Domini canistro vimineo, sanguinem portat in vitro.—*Ep.* 4, *ad Rustic.* The communion was thus conveyed to those who through sickness were absent from its public celebration.

[905] Cur nullas aras habent?—Minuc., *Octav.* Non altaria fabricemus, non aras.—Arnob., *Contr. Gentes*. The Christian altars were called indifferently, *Altare*, *ara Dei*, *mensa Domini*.

[906] In the Lateran basilica, which is claimed as the head and mother of all the churches of Rome —*caput et mater omnium ecclesiarum*—is an altar which tradition asserts St. Peter made with his own hands, and employed for the administration of the Holy Sacrament. The legend attests at least an ancient opinion as to primitive usage. Originally only one altar was permissible in a church, but under Romish influence the number increased to as many as twenty-five, as at St. Peter's.

[907] In three or four instances bronze rings are attached to the slab, as if to allow its removal for a second interment, or perhaps to give a view of the relics of the saint.

[908] Tertullian carefully guards against the literal interpretation of the words of Christ, "This is my body," by the addition, "that is, a figure of my body"—figura corporis mei.—*Adv. Marc.*, iv, 40. Augustine and others of the Fathers also discriminate between Christ's spiritual and corporeal presence.

[909] They were called *eulogia*, that is, blessing or benediction. In the Jewish cemetery is a representation of sacred loaves, probably passover cakes, marked ΕΥΛΟΓΙΑ. The Christian representation of a cup doubtless frequently refers to the "cup of blessing"—Τὸ ποτήριον τῆς εὐλογίας—mentioned by St. Paul.—1 Cor. x, 16.

[910] There is not in the whole range of early Christian epigraphy the slightest indication of the Romish doctrine of Transubstantiation; which, indeed, as Dr. Maitland remarks, "was not distinctly broached till the ninth century." Some of the earlier poets, however, and the more

rhetorical of the Fathers, allude to a mystical presence of Christ in the eucharist, bordering on the modern Romish conception.

The council of Elvira forbade the acceptance of any gift for the administration of the sacraments. How different from Rome's mercenary tariff for the celebration of masses for the dead!

[911] Ταῖς ἀγάπαις.—Jude, 12.

[912] Acts ii, 46; vi, 2.

[913] 1 Cor. xi, 16-34.

[914] Ita saturantur, ut qui meminerunt etiam per noctem adorandum sibi esse; ita fabulantur, ut qui sciunt Dominum audire.—*Apol.*, 39.

[915] Jus. Mar., *Apol.*, ii; Socrat., *Eccl. Hist.*, v, 22; Orig., in *Ep. ad Rom.*, xvi, 16.

[916] Cibum promiscuum et innoxium.—*Ep.*, lib. x, *ad Traj.*

[917] ἱεροὶ λόγοι.—*Peregrinus.*

[918] *Pædag.*, ii.

[919] Qui de ultima fæce collectis imperitioribus et mulieribus credulis sexus sui facilitate labentibus, plebem profanæ conjurationis instituunt: quæ nocturnis congregationibus et jejuniis solennibus et inhumanis cibis non sacro quodam sed piaculo fœderantur, latebrosa et lucifugax natio ... deos despuunt, rident sacra.—Minuc. Felix, *Octav.* Odio humani generis convicti sunt.—Tac., *Ann.*, xv. 44.

[920] Malifica superstitio.—Suet., *Neron.*, 16. Comp. Hor., *Sat.*, i, 8.

[921] Quotidie obsidemur, quotidie prodimur, in ipsis plurimum cœtibus congregationibus nostris opprimimur. Quis unquam taliter vagienti infanti supervenit?—*Apol.*, c. 7; comp. *ad Nat.*, i, 10-15.

[922] Casto sermone, corpore castiore.—Minuc., *Octav.*; comp. Orig. *Cont. Cels.*, vi., Jus. Mar., *Apol.*, i, 2.

[923] Agapæ natalitiæ, agapæ connubiales, and agapæ funerales. The pagans, not unnaturally, regarded the latter, like their own funeral banquets, as designed to appease the manes of the dead. They would doubtless think the same of the modern mortuary masses.

[924] Non simili sacrilegio, quamvis simili luxu celebrarentur.—Aug., *Ep.*, 29.

[925] Qui se in memoriis martyrum inebriant.—Aug., *Cont. Faust.*, xx, 21. Voracitates ebrietatesque suas deputant religioni.—*De Morib. Eccl.*, i, 34.

[926] *Enarr.*, in Psa. lix.

[927] Placuit prohiberi, ne fœminæ in cœmeteriis pervigilent, eo quod sæpè sub obtentu religionis latenter scelera committunt.

[928] Among other traces of primitive Christianity among the latter are their married clergy and abhorrence of images. "We are Christians, not idolaters," they said to the Jesuit missionaries, who presented for their homage images of the Virgin Mary.

[929] The name of Pius is substituted for Deus in one well-known Latin hymn. Another pentecostal hymn to the Holy Spirit is addressed directly to the present pontiff. The growth of this dogma of infallibility, the distinguished French ecclesiastic, Père Gratry, asserts, "was utterly gangrened with imposture." The stultification of the human intellect was never more strikingly exemplified than in the dictum of Bellarmine: Vera sunt vera et falsa sunt falsa; sed si ecclesia dixit vera esse falsa et falsa esse vera, falsa sunt vera et vera sunt falsa.

[930] *Adv. Praxean.*

INDEX.

THE END.

TRANSCRIBER's NOTE:

Missing periods were added to abbreviations and ends of sentences, italics were added to citations in footnotes, where missing in the original; and commas were changed to periods in abbreviations. In the index, commas, semicolons and periods were adjusted so that they were used consistently.

In screen view, transliteration of words and phrases in Hebrew and Greek was provided as inserts. Where the capital lunate sigma ('C') appears in the original Greek, the transliteration uses 'S.' Hebrew letters, Greek letters with accents, and the capital lunate sigma may not display in some e-book readers. Missing accents were added to words in French.

Footnotes were renumbered sequentially and moved to the end of the chapter in which the anchors occur. Footnotes [48] and [52a] are missing in the original. There are two anchors for Footnote [61]. The missing anchor for Footnote [756] was added. In the Index, footnote numbers and links were added to entries marked 'note' or 'notes' followed by a symbol.

Anomalies noted, and left unchanged:

- There are many misspelled words and abbreviations in English, Latin, Greek, French, Italian, and German. Some quotations from other sources, often in footnotes, do not match the original source. Only words that appear to be printer's errors were adjusted, as noted below.
- Occasionally, Greek letters were used to spell words in Latin.
- Hyphenation and spelling are not consistent, e.g. 'lifetime' vs. 'life-time,' 'Shakespeare' vs. 'Shakspeare,' and 'ae' vs 'æ.'
- On page 147, the reference to 'Colonna di Rienzi, (1347 - 1354)' may refer to Cola di Rienzi, ca. 1313 - 1354.
- Prices of items quoted in contemporary dollars do not use decimals between the dollars and cents, e.g. p. 132 and footnote [288].
- There is no illustration on the title page, even though, on page 267, a vignette is mentioned as being there.
- On p. 520, Roman number 'LXII' is identified as 'seventy-two.'
- The Hebrew in Footnote [845] may be a mistake for פַּרְנָסִים.

Changes to text:

- a 'foling' to 'following' ... The following examples ...
- b 'ΠΑΤΛΕΙΝΑ' to 'ΠΑΥΛΕΙΝΑ' ... ΕΝΘΑΔΕ ΠΑΥΛΕΙΝΑ ...
- c 'ΕΛΠΙΛΙΟC' to 'ΕΛΠΙΔΙΟC' ... ΕΛΠΙC, ΕΛΠΙΔΙΟC, SPES ...
- d duplicate 'and' removed ... darkened sun and moon look ...
- e 'enentirely' to 'entirely' ... are entirely gratuitous ...
- f '218' to '318,' index entry under 'Mary, Virgin, assumption of'

Footnote [107] 'ποιεῖθαι' to 'ποιεῖσθαι' and 'κοινητήρια εἰσιέμαι' to 'κοιμητήρια εἰσιέναι'
Footnote [247] added 'a' to 'lorsqu'on les a exposés'
Footnote [455] 'e'l' to 'e l'' ... La croce e l' crocifisso ...
Footnote [738] 'ἀνεσκολοπισμένὴν' to 'ἀνεσκολοπισμένον' and 'κύπιος' to 'κύριος'
Footnote [754] 'ΓΑΥΚΥΤΑΤΟΣ' to 'ΓΛΥΚΥΤΑΤΟΣ'

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