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The  
Romance of Symbolism



Sidney Heath

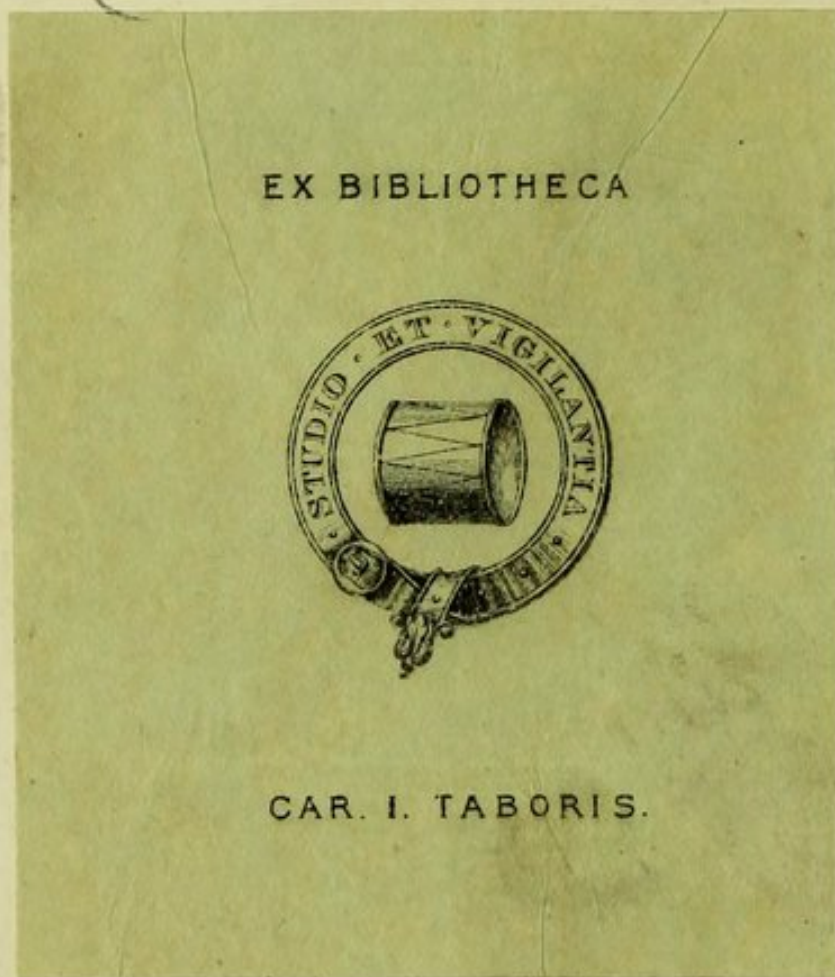


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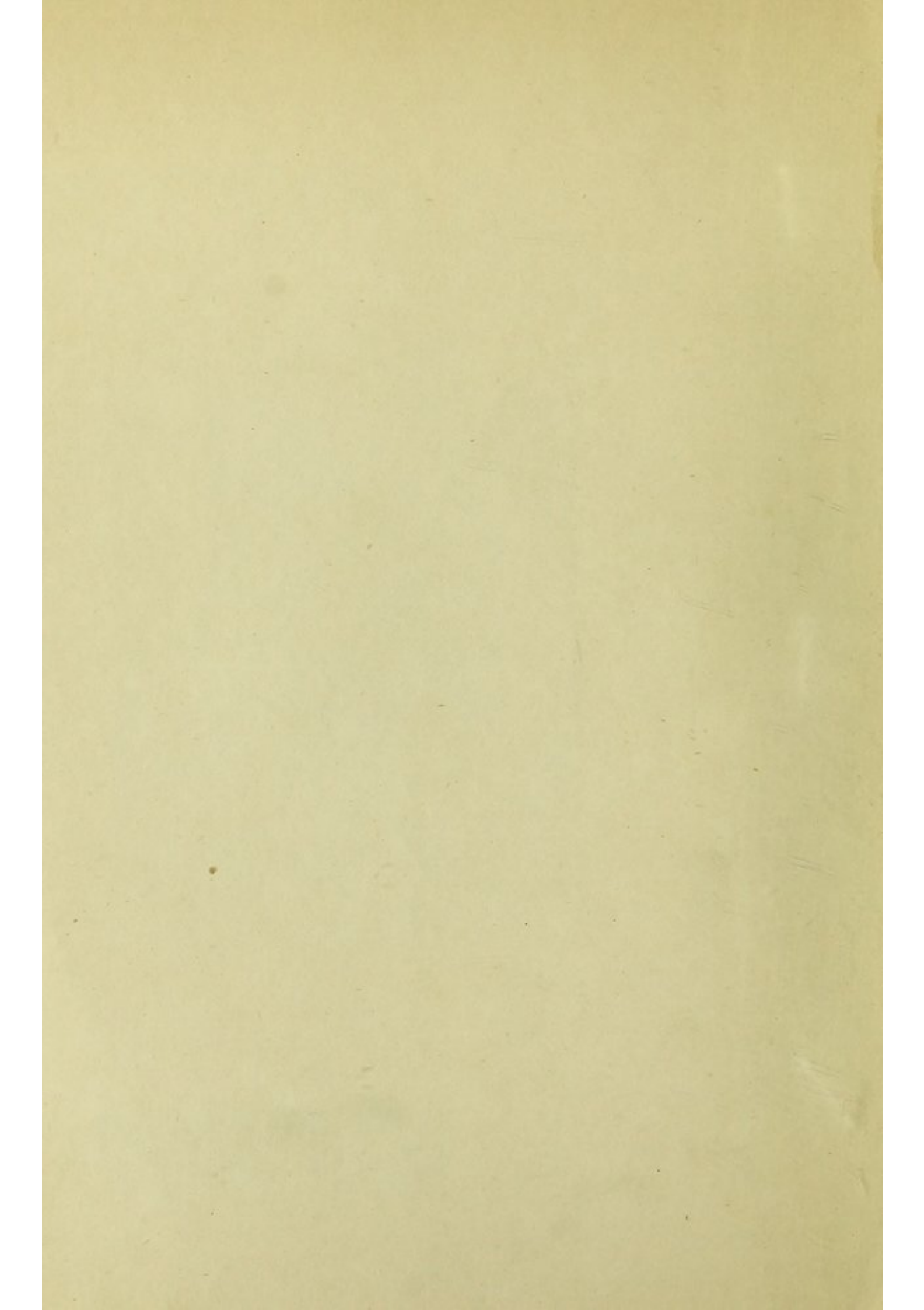
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THE ROMANCE OF SYMBOLISM



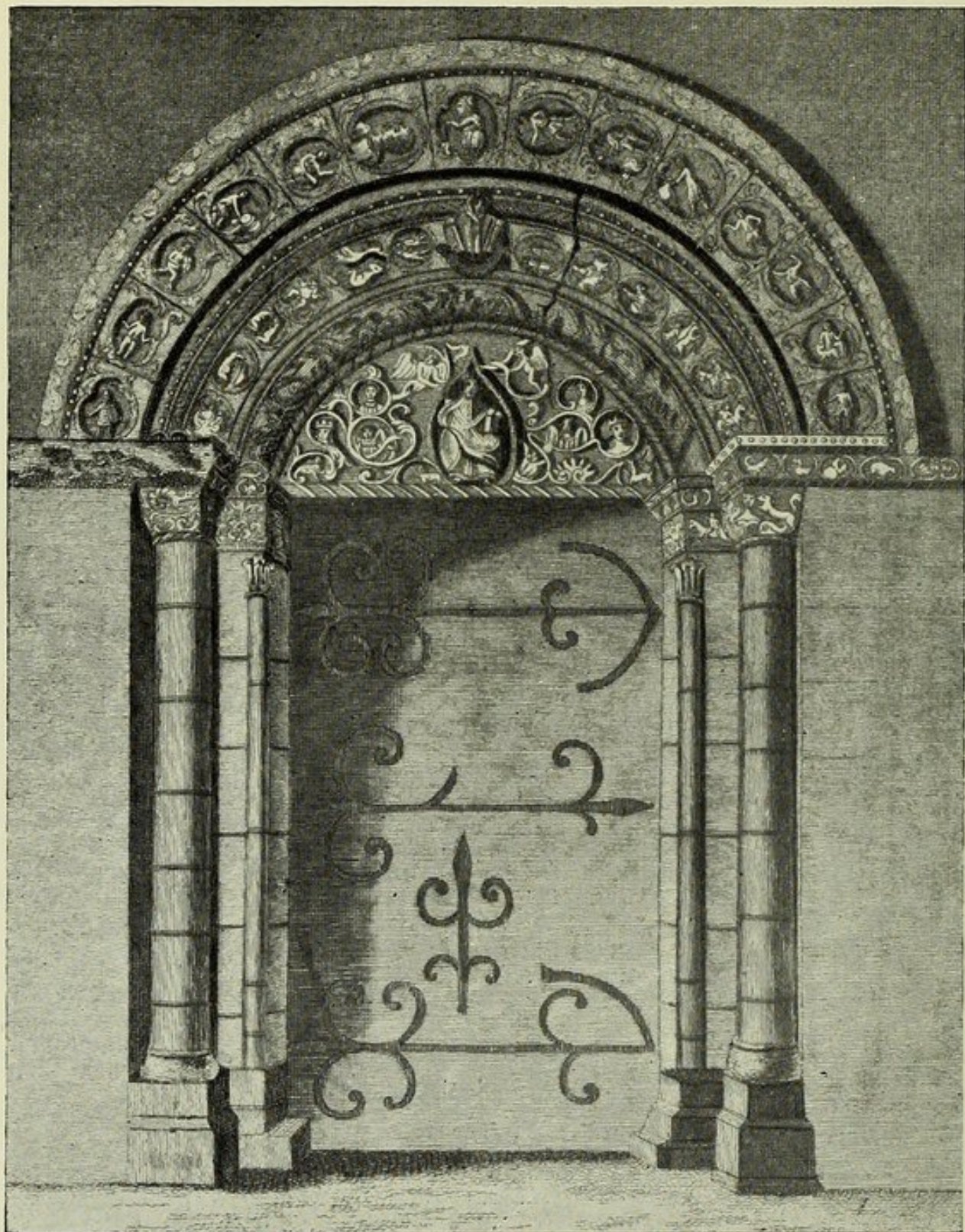




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*Norman Tympanum and Door,  
Barfreston Church, Kent.*

*(From an Old Print in the possession of the Author.)*

*Frontispiece.*



The  
Romance of Symbolism

AND ITS RELATION TO CHURCH  
ORNAMENT AND ARCHITECTURE

BY  
SIDNEY HEATH

*WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS*

LONDON  
FRANCIS GRIFFITHS  
34 MAIDEN LANE, STRAND, W.C.

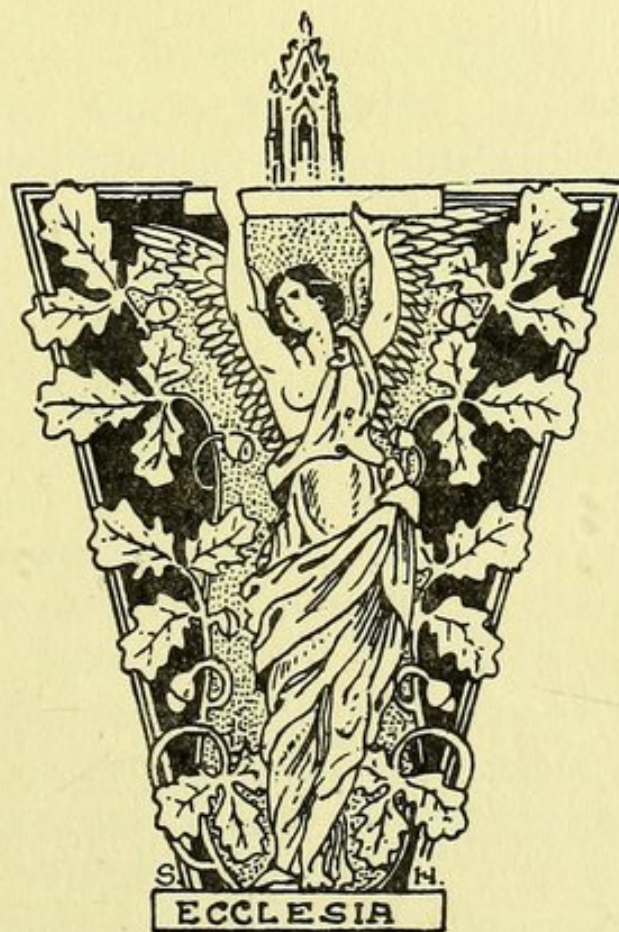
1909



(2) BU / HEA



TO  
MY WIFE  
THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY  
**Dedicated**







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## PREFACE

WHATEVER may be thought of the execution of this little volume, the author has no fear of being censured as regards its general design. An attempt to arrange in a simple form, in a few easily accessible pages, the principles of Christian symbolism, as depicted on the large fabric and the minor details of our churches and cathedrals, will hardly be slighted as superfluous. His aim has been to compile and arrange information respecting the symbolical origin and development of what is called ecclesiastical ornament, and has dealt only with its purely artistic or architectural qualities in so far as is necessary for the complete revelation of its religious function.

The astonishing growth of that semi-archæological literature that has characterised the last quarter of a century, leads one to hope that in regard to Church history and architecture, much has already been done to pave the way for a more sympathetic understanding of the symbols of our Christian faith, which are important for their intrinsic worth as art, no less than for the light they throw on the religions and creeds of past ages.

To affect a taste for things simply because they are



mediæval, is one of the most unfortunate humours of the present day ; but a temperate admiration, based upon a careful and impartial inspection, is calculated to increase the number of objects for our legitimate imitation, and to give us such a view of the thoughts, characters, and religious customs of our forefathers, as will enable us to attain a like insight into our own.

This volume makes no attempt to deal with the origin and evolution of symbolism from the earliest times ; although in a few cases the heathen prototypes of our Christian symbols have been briefly indicated ; but is mainly confined to the signs, emblems, attributes, and devices, which, although for the most part of pagan parentage, have been for so long associated with the Christian religion as we know it to-day.

Finally, this volume is intended to be only a preliminary guide to the study of symbolism, and one which may possibly be of use in helping the reader to unlock the portals of the larger and more erudite works on the subject, and thus lead those interested to become acquainted with the marvellous system of symbolism that has been so great a factor in the cults and religions of the world.

UPWEY, DORSET, 1909.

THE ROMANCE OF SYMBOLISM





# The Romance of Symbolism, and its Relation to Church Ornament and Architecture

## INTRODUCTION

### MEDIÆVAL SYMBOLISM.

IF there be one topic among the vast multitude of interesting themes, which, rather than any other, might be selected as typical of the individual and national mind of the Middle Ages, it is, I think, that of Symbolism, represented in the secular life by a love of heraldry, tradesmen's signs, rebuses, and monograms, and in the religious life by the plans, ornaments and details of our cathedrals, abbeys, and churches. In mediæval days everything savoured of symbolism.

### MERCANTILE SYMBOLS AND EMBLEMS.

The knight, at the battle or in the tournament, had emblazoned on his shield or tabard his personal device or cognisance. The abbot had his rebus worked into the capitals or bosses of his abbey. The private benefactor of certain aisles or chapels to his village



church had his mark, monogram, or arms carved on some portion of the fabric. The merchant and woolstapler put his sign<sup>1</sup> or the emblem of his trade outside his warehouse, instead of his name, and we thus find that the life of the past was impregnated with emblematic and symbolic forms, easily read and understood by the people, who, although they could neither read nor write, had been trained in the mystic system of symbolism from childhood.

By their devices the merchants became known all over the country, so much so, that they rarely signed their names, even when able to do so, but had their marks, generally with the addition of initials, engraven on signet rings, and on old deeds and documents these marks are placed by the name, thus appearing to have been used to authenticate the signature.

That such marks were in use at a very early date we have abundant evidence, for in "Piers Plowman" we read: "merkes of merchantes medeled," in painted glass; and with increasing trade they developed into a well-established mercantile custom, on which the fortunes of many successful and notable families were founded; families to whom so large a number of our old churches owe the whole, or some beautiful portion, of their fabric, as Tiverton Church, and the Lane Chapel in Collompton Church.

We are not, however, so much concerned here with the private and secular use of symbolic forms as with their place in religious customs and observances, and their influence in determining the plans and architectural details of religious edifices.

<sup>1</sup> The old London signs were excellent examples of mercantile emblems.



## MEANING OF SYMBOLISM.

It is perhaps hardly necessary to say that religious symbolism means the expression of belief represented in outward and visible signs and forms ; and a slight study of mediæval literature and ornament will quickly convince us that the early writers, architects, and carvers, had a great love of mysticism, a real belief in the supernatural, and a fondness for the mysterious and unaccountable, and that these qualities in their minds occupied the place now taken by scientific observation and experiment.

## GROWTH OF BELIEF.

We must not forget, however, in this age of positivism, spiritualism, and theosophy, that it is not a question whether we do or do not hold the same beliefs as our forefathers, or strive after the same ideals. It is *their* belief we have to deal with, and as all history is continuous, the thoughts of men, though always either widening or contracting, are still one successive unity, a vast procession ever marching onwards through the centuries. Certain it is that out of the beliefs of one age grow those of another, and although we may regard symbolic ornament as superstitious because we have outlived it, yet we must bear in mind that it was developed by the religion of the Middle Ages, and also the indisputable fact, as history proves in a most emphatic manner, that it is not the believers, *but the sceptics*, who cause empires to crumble and nations to wither away. All forms of ecclesiastical art are so closely connected with religious life and thought, so bound up with spiritual conditions and emotions, that it is hardly possible for anyone not to be



led unconsciously to speculate on its hidden meaning and significance.

If the graphic arts and literature reflect the secular life of nations, symbolism is the mirror which still more faithfully reflects the religious life of the centuries.

#### GOTHIC ART.

The real spirit of mediæval feeling is nowhere so thoroughly expressed as in the memorials of the architectural style called Gothic. This style of Christian art is distinguished by its lofty vaults and arches, its general profusion of ornament modelled after leaf and flower, thus presenting little if any of the Moorish element. The period during which the style flourished may be said to include the 12th, 13th, and 14th centuries, and the style may have originated from some artistic association, closely allied and confederated in different countries. Whoever may have been its originators it is quite certain that their intention was not merely to pile up stone edifices, but to embody certain ideas in the material structure.

However excellent a building may otherwise be, yet if it convey no meaning, express no sentiment, it loses all claim to be considered a creation of Art; for building, at once the most ancient and sublime of creative arts, cannot directly stimulate the feelings by means of actual appeal, and its broad import alone makes it the exponent of a certain class of sentiments. Thus it is that ecclesiastical architecture generally bears a hidden symbolical meaning. The whole plan is replete with symbols of deep significance traced and illustrated in the records of the period. On the whole, Gothic architecture, in its aspiring grace and beauty of form, may be said to convey the stupendous



idea of Eternity, and this notwithstanding the criticisms of certain modern writers, who are in the habit of rejecting much of which they know neither the origin nor the real import.

A word of warning, however, is necessary, for it is easy to go too far in symbolism and assign a hidden meaning where none could possibly have been intended.

Eminent church architects have gone quite far enough in this direction, as, for instance, Mr. A. W. Pugin, who wrote of the church tower as "a beacon to direct the faithful to the House of God," and Mr. H. M. Bloxham, who thought that the pointed arch was not improbably suggested by the wish to give architectonic form to the *vesica*.

#### DURANDUS AND SYMBOLISM.

If a person likes to regard the nave pillars as symbolical of the great doctors of the Church, or the lead quarries of the windows as representing the net of the Church within which he is enfolded, there is no great harm in the thought, but to say that these were designed expressly to perpetuate such meanings is an assumption for which there is not the slightest evidence. Durandus states among other things that the double door symbolises the two-fold nature of Christ, and that the three strands of the bell-rope fittingly indicate the Trinity. Such readings are called the *impertinences* of symbolism, and have always constituted the weakest side of symbolic art. Indeed, after reading Durandus one would think that the old architects designed buildings entirely out of Church doctrines. This, of course, is reducing symbolism to an absurdity, and it is not proposed



to consider anything here beyond the meaning which the artist or inspirer of the work may have intended to convey. The further ideas, as set forth by Durandus and others, may have been intentionally suggested to the fervent imaginations of those who were *predetermined* to read meanings of their own into every obscure portion of a church.

#### THE OLD BUILDERS.

We can, however, safely say that side by side with the evolution of religion marched the evolution of building and architecture, and symbolism kept pace with the arts and crafts. Sometimes it appears to have been symbolism or the symbolical element, which, if it did not direct, at least influenced architecture; at other times, when purely constructive problems and necessities led to the introduction of new architectural forms, the symbolisers rarely failed to find an appropriate and mystic meaning for what was done, although it is just possible that in many instances the builders of old, whether guilds of craftsmen, or great clerics like William of Wykeham, Wolsey, Thomas Chard, and William de Middleton, always had a symbolical reference in their minds for many portions of the edifices they designed. Certain is it that the symbolical sense was very prominent during the Middle Ages when ecclesiastical art absorbed much of the symbolical influence that called it into being, and with which it has been so long associated.

#### DEFINITION OF TERMS.

It may be as well here to define terms, and endeavour to explain the meaning of such words as symbol, figure,



emblem, and attribute. The words symbol and figure may be taken to represent any tangible design employed to convey an idea, although this is only their general signification as they differ in the following particulars. According to Didron the religious symbol is an exterior formula, embodying some dogma of religious belief, and, like the dogma itself, may be regarded as an article of faith. A figure, on the contrary, is a variable creation of human imagination, and one which is not governed or imposed by sacred dogmas, but results from the unfettered operation of man's intellect. Briefly, then, a symbol demands our faith, whilst a figure appeals only to the mind. Lastly, the symbol, when fully developed, becomes a myth, but the figure vanishes into an allegory. A myth belongs to faith, an allegory rests only on opinion. The words symbol and emblem are rather more interchangeable, although the word symbol may sometimes be used for an emblem where the contrary would not be true. Thus the sword can be used as a symbol of martyrdom or as the emblem of S. Paul.

Dr. March gives an excellent definition of these terms<sup>1</sup> "A symbol stands for an abstract idea, an emblem denotes a concrete thing, an attribute occurs in apposition with the person it qualifies; for example, in a presentment of the Blessed Virgin, the lily that she holds in her hand, or that flowers by her side, is her attribute. When the lily appears alone, if it represents the Queen of Heaven, it is her emblem, but if it indicates Purity it is a symbol."

Finally, a symbol has also been defined as<sup>2</sup> "an object or an act which sets forth some fact or doctrine in an emblematic manner. We may, indeed, call a Symbol a

<sup>1</sup> "Dorset Proceedings," Vol. xxv., p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> "Notes on Symbolism." (Anonymous.)



substantial Parable. The Parable proper places earthly and heavenly things side by side, and shows how they run parallel with each other; the Symbol embodies a comparison between the seen and the unseen, and as a *verbum visibile* reached the mind through the eye instead of the ear." We must also remember that the foundation of the "Creed," known to us as the *Apostles' Creed*, can be traced back to the New Testament; but as time advanced these confessions were enlarged and made to embody the essentials of the Christian Doctrine, as taught, preached, and written by the Apostles. Hence this confession of faith acquired the name of *Symbolum*, a Greek word meaning to throw or cast together; even so, say some, the Apostles met together, and each one put or threw in his contribution to this symbol. The most natural signification of the word seems to be derived from the pagan symbols, which were secret marks or tokens communicated at the time of initiation into their reserved or hidden rites, so that by such signs the devout gained access to the secret worship of that God whose symbols they had received. For the same reason the Apostles' Creed is thought by many to have been termed a symbol because it was studiously concealed from the pagan world. That the Apostles' Creed was drawn up by the Apostles themselves cannot be proved, but that the greater part of it has come down from the days of the Apostles is evident from the testimony of ancient writers, particularly of S. Ignatius, in whose epistles most of its articles are to be found.

Much could be written to show that Egyptian and Roman ornament was symbolic in character, did considerations of space permit, and to indicate that its individual forms had specific significance — the purport of each shape being taught by the priests.



## HIERATIC ORNAMENT.

The Egyptians were essentially a sacerdotal people, simply because everything emanated from the priestly office. Such is also the case with the Hindus, and, under different circumstances, the Hebrews. Institutions of a sacerdotal character were very prevalent among the Etruscans in the West, and the heroic age of the Greeks was doubtless preceded by periods of priestly administration, although symbolism is not so evident in Greek decorations as in the ornament of many other nations. The Greeks were a highly refined people who sought not to express their power by their works so much as by their refinement. In one respect, however, Greek ornament resembled that of the Egyptians, in that its established forms were rarely altered, although they laboured incessantly at their simple but well-established ornamental compositions, which have become characteristic of them as a people.

## THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

Christianity, by dwelling particularly on the sanctity of the individual life, deepened the channels of natural feeling and unfolded immense capacities of emotion which strove to express themselves. But Christianity had to pass through several stages before she developed any exclusively Christian art symbols. The unrest of the fierce missionary spirit had first to subside, and to give place to a more contemplative mood before the need of any elaborate art-medium of expression became urgent. The unrest of the earliest days of Christianity was fatal to art expression, and it was doubtless in the peaceful seclusion of monastic life that Christianity, from being



intensely practical and objective, became more meditative, introspective, and mystical. Once relieved from the militant type of persecution, the early bands of devotees had time to examine and chronicle the various emotional ecstasies of their faith, to note the earnestness of its aspirations, the intensity of its enthusiasms, the complex and ceaseless struggle between the spirit and the flesh, and the ever-changing proportions of one to the other.

#### THE NICENE COUNCIL.

Out of these experiences arose at length an overpowering desire for art expression, and such was for a long period regulated and controlled by the Church. The art of this era was essentially hieratic, and the expression of any individuality on the part of the artist would have been strongly resented. It was laid down at the second Nicene Council, in 787, that "a picture is not to be fashioned after the fancy of the painter, but according to the inviolable traditions of the Holy Catholic Church . . . it is the Holy Fathers who are to invent and direct, artists have but to execute their behests." (*See also Appendix II.*)

#### THE NEED FOR SYMBOLS.

This was the doctrine followed by the Italian artists, and more strictly and literally by the Byzantines. Art was stereotyped, and only changed its forms as these became worn or defaced by centuries of alternate decay or rough usage. The reason was obvious when we consider that ordinary folk could neither read nor write, and that religious symbols, as we shall see later, took



the place of our open Bible, and were used for the purpose of teaching the people just so much of the Church's History and Doctrine as those in authority thought it needful for them to know. To the faithful these pictorial emblems and symbols were instructive volumes, written in intelligible and self-speaking characters; and we may therefore rest assured that ancient church symbolic ornaments are true and authentic records, not of the opinions of laics and individuals, but of the public doctrine of the Church at the period when they were executed.

#### ALLEGORY AND PARABLE.

The spirit of Allegory is quite as prevalent in the New as in the Old Testament, especially that variety of it called Parable. If Aphorism is the natural form of every Divine revelation in the expression of the eternal Word, as a written *Fiat*, Parable is the human, figurative investiture of Divine maxims. It is unquestionably in the simple allegories of Parable that the Gospel has become a type for all later legends, which latter, in their turn, have furnished the storehouse from which Christian art and literature have been supplied.

#### EARLY CHRISTIAN CULTURE.

The early days of the Christian faith were the ages in which all human art and knowledge were regarded as Divine, and inquiry into the history of universal mental culture, whatever the vehicle adopted for its expression, will show it to have been so many developments or figurative illustrations of Divine revelation. The elements of the earliest mental culture, the Greek as well as the Oriental, after



passing through the earnest Roman world, flowed into Christian ages, in which a living stem of noble intellect, grafted on the old northern stock, has linked together all the nations of the West in loving brotherhood.

#### THE ALPHABET.

Mr. Herbert Spencer, in the course of his enunciation of the philosophy of evolution, speaks of the book and the newspaper as connected through a long descent with the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the ancient Egyptians, and the picture-scratching on bones of still earlier times. We know, at any rate, that the letters of our alphabet were once pictures, symbols, or abstract signs of entities and actions, and grew more and more degraded until they became the arbitrary characters that we are all familiar with to-day. Temples and tombs have always been man's biggest books wherein he has read the development of the individual life, and the religious sentiments of past ages, as indicated by hieroglyphics, symbols, and ornament.

#### THE MORAL INFLUENCE OF SYMBOLS.

It is probable that pictorial art, such as carvings, paintings, sculpture, etc., has always had the power to leave some definite impression on the memory to a greater extent than written or printed words, because art has always preceded language, philosophy, and science; and although we may ask ourselves how it was that pictured symbols obtained any credit, or by what means they were enabled to flourish and develop, we shall find, on consideration, that all pictured objects, apart from any particular religious function, not only make an appeal to the special senses which they are



intended to stimulate, but they excite a common central emotion which stirs the imagination by some borrowed reminiscence of either actual association or figurative illustration. Thus the main sentiment of things is not exclusively attached to any of the sense-impressions belonging to the object, but is more or less common to them all. Again, whenever anything appears in the world of sense and in Nature resembling some lineament of the Divinity, this latent, dormant reminiscence awakes, just as beauty animates the spectator with admiration and love that are not directed to the beautiful object itself, but rather to the *invisible ideal*. From this admiration, this emotional enthusiasm which takes entire possession of the faculties, spring all higher knowledge and truth.

#### VISUAL PERCEPTION.

A writer, already cited, has made the following apt quotations.

Mr. Herbert Spencer says: "The most highly-related feelings are the visual, and these are of all feelings the most easily reproduced in thought." (Psychology.) Mr. Stout, writing of complex perception, observes that "if one part of the complex whole be given, we have such a prenotion or schematic anticipation of the remainder as enables us to mentally inquire for it."

Dr. Bain, in "Senses and Intellect," writes: "The sensations of sight make more than any other thing, perhaps more than all other things put together, the materials of thought, memory, and imagination. Vision is the most retentive of all the senses. Objects thought of on account of the other sensations they furnish are *conceived* under their visual aspect."

Pictured symbols were undoubtedly intended as an aid



to worship. Didron, in his great work on "Christian Iconography," says: "For those men of the Middle Ages, for those Christians of lively susceptibility, but who yet knew not how to read, the clergy provided rondes, bosses, bas-reliefs, and pictures, where science on the one hand and doctrine on the other were personified . . . for it is acknowledged that a picture sways the soul far more powerfully than any discourse or description in words."

#### ABHORRENCE OF IMAGES.

In the early times, however, the abhorrence of carved representations of the objects of worship that was inherited by the Christian from the Jewish Church was so intense as almost entirely to forbid the application of the art of sculpture to the service of religion. Early Christian statues are of the rarest, and for seven or eight centuries the art of sculpture, if not wholly interdicted, was regarded with the gravest suspicion, and images were naturally looked upon with contempt by the early Christians.

The letter of the second commandment, prohibiting the making of any graven image, had, however, already been broken, when in Solomon's temple the art of the sculptor had graven the figures that adorned its cedar walls, and it was altogether abandoned before what S. Paul calls "the riches," the wealth, and the abundance of new thoughts opened by Christianity; but from their first appearance in the Christian Church, poetry, painting, music, and sculpture have poured in a flood of sacred imagery on the world.

#### SYMBOLIC INFLUENCES.

It is scarcely too much to say that it was by its symbolic ornament and architecture that much of the influence of



the early Church is to be traced. Whether this was attained by outward appeals to man's love of the beautiful, or to his more mysterious fears of a great power wielded by a priesthood who left no means untried in order to bring humanity within the tangible influence of a visible church, matters little to-day; but there is no doubt that the greatest poems, the finest buildings, and the purest works of art in the world, are distinct impressions of *religious sentiment*, and as such they have produced a powerful effect on millions of human beings.

#### THE MORAL EFFECT OF SYMBOLS.

If worship through artistically wrought symbols be, as some say, a debasing superstition, the effect is pernicious, if not indeed immoral; if, on the contrary, it quickens the most elevated emotions, the effect is beneficial in a high degree. To say that they produce no moral effect is to say that they produce no effect at all, which is tantamount to saying that example has never any influence upon practice. It would perhaps be true to say that art provides the most powerful, though the least obtrusive, means by which the standard of morality is affected, and in this sense the arts of a nation govern men's manners more than her laws.

#### PAULINUS.

Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, in describing the pictures which he had had executed in the basilica of S. Felix, at Fondi, says: "Images thus traced and coloured will perhaps inspire those rude minds with astonishment. Inscriptions are placed above the pictures in order that the letter may explain what the hand has depicted. . . .



Painting beguiles their hunger; chastity and virtue are engendered by such examples of piety."

POPE GREGORY I.

In an epistle of Pope Gregory I., we read: "Painting is used in churches that they who are ignorant of letters may at least read on the walls by seeing what they cannot read in books." (Epist. vii. 3.) And again: "It is one thing to adore a picture, another to learn by the story of the picture what ought to be adored . . . we do not prostrate ourselves before it (the image of the Saviour) as before the Godhead; but we worship Him whom by help of the image we call to mind as born, as suffering, or even sitting on His throne. And while the picture itself brings the Son of God to our memory, it either rejoices our mind by the suggestion of His Resurrection; or consoles it by His Passion."

SYNOD OF NICÆA.

Leontius says: "I, worshipping the image of God, do not worship the material wood and colours; God forbid; but laying hold of the lifeless representation of Christ, I seem myself to lay hold of and to worship Christ through it."

At a synod held at Nicæa in 787, the following conclusion was arrived at concerning images: that the "venerable and holy images should be set up in the same manner as the figure of the precious and life-giving cross . . . the images, to wit, of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and the one undefiled Lady, the holy mother of God, and of the honourable angels and all saints and holy men . . . for the honour of the image passes on to the original,



and he who worships the image worships it in the person of Him who is therein depicted."

The spirit if not indeed the letter of this decree was soon to become so much abused as to constitute a grave scandal, for there is no doubt that many pictures were deemed miraculous, and many superstitious practices were condoned by those who framed the above rule.

#### ABUSE OF IMAGES.

Michael Balbus says, in a letter to Ludovicus Pius: "They not only ask help from the above images, but many, hanging linen cloths upon them, placed their children in them as they came out of the font, thus making them sponsors; and monks receiving the tonsure had the hair held over them so as to fall into their lap. . . . Some of the priests and clerks, scraping the colours of the images, mixed them with the oblation and wine, and after the celebration of masses gave of this oblation to those who wished to communicate. Others put the Lord's body into the hands of the images, from which they caused those who wished to communicate to receive it."

#### EARLY ENGLISH PICTURES.

The earliest authentic account of pictured symbols in an English church occurs in Bede's "Life of S. Benedict Biscop," his first abbot, who, in 648, "brought from Rome paintings of sacred images, to wit, of the blessed Mary and of the twelve Apostles, and placed them in his church at Wearmouth, so that all who entered the church, even those ignorant of letters, whithersoever they turned their eyes, might contemplate the ever-lovely countenance of Christ and of His saints, though in an image; or might



more heedfully call to mind the grace of the Lord's Incarnation."

S. AUGUSTINE.

When Augustine and his companions met Ethelbert in the Isle of Thanet, in 597, they came "bearing a silver cross for banner, and an image of the Lord the Saviour painted on a board." (Bede's "Hist. Eccl.," I. 25.)

THE MEANING OF ORNAMENT.

It may be as well to state here that as the examples of symbolism we shall consider in the following pages found their expression for the most part in architectural or artistic forms, called *ornament*, we must define exactly what is meant by this term. Mr. Glazier, in his "Manual of Historic Ornament," gives it the following definition. "Ornament is the means by which Beauty or Significance is imparted to Utility. It is either Symbolical or *Æsthetic*. Symbolic ornament consists of elements chosen for the sake of their *significance*—*Æsthetic* ornament consists of forms or elements chosen for their *Beauty* alone." This definition, though correct in its general application, hardly goes far enough if we want to get at the true basic qualities of ornament. This is an intricate, and to many, perhaps, a "dry as dust" subject, yet to know something of the origin of ornament is essential if one wishes to understand fully its later artistic forms. To be as brief as possible, ornament sprang from structural handicraft, "and became rooted in the mind by association of contiguity, and that thus an expectancy was raised of such urgency that transfer took place as occasion offered." Says Dr. March in his



"Evolution and Psychology in Art," from which the above passage is quoted: "To fasten a flint flake to a handle of horn was probably one of man's earliest achievements. Wattlework and basketry came next, and the stitching together of skins for clothing. Then followed mat-making, plaiting, and weaving. In these artifices, the coils of the ligature, the returning stitch, the intervals that separated the osier rods, the convolutions of the fillet, the interlacing of branches, rushes, or threads, on which all hands were employed, and all eyes were bent, comprised serial repetition of the most rigorous and regular kind. Hand and eye working together grew accustomed to certain geometric successions of lines and scrolls, of squares and frets. But these things did not constitute Ornament, for they were essential and not accessory to the structure; they were technical requirements; their visual equivalent was not yet bestowed on something else. . . . But when the mind, long accustomed to certain appearance of serial repetition, began to look for them on other things, and felt a sense of loss in their absence; when their visual equivalent, such as cross-hatching, was cut on a comb, or when chevrons were scratched on a bone needle, transfer, metamorphosis, was accomplished and Ornament was born."

#### FINE ART.

I have been beguiled into giving this somewhat long quotation from one of the most eminent authorities on the subject, for the reason that it may be new to many readers, and be helpful in their study of the basic properties of ornament; a word, if we accept the theories here set forth, that is used in a very loose manner in the present



day, and one that is often applied, no doubt for the want of a better one, to articles which belong by right to fittings and furniture. These are within the province of fine art, between which and Ornament there is a vast difference, but as one cannot be continually speaking of church fittings and furniture, both ugly words, the reader must bear in mind that when "ornament" is mentioned in these pages, it is not always used in its strictly scientific sense.

#### INTERIOR DRIPSTONES.

A good example of the expectancy above referred to is that afforded by the occurrence of dripstones on the interior arch-mouldings in some of our churches. Mr. Francis Bond in his "Gothic Architecture" suggests that it may have been the expectancy of *rain* that caused them to be placed inside the buildings ; but I think one can safely say that the old craftsmen were far too good builders to have anticipated that rain would have percolated through their roofs in such quantities as to necessitate the construction of an inside dripstone to carry it away. Is it not more probable that it resulted from a *visual* expectancy of such urgency in the eyes of those long accustomed to the outside dripstone, that the interior arch or moulding would have appeared incomplete without this particular adjunct ? If this were the case the exterior dripstone represents utility, being essential to the structure, and the interior one merely *ornament*, having been bestowed as an accessory to satisfy a visual craving only.

#### DECLINE OF GOTHIC ART.

As the student of Gothic architecture will readily call to mind, Gothic ornament, having passed from its purity to



undue elaboration, began to lose its appeal to the people for whom it was created just at the time when the religion with which it had been so long associated began also to lose much of its early significance, until the advent of the Reformation overthrew the old traditions and usages. With the reformation of religion came a corresponding revival and investigation of classical learning, and a general diffusion of knowledge, with the result that the immediate necessity for art symbols was, if not actually gone, at least in a transitory state, as an extended system of symbolism was created for, and has appealed in all ages to, an unlettered, rather than to a cultured and well-read people. A natural result of this revival of classical literature was the investigation of classical styles of architecture, and, as this was going on, a violent dislike to whatever had been associated with the old form of religion sprang up, a dislike which turned to bitter hatred as the struggle advanced, until the feeling against Gothic architecture was so intense that anything was preferred to it.

#### HENRY VIII'S INJUNCTIONS.

We need not, however, deal at length here with the causes and effects of the Reformation, except inasmuch as these affected symbolic ornaments and ceremonies; and while there is no doubt that the primary object of the genuine reformers was to purify and not to desecrate, yet they were associated with those who craved for demolition and desecration. Henry VIII's injunctions did not affect, during his own reign at any rate, the customary observances, or the position of altars and images, but only regulated the use of lights before them. In the following reigns, however, a much more



drastic course was adopted. Elizabeth's sincerity in endeavouring "to unite the whole nation into one way of religion," and her protests against the gross errors of the Church of Rome, have never been disputed, and, as such, would have been undoubtedly a genuine reformation. Her proclamation was most judicious, and although her leanings were towards the Reformed Church, yet, according to Dr. Cardwell, "she considered that in the Romish system there were many good institutions, and practices, and feelings which might have been advantageously retained, and that the remains of *original Catholicity* within that Church should not have been offensive to any sound Churchman."

#### ELIZABETH'S PROCLAMATION.

The fact is that many of those who carried out her injunctions exceeded the spirit if not the letter of the law, for one of the first acts of her reign was to issue a proclamation "*against* breaking or defacing of monuments of antiquitie." This order directed that "no Images set up for the only remembrance of individuals for posterity, and not for any religious honour, nor any Image in glass windows should be broken or defaced, upon pain of the wrong-doer being committed to the next gaol."

Those who had done any damage were to repair the same, or, if unable to do so, open Penance was enjoined. The removal of bells and lead was also prohibited, and the "Altar Steps" in Cathedrals, Collegiate and Parish Churches were not to be taken away. Some of the reformers were honest enough to acknowledge that their main objective was to "gain a great masse of money for the King."



## PURITAN FANATICISM.

So the Church continued in a more or less settled state until the ordinances of 1643-4 were put into the hands of the Puritan fanatics. To their mind the Reformation had not been nearly drastic enough. They desired free scope to harry, pillage, and destroy, and they had their way in a wild frenzy of fanaticism that worked in a fierce and pitiless spirit to mutilate and desecrate.

Altars and stone tables were removed from the east ends of the chancels; all tapers, candles, crosses, images, pictures, organs and their cases were shattered and demolished. Roods and rood-lofts were sold or burned, holy water stoups and fonts were mutilated or broken to pieces, together with monuments, brasses, and everything that could be seized.

## HORSES BAPTISED.

What was destroyed at this period proves conclusively that the Reformation had not dealt, was not intended to deal, a vital blow at legitimate ceremonial, and up to 1643 the majority of our churches had retained the greater part of their fittings and ornaments. "But then," as Markland says, "from the first opposition to the National Church by the simple Puritans, the next stage was that of ridicule, and the last of obloquy. They actually baptised horses in churches at the fonts; and the jest of that day was, that the Reformation was now a thorough one in England since our horses went to Church."

## WILLIAM DOWSING.

We need not continue the story, but inasmuch as it has been suggested by certain Puritan apologists that



this wilful desecration was the work of common and ignorant soldiers, we will take but a single entry from the "Journal of William Dowsing," one of the persons selected by the Parliament to enforce the ordinances in the county of Suffolk.

"At Sudbury we brake down ten mighty great angels in glass ; in all eighty. At Allhallows, we brake about twenty superstitious pictures, and took up thirty brazen superstitious inscriptions. At Clare we brake down one thousand pictures superstitious : I brake down two hundred ; three of God the Father, and three of Christ and the Holy Lamb, and three of the Holy Ghost, like a dove with wings ; and the twelve apostles were carved in wood on the top of the roof, which we gave orders to take down ; and twenty cherubims to be taken down."

#### NO NEW CHURCH.

When we consider that these *Parliamentary Visitors* were let loose in every county in England, some small idea can be gathered as to what was destroyed by the Puritan iconoclasts. There is no statement more erroneous than that to the effect that the Reformation disestablished the old Church and established a new one. It did nothing of the kind, for in no sense did the Reformation involve the substitution of a new Church for an old one. The work was, however, a truly national endeavour to purify, but not change, and it was pledged to the future freedom of both Church and State from outside ecclesiastical domination. In effect it left the Church of England what she in her creeds claims to be—the "one Catholic and Apostolic Church," whose head is Jesus Christ.



## IDEALS OF ART.

In conclusion one can safely say that old church symbolic carvings, where they have not been mutilated or restored, give a gem-like appearance to buildings wherein they are found—pathetic, appealing, and impressive. They exhibit a deep religious belief combined with remarkable manual skill, and they convey to us an impression of reality, tempered and exalted by ideality, telling us the whole life-story of our ancestors. Setting aside the long lapse of time over which they are spread, they belong not only to varying religious periods, but to different conditions of society and social prosperity. It was not a question of theology on the one hand, or of æsthetics on the other; it was individuality of expression, ruled by, and combined with, a solid religious conviction that led to that mysterious and ineffable charm which penetrates and permeates the humblest examples of mediæval art. The wonders of Nature, and the secrets of art and science, are but isolated rays of the Divine light, as it has shone in the Church of God from the beginning, and will continue to shine unto the end of time. This all too brief introduction may fittingly close with Wordsworth's noble lines :

“ When in the antique age of bow and spear,  
And feudal rapine clothed with iron mail,  
Came ministers of peace, intent to rear  
The mother church in yon sequestered vale.

“ Then to the patron saint a previous rite  
Resounded with deep swell and solemn close,  
Through unremitting vigils of the night,  
Till from his couch the wished-for sun uprose.



- “ He rose, and straight, as by Divine command,  
They who had waited for that sign to trace  
Their work’s foundation, gave with careful hand,  
To the high altar its determined place ;
- “ Mindful of Him who in the Orient born  
There lived—and on the Cross His life resigned,  
And who, from out the regions of the morn,  
Issuing in pomp, shall come to judge mankind.
- “ So taught their creed ; nor failed the eastern sky,  
’Mid these more awful feelings to infuse  
The sweet and natural hopes that shall not die  
Long as the sun his gladsome course renews.
- “ For us hath such prelusive vigil ceased ;  
Yet still we plant, like men of elder days,  
Our Christian altar faithful to the east  
Whence the tall window drinks the morning rays.
- “ That obvious emblem giving to the eye  
Of meek devotion which erewhile it gave  
That symbol of the dayspring from on high,  
Triumphant o’er the darkness of the grave.”



## CHAPTER I

### THE PAGAN-CHRISTIAN OVERLAP

#### TRANSITION OF RELIGION.

No one who has not turned special attention to the subject can form any conception of the mass of purely pagan ideas, which, glossed over by Christianity, but barely hidden by it, grow in rank profusion in our very midst, and still exercise in the form of "superstitions" a living hold on the popular mind. The change from the pagan religions to Christianity was not abrupt, but was a slow and steady period of transition, which has been aptly called the "Pagan-Christian Overlap," and this overlap is discernible in the manners and customs of every country where Christianity was propagated. What happens when men change one religious belief for another? Does the first vanish altogether, or does it form the basis of a new condition of thought which is grafted on to the old stock? The answer is to be found by considering the rare sagacity displayed by the early Christian missionaries in seizing upon basic resemblances between the heathen and the Christian creeds, and by endeavouring to give holier and purer significance to the signs and modes of worship in use among their heathen contemporaries.

By this overlap, this cautious blending of Christianity with heathen customs they were powerless to stamp out,



the Christian missionaries succeeded in fusing two diametrically opposed religious creeds into one organic whole, the Christian religion as we know it to-day.

#### NEW MEANINGS TO OLD FORMS.

The primitive believers had not so much to create new rules of conduct as to direct the significance attaching to the observance of the old forms into a channel of Christian thought. Thus pagan types had literally to be baptised into the service of Christianity, and these types made up the only garment in which the ideas of the new religion could clothe themselves. Nothing is more remarkable in human nature than its determination to retain old forms which it invests with a new life. Christianity took its temples, statues, sacred days, etc., from the pagans, and although humanity outgrows its vestments it does not cast them off, but is content to be continually adding new patches on to the old garments.

#### CHRISTIANITY FORESHADOWED.

Imperfect presentiments and premonitions long foreshadowed the coming of Christianity, the early champions of which faith found so much in the teaching of Socrates or of Plato, in harmony with their own ideas, that they did not hesitate to pronounce this doctrine to be Christian.

The word "sarcophagus," as well as the mode of burial, was taken entirely from heathenism, and passed into the nomenclature of the Christian Church, and there is abundant evidence that sarcophagi were used for Christian burials. The sarcophagus, being regarded as a mark of wealth, led Christians of position to adopt the usual mode of burial consistent with their rank with little regard to



the character of the sculptures that ornamented their last resting-places.

#### AUTHORITIES SANCTION COMPROMISE.

A politic regard for popular feeling, as associated with long-standing customs, led the authorities to permit, and sometimes even to sanction, many of the formalities of unvarnished paganism, and notwithstanding many legal enactments, it was not until well on in the 5th century, that the grosser customs of paganism were stamped out. The language and edicts of the fathers appear to imply a spirit of unwavering extermination; but in practice much milder methods were adopted. Among the Teutonic nations especially there was a disposition on the part of the Church to leave many pagan usages unchallenged, or to invest them with Christian doctrine.

#### SUN WORSHIP.

Among the Latins the worship of Mithras, the great sun-god, survived for many centuries, and Pope Leo the Great states that many Christians in his time adored the rising sun from lofty heights; and that some of them, in the wish no doubt to blend the old religion with the new, when ascending the steps of S. Peter's at Rome, were wont to turn and make their obeisance to the sun.

#### CHRISTIAN RELAPSES.

Christianity was very far indeed from being a continuously progressive overthrow of the old customs and superstitions, and it not infrequently disappeared through the relapse of the population into paganism. In England



when the Christian converts of the Celtic missionaries were driven into Wales, the rest of the country was left without their support, with the result that Kent and Essex quickly relapsed into paganism, and Mercia, under Penda, remained pagan until 633. Bede states that up to the time of Wilfrid's mission in 681 "all in the province of the South Saxons were strangers to the name and faith of God."

#### EDICTS AND PENALTIES.

An edict of Theodoric, A.D. 500, directs that all persons found sacrificing according to the rites of paganism shall be put to death, and this edict, one of hundreds of a similar character issued from time to time, marks the culminating point in repressive legislation in the west. These edicts at periodical intervals were put into force with undoubted severity, but for the most part the policy of the Church was generally one better calculated to succeed. It learned to prefer gradual triumphs to speedy conquests, aware that the former were more likely to last, and was pleased to satisfy its conscience with compromise. Direct participation in pagan festivals, under the pretext of a semi-religious observance, was not uncommon. S. Augustine, when reproving the Christians for joining in such festivals, is said to have received the pagan retort, "Why should we abandon our Gods whom the Christians worship as well as ourselves?"

As Christianity made progress its contests with the old beliefs grew fiercer and more extensive; the mutual antipathy of hostile creeds is in itself sufficient to account for the earlier persecutions of the Christians; for even after Christianity had emerged victorious from the many



attacks on its existence, and had established for itself a recognised position, there were still in many countries men of eminence on the side of paganism, who made a final effort to overthrow Christianity in the hope of sustaining the sinking creeds of their fathers.

#### THE CONVERTS' OATH.

The form of oath taken by the Saxons on abjuring paganism was to this effect: "I renounce the Devil and all his works and words Thunear (Thor) Woden, and Saxon Odin and all such sorcerers their familiars." This formula has been attributed to the 8th century. The legendary traditions of Scandinavia, although they would like to appropriate him exclusively to themselves, admit that Odin was a Saxon king who came to Sweden and built Sigtund, where he established his dominion. The testimony of the Anglo-Saxons is to the same effect, and some of their kings, as Alfred, were descended in unbroken lineage from Odin. The tradition that Odin came from Asia to Saxony is a Scandinavian fable by no means favourable to the circumstances of the historic Odin.

#### ODIN.

The personal existence of Odin has been frequently denied, and in this respect he has shared the fate of half the heroes of the ancient and mediæval worlds. The more temperate school of historical critics, however, have been unwilling to set hypothesis against the united force of tradition, and have preferred to believe, in those cases where no solution was to be gained by scepticism.



## SURVIVAL OF PAGANISM.

Many memorials and traces of the worship of Odin and other pagan rites have survived. Hills and forests were the favourite setting for heathen ceremonies, and in a special manner long harboured an infinite variety of kindred reminiscences. For many Christian centuries trees of large size and great age, particularly oaks, were held sacred ; no less so the ash, possessing mystic properties and declared in the Eddas' legend of Creation to be the origin of all Nature. In later poetry, too, the fragrant lime continued to be celebrated as an enchanted tree. As might have been expected the olden mythology, after its general extirpation, assumed the form of mere superstition which still lingers in our midst, but with much degradation. The seers and the witches of the past have become the fortune-tellers of to-day.

## SAINTS FOR GODS.

As we have seen, the Church assimilated beliefs it could not destroy ; and in many cases substituted its saints and angels for the gods and spirits of the heathen cults. Thus the great Scandinavian water-spirit, *Níkur*, became, in the Middle Ages, S. Nicholas, the patron of sailors. So with sacred trees, flowers, and water ; their sanctity was transferred, not destroyed. S. Boniface, with the wood of the oak he so miraculously felled, raised an oratory to S. Peter, to whom were henceforth paid the honours of Thor. The once popular goddess, Freja, could only be banished from men's minds by transferring what had been sacred to her to the Virgin Mary, and so on.

We know from Bede that the Saxons assembled at certain sacred places for the celebration of religious



rites. Trees, rocks, and wells, marked their sacred places, and that such were venerated by the Saxons is not a matter of conjecture but of evidence. A canon of the reign of Edgar enjoins the clergy to be diligent in withdrawing the people from the worship of trees, stones, and fountains. The laws of Cnut prohibited the worship of heathen gods, the sun, moon, fires, rivers, fountains, and other heathen practices.

But the pagans could not be weaned from the old customs by canons, laws, or edicts, and this was, for the most part, wisely recognised by the authorities. Gregory's letter to Mellitus (Bede, lib. i., c. 30) directs him to *retain* the old temples and consecrate them, "that the nation, seeing that their temples are not destroyed, may remove error from their hearts, and knowing and adoring the true God, *may the more familiarly resort to the place to which they have been accustomed.*" And further, the pagan feasts were to be turned to the honour of God, "to the end that while some gratifications are outwardly permitted them, they may the more easily consent to the inward consolations of the grace of God, *for there is no doubt that it is impossible to efface everything at once from their obdurate minds.*" In short the policy of the great Bishop, and of the Christian Church in general, was to make the transition from pagan error to Divine truth, as little violent as possible. In England, where S. Augustine and his successors carried out the spirit of Gregory's directions, the people would be gathered together in the places they held sacred—within the stone circle, in the leafy grove, on the swelling mound, by hoary rock, or holy well. And we have evidence of it in stones once sacred to the rites of Druidical worship, marked with a cross; in wells of water once sanctified by heathen ceremonies, placed under saintly



invocation by Christian superstition ; in old church sites whereon Woden and Freja, and before them, Jupiter and Venus, were worshipped.

#### THE MIGRATION OF SYMBOLS.

There is much akin in the varied mythology of nations, and the legendary epics of all races have many points of contact, and appear everywhere to vibrate in tones of mutual sympathy. For the existence of similar symbols in widely remote countries there are three possible hypotheses: 1, Migration; 2, community of religion; 3, similarity of development. Either they have spread from one place to another, or they are the legacies of times when the people possessing them were geographically united; or, finally, they have sprung up independently in virtue of the natural laws of religious growth. It may be difficult to say of any given belief to which class it belongs; but there are many beliefs, so alike in general features, yet so divergent in detail, as best to accord with the theory of a common descent or a common development. Certain is it that early symbolism had the capacity to spread widely and rapidly, and to retain in its later or Christian forms all the characteristics of its heathen origin.

#### THE BELTANE FIRES.

The three great festivals of the Druids took place on May-day Eve, on Midsummer Eve, and on All Hallow-e'en. On those days went up from cairns, toothills, and Belenian heights, fires and sacrifices to the great sun-god, Bâl. These fires have come down to us as the famous Beltane fires, lit still, or until recently, in parts of Ireland, Scotland, and in Cornwall, on the eve of the



summer solstice, and at the equinoxes. The Church, to sanctify these fires of heathen origin, made the day of John the Baptist coincident with Midsummer day, and taught that the heathen customs they could not eradicate were symbolical of Christian doctrine. The fires, said they, signified the Baptist, that burning and shining light who was to precede the true light, but the pagan origin of these fires is amply proved by their heathen names.

#### IRELAND'S ROUND TOWERS.

The Round Towers found in every part of Ireland have long been a puzzle to archæologists and ecclesiologists alike, mainly because there is nothing quite like them elsewhere to which they may be compared. Those that are perfect are found to vary in height from seventy to one hundred and ten feet, and although they differ slightly in construction and material, the result no doubt of local conditions, they all belong to one common type. They are most numerous in the districts where the early colonists settled, before the piratical invasions of Danes and Norsemen, and in all they number some eighty, of which twenty are more or less perfect. In some cases, as at Antrim, the granite slabs above the door are ornamented with rudely-sculptured crosses, and the duplex, a well-established pagan-Christian symbol, figures with the ship, symbol of the true Church, on either side of the door-jambs of the tower at Roscrea.

#### BELFRIES OR WATCH TOWERS.

The purpose of these towers has ever been a much-debated question. Among the many theories that have appeared from time to time is that they were watch-



towers,<sup>1</sup> burial monuments of illustrious persons, pillars for keeping alive the sacred fire of Bâl, and belfries. Mr. Gough in "Archæologia" seems to have no doubt that they were really Christian minarets, from which the faithful were summoned to prayer, and Mr. Petrie, the author of a treatise on the subject which gained the prize offered by the Irish Academy for the elucidation of the mystery, is equally confident that they were belfries or campanili, "but used at the same time as places of refuge against the sudden predatory inroads of the sea-pirates and land-robbers to which the Christian settlements were exposed." We need not go any further into this much-discussed problem, except to point out that the early Irish colonists were worshippers of Bâl, and that the constant recurrence of the word Bâl, in Irish place-names seems to indicate some connection with the early pagan settlements.

#### A STRANGE SURVIVAL.

Mr. E. Ellis, in his "History of Ireland," published in 1869, says: "On S. John's Eve (23rd June), a strange relic of Bâl-worship may be still witnessed in country parts: fires of turf or furze are made across the roads, through which men, women, children, and cattle pass—just as the Assyrians of old are described in the Bible, as causing their children to pass through the brick-kiln to Bâl."

#### THE BIRTHDAY OF CHRIST.

It may come as a surprise to many people, even to those who are aware how much is obscure in the

<sup>1</sup> "The construction of the Irish round tower shows that it was primarily intended for a watch-tower, whatever may have been its other uses." S. O. Addy, "Evolution of the English House."



early history of our Lord, to learn that Christmas Day was *adopted* by the Church for the birthday of Christ, for as late as A.D. 400 the Fathers were quite uncertain of the exact date of the Holy Advent. S. Chrysostom, writing at the beginning of the 5th century, says (Hom. 31), in reference to the pagan festival of the Sun-god: "On this day also the birthday of Christ *was lately fixed* at Rome in order that while the heathen were busy with their profane ceremonies the Christians might perform their sacred rites undisturbed. They call this (Dec. 25, or viii. Kal. Jan, as the Romans wrote it), the Birthday of the Invincible One (Mithras); but who so invincible as the Lord? They call it the Birthday of the Solar Disc; but Christ is the Sun of Righteousness." Christian ritual, as we shall see in the following pages, has retained much symbolism drawn from a heathen origin. The custom of facing east in worship, derived from the Persian notions of sun-worship, is only one of many such instances.

#### POPULAR OBSERVANCES.

Of our more popular observances there are many showing a like influence. The Roman custom of presenting gifts at the New Year is still observed. The use of bridecake at weddings, the palatine bay and oak on our coinage, all recall a like origin.

#### YULETIDE.

Elfs, goblins, mermaids, giants, dwarfs, dragons, and all the apparatus of a fanciful creation, formed the principal machinery of northern mythology from the earliest times. These were not borrowed, although they bore marks of primeval kindred with Persian demonology. The northern



feeling, embodied in legendary story, was the root on which the genius of the Western nations was engrafted. Christianity was the light from above that illumined the older elements, purified and moulded them into Christian modes of thought. Christmas has supplanted the old Yule festival, but the Yule log still testifies to the rites of fire-worship once connected with the season. At Yuletide, too, the Boar was sacrificed to Frigga, Woden's divine spouse, and the "boar's head" appears still at many a Christmas feast. We now keep Easter at the time when our pagan forefathers used to sacrifice to the goddess Eostre (the Astoreth or Astarte of the Phœnicians), and hot-cross buns may well be the descendants of cakes once eaten in her honour, on which the symbol of Christianity has taken the place of some heathen sign.

#### DRUIDIC REMAINS.

Long after Christianity had become well established in Britain, druidic remains were still held in great reverence—a reverence sometimes amounting to adoration—and we are told on good authority that many druidical stones were Christianised by having the cross cut upon them.

#### A CRUCIFORM MOUND.

Be this as it may there is at Margam, in Glamorganshire, a remarkable cruciform mound, situated on the top of a hill abounding in tumuli. There is little doubt that in ancient times this mound was set apart for pagan worship. If so it would be regarded with peculiar abhorrence by the early Christians who, to hallow it, raised the symbol of their salvation upon the spot where one of the *llans*, the circle for druidic worship, was situated. It is worthy



of notice, too, that "Y Groes," the Cross, figures in the names of sundry places in the vicinity, as "Lanton-y-groes," the flat under the cross, a house situated exactly as the name implies; "Tan-y-groes," the fire of the cross; and "Groes-wen," the blessed cross.

This pagan-Christian overlap can be discerned in many purely secular customs, manners, and ceremonies. A very simple, yet at the same time a very good illustration is that afforded us by the names of the days of the week—Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, etc.

#### DAYS OF THE WEEK.

Týr, Ty, or Tew, gave his name to Tuesday, and the word originally appears to have been applied to whatever was god-like or illustrious. But when the god Woden became the great source of spirituality, Tew was not entirely thrown over, but was invested with the spirit of bravery and prowess, by virtue of which his emblem was an arrowhead.

Woden, whose name is commemorated in Wednesday, was the one-eyed god, who sacrificed the organ of sight for a draught of wisdom. His sign was the triskele — as symbolic of his supremacy in the trio—Woden, Frey, and Thor.

Thursday is reminiscent of Thor, Woden's son, a great pagan god who solved all difficulties with his hammer. His emblems were the mallet and the northern fylfot (*see* Chap. V.). In heathen mythology the rowan tree was called Thor's Helper, because it bent that he might grasp it when crossing a flooded river on his way to the land of the Frost Giants.

Friday comes to us from Frey, the lord of the solar disc,



and the god of fertility, together with Freya, his sister, who was the goddess of love, and Frigga, the wife of Woden and the sister of Týr, who were with Frey himself originally one deity. Frey's signature was the pre-historic solar cross, ✚ now called the cross Pattée (*see* Chap. V.).

#### MODERN SUPERSTITION.

In popular superstition this overlap is as marked as it is in religious customs and observances, and however absurd such beliefs and customs may appear to the mind of the modern scientist, yet they cannot be dismissed as trivial, for in many cases they suggest past unions between nations now geographically remote, and without doubt they all originally had a meaning, even if such has now become effaced with the lapse of time. They are valuable, also, inasmuch as they often corroborate the evidence exhibited by the more material remains of past ages, such as sculptured stones, etc. In Devonshire, when a death occurs in a house, the inmates immediately inform the bees, invite them to the funeral, and drape the hive in crape, and the same custom, with slight local modifications, prevails in every English county, and very widely on the Continent.

#### ANIMAL SPIRITS.

The usual explanation of this custom, which is too widespread not to have had a common origin, is that some bees died or took to flight consequent on the neglect they incurred when the hand that had tended them could no longer do so; and what is now regarded as superstition and caprice, no doubt dates back to a time when not only bees



and cattle, but trees and flowers were considered liable to take offence, unless their spirits were pacified by such treatment and sympathy as was extended to fellow human beings. In many of the English counties, too, bees must not be made the means of barter, they must be given or even stolen, never bought, otherwise they will take offence, with the result that the farmer's corn, hay, or flocks will most certainly suffer.

#### APPLE-HOWLING.

In Devonshire, in Cornwall, and doubtless in many other counties, it was customary for the parishioners on Christmas Eve to walk in procession to the apple orchards, then, standing around the chief tree, to salute it with certain words, sprinkle it with cider, and place cakes of toast and sugar among the branches. The salutation was generally in the form of a prayer invoking the fruitfulness of the tree, and the custom was called *apple-howling*. Can there be any reasonable doubt that this is a survival of the belief that trees were endowed with a conscious personality, and the hope to secure its continued favours by the offering of prayers and gifts? In a word, the survival of totemism pure and simple?

#### SACRED TREES.

Again, the Elder was a sacred tree, and one to which the old Saxons offered up prayers before lopping its branches, and the old peasant of a few years ago would no more have thought of binding up the elder with other faggots than of committing sacrilege, and it is still regarded in country districts as the safest kind of tree to shelter under during a thunderstorm. The white thorn,



also, was an object of totemism, and one that was so strongly rooted in the pagan mind, that the Church wound its own legend around it, and by teaching that its wood had composed the Crown of Thorns, deprived the custom of much of its heathen sting, thus furnishing us with another illustration of the gradual Christianising of that which was originally heathen. A few every day examples may be briefly alluded to.

#### MODERN HABITS.

English schoolboys, and their fathers likewise, turn the money in their pockets on the sight of a new moon, thus perpetuating a heathen tradition that with the increase or wane of the moon there was a corresponding increase or wane of things on the earth. But how are we to account for the somewhat unpleasant but very general habit of spitting. Some people spit if they meet a white horse, or see a magpie, and never fail to do so when passing under a ladder. When leaving home for school boys spit on a stone and throw it away, and market people may still be seen spitting on the first money they receive. The idea is that the habit is a charm for bringing good luck and averting bad. The only solution of this universal custom is one that is here suggested with great diffidence, and is to the effect that in the old religion of the Messalians spitting and sneezing were enjoined as a remedy for freeing the air of the demons and evil spirits, and it is thus possible that in this observance we have the key to the mystery. During the Sacrament of Baptism in the Russian Church, when the sponsors promise to renounce the devil, the people present turn round and spit upon the ground.



## THE BOOK OF KELLS.

The famous MS. known as the "Book of Kells" (*circa* A.D. 690) may not inaptly be referred to as a further illustration of the influence of Christian doctrine operating on the semi-pagan genius of the Celtic mind. The MS. is now preserved in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, and it is of immense value for its purely artistic merit, but with that we are not here concerned. Mr. Walter Crane tells us that "the art of the early Christian Western civilisation was strictly ornamental in its manifestations, suggesting in its richness, and in the intricacy and ingenuity of its involved patterns, as well as the geometric forms of many of its units, a relation to certain characteristics of Eastern as well as primitive Greek art."

The book derives its name from the Columban Monastery of Kells, or Kenlis, originally Cemanas, once a place of importance in the county of Meath, in Ireland, and it is thought to have been the Great Gospel brought to the Christian settlement by S. Columba, and may possibly have been composed by that saint, who died in 597.

On one page is the Greek monogram of Christ and the three words, "Christi Autem Generatio," and on another the emblems of the Evangelists (*see* chap. xiv.) enclosed in circles. Other early MSS., interesting to both artist and antiquary alike, are the Arundel and the Lutterell Psalters, and both show in a marked degree the influence the Byzantine and Roman traditions had upon the earliest forms of Christian pictorial art.

## USES OF RINGS.

Our present marriage service also shows the retention of many rites and practices of our pagan ancestors. The



custom of placing a ring on the bride's finger is ages old, although this was by no means the first use of these ornaments, for the wearing of a ring probably originated from the convenient means it afforded of carrying a seal, that indispensable warrant of authority in ancient and mediæval times. Before the introduction of coinage the Egyptians circulated gold in the form of rings, and the Egyptian at his marriage placed a ring of gold (the equivalent of a certain sum of money) on his wife's finger, in token of his entrusting her with all his property. Clemens tells us that the early Christians saw no harm in following the same custom, and when the modern bridegroom places a gold ring on his bride's finger, he says, as did the old Egyptian, "With all my worldly goods I thee endow." The fourth finger of the bride's left hand was chosen to receive this token, because it was thought in the unscientific days of the past "that a particular nerve or artery is conferred thereto from the heart, and therefore that especially has the honour to bear our rings."

Nearly all ecclesiastical vestments (with the exception of the girdle and stole which are Judaical), show a like origin, as the amice and the alb, which have even retained the very names they bore in Numa Pompilius's day. In the Roman Catholic Church the "pelt" worn by the Canons is a survival of the days when the pagan priest wore the skin of the animal he had sacrificed, with the skin outward.

The tonsure was worn by the Brahmins long before it was adopted by Rome, and incense was at first regarded with such anti-pagan horror that many of the early priests were executed for refusing to use it. The heathen name for holy water was *aqua lustralis*, and was used for the symbolic purification from sin.



The Episcopal mitre, worn by Anglican, Roman, and Greek bishops alike, has also its heathen prototype. The high priest of the fish-god Dagon, amongst the ancient Philistines, wore a mitre shaped like the head of a fish. The Grand Lama of Tibet wears a mitre; so does the Emperor of China when he dons his priestly robes and blesses his nation. The Judaical mitre was in the shape of a turban, with a band encircling the head.

Infant baptism is certainly Persian, if not of much earlier date, while the throwing of three handfuls of earth on the coffin of the dead, together with the words "dust to dust," is a custom the origin of which is lost in Egyptian mythology.

What says Fra Colonna in *The Cloister and the Hearth*? "Our prayers for the dead come from Asia with Æneas. Ovid tells, that when he prayed for the soul of Anchises, the custom was strange in Italy.

‘HUNC MOREM ÆNEAS, PIETATIS IDONEUS AUCTOR  
ATTULIT IN TERRAS, JUSTE LATINE, TUAS.’

"Our numerous altars in one church are heathen; the Jews, who are monotheists, have but one altar in a church. But the pagans had many, being polytheists. . . . Our Devil is the god Pan, horns and hoofs and all . . . our Moses hath stolen the horns of Ammon; our Wolfgang the hook of Saturn; and Janus bore the keys of heaven before S. Peter. All our really old Italian bronzes of the Virgin and Child are Venuses and Cupids."

Further, "kissing of images, and the Pope's toe, is Eastern paganism. The Egyptians had it of the Assyrians, the Greeks of the Egyptians, the Romans of the Greeks, and we (the Roman Catholic Church) of the Romans,



whose Pontifex Maximus had his toe kissed under the Empire. The Druids kissed their high priest's toe a thousand years B.C."

#### THE EVIDENCE OF TOMBSTONES.

Old tombstones with their curious epitaphs serve as an unimpeachable record of the gradual development of religious thought from barbaric to civilised times. The earliest epitaphs found in England were written during the Roman occupation, and commemorate the more prominent officers of the Roman legion. The oldest epitaph in English is found in a churchyard in Oxfordshire, and dates from 1370, reading as follows :

"man com & se how schal alle dede be :  
wen yow comes bad and bare :  
noth hav ven we away fare :  
all ys werines yt ve for care."

From the 13th century down to the Reformation, epitaphs were mostly inscribed on brass, and are expressed in the first person singular, and contrast the deceased's rank in life with the lowly condition of his body in the grave, concluding with a prayer for the passer-by. The trend of religious opinion is plainly shown by the three following epitaphs. In 1416, on the tomb of a young man who died when twenty-one years of age :

"Desiring you that this shall see  
Unto the Maiden pray for me,  
That bare both God and man."

In 1437 on a tombstone to a John Spycer, we read :

"Now, Jesu, that diedst on a tree, on us have mercy and pitie ;  
Mary, mother, maiden clear, have mercy on me, John Spycer."



## THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was only formally declared to be an article of faith in the Church of Rome as late as 1855, but it was undoubtedly in the minds of the authors of epitaphs during the middle of the 15th century. After the Reformation, however, the Romish allusions to "golden keys" and the cleansing fires of Purgatory quickly passed away, together with the pious formula, "Pray for the soul," that figures on so many pre-Reformation epitaphs. So quickly indeed did these Popish doctrines disappear, that ten years only after Henry VIII's rupture with the Romish Church we get the full development of the Reformed religion on the epitaph to one Lambe, who prayed for immortality through Christ alone. This is also a good example of the play upon words, or punning epitaph, so commonly found:

## LAMBE'S EPITAPH.

" O Lambe of God, whiche sinne didst take away,  
And (as a lambe) was offered up for sinne ;  
Where I, poore Lambe, went from the flock astray,  
Yet thou (good Lorde) vouchsafe thy Lambe to winne  
Home to thy fold, and hold thy Lambe therein :  
That at the day when lambes and goats shall sever,  
Of thy choice lambes, Lambe may be one for ever."

One of the most extraordinary epitaphs we have is one at West Allington, Devon, whereon we read :

" HERE LIETH THE BODY OF  
DANIEL JEFFERY THE SON OF MICH  
AEL JEFFERY AND JOAN HIS WIFE HE  
WAS BURIED Y<sup>e</sup> 22 DAY OF SEPTEMBER  
1746 AND IN Y<sup>e</sup> 18<sup>th</sup> YEAR OF HIS AGE.



“ This Youth When In his sickness lay  
did for the minister Send + that he would  
Come and With him Pray + But he would not atte<sup>nd</sup>  
But When this young man Buried was  
The minister did him admit + he should be  
Caried into Church + that he might money geet  
By this you See what man will dwo + to geet  
money if he can + who did refuse to come  
Pray + by the Foresaid young man.”

Apart from the cruciform mound, to which attention has already been called, sculptured stones, such as the famous hog backs of Lancashire and elsewhere, the early Saxon roods of Romsey, and the old stone crosses of Cornwall, all show decided characteristics of pagan influence, and some of them may well be pagan stones adopted, with but slight modifications, to set forth Christian doctrines. On many Cornish crosses the Woden-Christ hangs free and fully clothed, without a cross, in the Scandinavian and Byzantine manner, and, as we shall see in the following pages, the gradual Christianising of the pagan forms of worship is amply borne out by the large numbers of similar memorials which still exist.

#### THE FUTURE WORLD.

In concluding this chapter on one of the most interesting periods of our Christian faith, attention may be called to the widespread propensity of symbolisers, whether pagan or Christian, to endeavour to reveal the innermost desires and fears of living men. These pictures of a future world beyond the bourne of death were no doubt inspired by a perfectly natural curiosity to learn the mysteries of a future life ; for the desire to seek after a solution of spiritual



existence has always been one of the most marked characteristics of both savage and civilised communities. Whatever has constituted man's highest pleasure on earth, *that* he has hoped to find again in heaven, and whatever he has most dreaded, *that* he has imagined as forming the retribution of guilt hereafter. From this point of view the Christian idea of the supreme vision of beatitude—the attitude of adoration—is surely the loftiest ideal of which we have any conception.

#### GOOD FROM EVIL.

Finally, we have inherited the legitimate and unbroken continuation of long and living traditions, and we shall best understand the Christian religion if we think of it not as a new religion, but as some such prolongation of the older cults of the past. This is not discreditable to Christianity, rather it shows its wonderful elasticity, its growth, and such vitality as enabled it to absorb and eventually to entirely supercede the creeds on which it was grafted. As a modern writer says, "The very fact that it was possible to convert pagan emblems into Christian tokens is a striking example of the way in which evil itself may be made to bear witness to God's truth, ofttimes latent, under the most soul-destroying error."



## CHAPTER II

### PLANS OF CHURCHES, THEIR ORIENTATION, ETC.

#### EARLY CHRISTIANS.

THE word originally applied to Christians, as distinct from Jews, infidels, and heretics, was *Ecclesiastici*, but subsequently the term came to be confined to the clergy, as contradistinct from the laity, and has survived with us in that capacity alone. In the New Testament the word *Ecclesia* is employed in various senses, either to designate the civil assemblies of the Greeks, the general assembly of the Israelites under the law, or the whole body of Christians throughout the world. It also refers to a particular Church or congregation, whether collectively or individually considered, and to a place or building.

#### THE EARLY CHURCH.

The word *Church* as used by us implies the "House of God," and may be traced through the Scotch *Kirk* and German *Kirche* to the Greek *κυριακόν*, *The Lord's House*, whence it signifies any place peculiarly appropriated or "set apart for the service of God"; although, like *Ecclesia*, the word was also used to denote both an assembly and a building. Among the Latins the term in general use was *Dominicum*, or *Domus Dei*, the former word being sometimes used to indicate the Lord's Supper and the Lord's



Day. Mr. S. O. Addy says, "In the same way basilica is βασιλική, the king's house, so that church and basilica are virtually identical terms." The Church is often spoken of as the *Visible Church*, which is set forth in the XIXth Article as "*a Congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered, according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.*"

When the word *Church* is not applied to any particular persons or assemblies, but embraces the whole of the Christian peoples, it takes the epithet *Catholic*; a Greek word meaning *general* or *universal*. In this sense the word is nearly as ancient as the Church herself, being grounded on the diffusive commission of our Lord, "Go, teach all nations."

The honour of having formed the prototype of our oldest English churches rests unquestionably with the primitive aisleless building of the Celts as found in Ireland, and although a few antiquaries still put forward claims for the Roman basilica, there is not the slightest doubt that priority of place must be given to the Celtic model.

Mr. Ernest Radford says: "The Prototype of most of our oldest churches is the little aisleless church of the Celt with its square-ended chancel added." And this is the opinion of those who consider that our oldest churches were planned in the form of an oblong, and that the element of the square chancel-end is indigenous, for in this manner only can the reappearance in English Gothic architecture of the square chancel-end be accounted for. Mr. Petrie thought that the early Irish Church plan was a simple oblong without aisles or transepts, and was the prototype of our earliest churches, "but from very early



times it took the form of both a cross and an oblong." The influence of the Irish missionaries upon early church architecture in England has never been disputed, and it can be proved by reference to many existing examples; but after a time these rude and humble chapels could not compete with the more pretentious plans supplied by the architects of Gaul and Italy. At the same time the energy shown by the early missionaries, coupled with the great veneration in which they were held, makes it certain that their ecclesiastical architecture had a considerable influence on that of England, and it is equally sure that the preference of a square over an apsidal termination, so strongly shown in English churches up to the 12th century, was due to the habit of imitating the early oratories of S. Cuthbert or S. Aidan.

The simple plan of our earliest churches was soon to give way to one in the form of a cross. In the East the Greek Cross was largely favoured, and this form of church with a great dome or cupola at the intersection, became so characteristic of the architecture of Byzantium (Constantinople), as to acquire the name *Byzantine*. In Western Europe, however, the Latin Cross was mostly used, and this with few exceptions is the plan on which our English cathedrals and churches were built. When the Cross became the accepted symbol of the Christian religion, it was only natural that this cruciform plan should have been adopted for buildings which were largely, although not exclusively, set apart for religious worship. Without intending to reiterate what has been said in the previous chapter it must be remembered that although the Cross has long been the accepted symbol of the Christian faith, yet its origin is lost in pagan obscurity, and even as an architectural and ornamental form it is



many centuries earlier than Christianity. It has been found on tombs and cisterns at least as early as 400 B.C., and it was a favourite form for certain ornaments worn by the Druids. The evolution of the cruciform church plan was doubtless very gradual, and one that was hastened or retarded by the attitude of the pagan contemporaries of the early Christians, whose only hope of living in anything like comparative peace and quietness was to effect a compromise, and not break all at once with the influences, customs, and traditions by which they were surrounded. They endeavoured to weave the fine fabric of Christianity into the coarser garment of paganism, and they did so for the most part in a judicious and careful manner, and one that is well worthy of the attention of modern missionaries.

A curious instance of this grafting of Christianity on to another creed is that afforded by some of the Russian Churches, whereon is found a Crescent beneath a Cross, as indicating the ascendancy of Christianity over Islamism ;<sup>1</sup> and one of the early Popes ordained that every church spire should be capped by a cock as symbolical of the sovereignty of the Church over the whole world. In the Bayeux Tapestry one is shown on the gable of Westminster Abbey. There is no doubt, however, that the symbol of the Cross was held in the highest honour by the early Christians, and that by it they consecrated all the more important acts of their daily life. The traditional measurements of the actual Cross upon which our Lord's body hung, are stated by Sir John Maundeville to have been as follows : "You shall understand that the Cross of our Lord was eight cubits long, and the cross-piece was three cubits and a half in length."

<sup>1</sup> This was done by order of the Grand Duke Basilovich. (*Rites and Ceremonies of the Greek Church in Russia.*)



It is of course common knowledge that a church is composed of nave and chancel (to which may be added aisles and transepts), and that these face west and east respectively, as symbolical of the teaching that to the East we are to pray for protection against the power of our enemy, and for the blessing of the Day-Spring, symbolised for us by the rising sun.

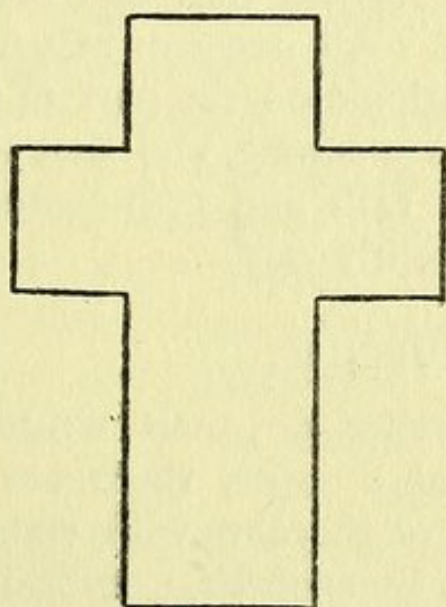
The custom of turning to the East during the repetition of the Creed, is, if not universal, very general in the Christian Church to-day; and by far the greater number of our churches have been planned and arranged for this purpose.

Several reasons have been assigned for this custom, among them that the East was the Symbol of Christ, who was called in Scripture "the Orient," and "the Sun of Righteousness." That the East was the Seat of Paradise. That as our Lord made His first appearance in the East, He will there appear on the last day. The pagans generally worshipped towards the East, and the custom was no doubt continued by them after their conversion to Christianity. Dr. March writes: "The origin of the eastern attitude of invocation probably lies in the fact that the sun, the visible and ever-recurring source of light and heat, was venerated if not actually worshipped by the earliest civilised races of which we have any knowledge, and whose priests taught that the sun's activity was controlled by a supreme being."

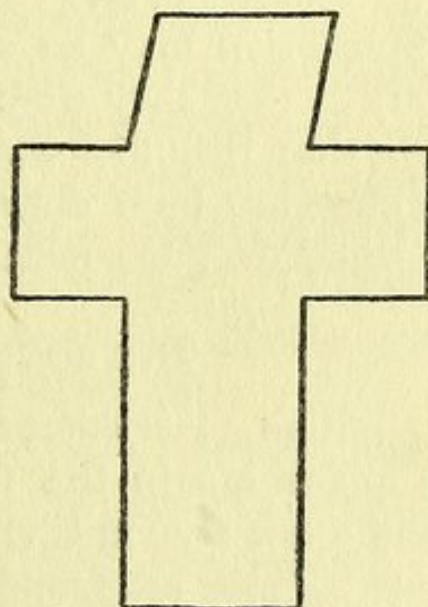
The east and west planning of our churches is called the *orientation* of the building, and one of the earliest records of such orientation is that found in the *Apostolic Constitutions* (II, 57): "And first let the house be oblong, turned towards the East, the pastophoria on either side toward the East." Mabillon, in speaking of ancient



churches, says: "They all used to end in an apse or bow, and used to look toward the East," but as Socrates tells us that the Church of Antioch "had its position inverted, for its altar looks not toward the East, but towards the West" (Hist. Eccl., *lib.* v., Cap. 22), it appears that there were exceptions to this rule.<sup>1</sup> The practice of the Christians in orientating a church was no doubt in its origin another of those pagan customs which were by a wise economy turned to Christian purposes. Orientation,



*Normal Plan*



*Plan with deflected Chanc.*

however, is by no means found to apply to all *chancels*, for many of these do not so orientate, but show a slight deflection, usually one or two feet, to north or south. This has often been stated to be due to the fact that a church was intended to orientate only on the day of the

<sup>1</sup> The Church of Tyre had its Sanctuary to the west, in which respect it followed the plan of the Tabernacle and Temples. S. Peter's at Rome has its apse to the west.



Saint in honour of whom it was dedicated ; but many churches have been tested on their saints' days, and the chancel is still found to deflect. Some authorities attribute these deflections to bad planning or weak construction ; but Mr. J. H. Parker states emphatically that it is quite incapable of constructional explanation. The only solution is the symbolical one, that it represents our Lord upon the Cross at that period when " His head declined towards His right shoulder, and in that attitude he chose to die." As many deflections are to the north, and many chancels have no deflection, one can but suggest that this touching explanation may be correct. All one can say with certainty is that they were intentional on the part of the builders, that they had a specific meaning, and that it is in the churches built during the 14th and 15th centuries that such deflections most frequently occur.

#### THE ROUND CHURCHES.

In addition to cruciform churches, *i.e.*, those churches whose plans are in the form of a cross, there are in England a few Round Churches, or churches with circular chancels. These are found at S. Sepulchre's, Cambridge ; S. Sepulchre's, Northampton ; S. John's, Little Maplestead, Essex ; the Temple Church, London ; at Bruerne, Lincolnshire ; and Temple Balsall, Warwickshire.<sup>1</sup> These were built by the Knights Hospitallers, a religious order founded about 1092 to attend the sick and wounded during the first Crusade. They settled in England, A.D. 1100, during the reign of Henry I., and the old gateway leading to their Hospital may still be seen at Clerkenwell.

<sup>1</sup> Foundations of a round church have also been discovered at Clerkenwell, where the Gateway of the Hospital may still be seen. The Knights Templars possessed 27 Preceptories in England.



Their principal Church was that of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, and of those they erected in England that at Little Maplestead is thought to reproduce with great fidelity the plan of the parent church.

#### SYMBOLISM OF THE CIRCLE.

The circular design, both of chancels and roofs, has been said to be symbolical of the vast concave and circuit of the heavens, and, according to Durandus, is to signify "that the Church hath been extended throughout the circle of the world, as saith the Psalmist, '*and their words unto the end of the world.*' Or because from the circle of the world we reach forth to that crown of eternity which shall encircle our brows." The Knights Hospitallers afterwards developed into a semi-military order, and combined the prowess of the knight with the instincts of the cloister. They wore the mail and arms of their period together with a black gown and a white cross on the left shoulder, *not* a red surcoat marked with a white cross, as is so frequently stated, and both the Templars and the Hospitallers wore a long mantle which was thrown over the shoulders and hung upon the ground. Both orders were forbidden to have their features cut in stone, and the only known effigy of a Templar was at Yves de Braine, near Soissons, in France.

#### THE NAVE.

*The Nave* of a Church is that portion westward of the Choir and Chancel, in which the general congregation assemble. The word is derived from the Latin *navis*,<sup>1</sup> a

<sup>1</sup> The German word for the nave of a church is *schiff*, ship. But the word was by no means confined to ecclesiastical buildings, and the earliest English houses have been stated by Mr. Addy to have



ship, and the resemblance of the naves of the old basilica churches to a ship was very marked, and the symbol was peculiarly appropriate to a people who loved to trace their spiritual descent from fishermen. The nave was usually separated from the rest of the church by a screen, which is dealt with in a following chapter. In large buildings the nave contains two or more aisles, on either side of which are seats for the congregation, and, previous to the Reformation, the pulpit was always placed in the nave, a position it still occupies in the Roman Catholic Church.

#### THE AISLES.

The word *Aisle* comes from the French *aile*, a wing; hence, if a church has a passage down the centre as well as on either side, it is, considering the derivation of the word, somewhat absurd to speak of a "*Middle Aisle*." It appears certain that two distinct words have somehow got mixed up, one being *aisle*, a wing, and the other *alley*, a place to walk in. The north aisle, of the choir of Lincoln Minster was formerly called the "Chanter's *Alley*," and Bishop Pilkington, in describing a Whitsuntide service at S. Paul's, says: "In the midst *alley* their long censer, reaching from the roof to the ground, as though the Holy Ghost came in their censings down in likeness of a dove."

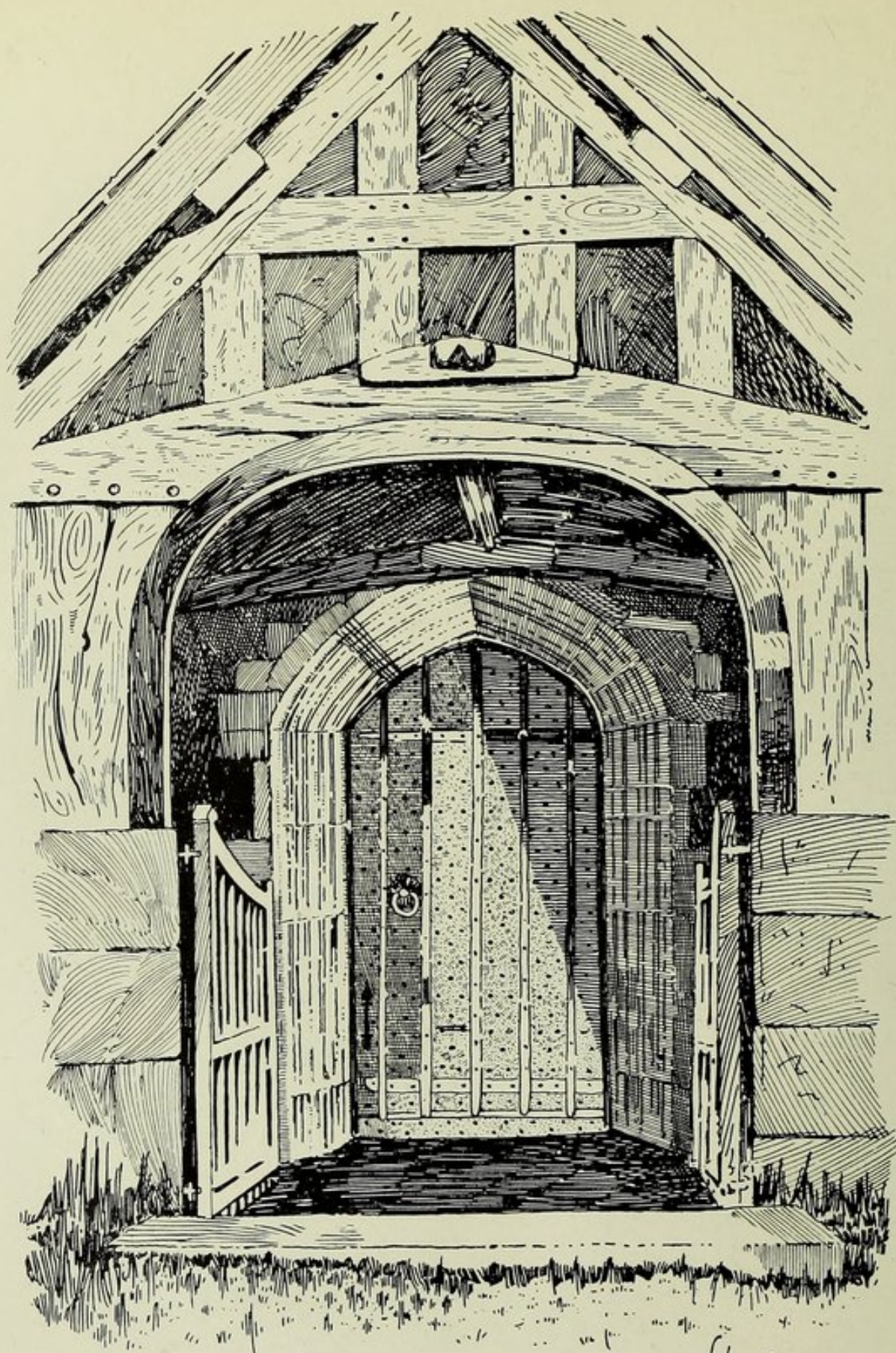
The Nave is symbolical of the Ship of the Church tossed on the waves of the world, and typifies the Church militant on earth, the condition of the Christian in his course through this life to a future state of happiness and perfection.

resembled an upturned boat. In the 10th century the word for an English house was "hulk," meaning a ship, and in the old Norse poetry the house was called the *hearthship*. (See "The Evolution of the English House.")









The Porch. Woolen Wawey.

Sidney Heath



## THE PORCH.

The *Porch* by which we enter the House of God was, in the early Christian buildings, called a *Narthex*, and was a division within the Church to which catechumens and penitents were admitted. The word *Porch* is derived from the Latin *Porche*, and Italian *Portico*, and with us consists of an adjunctive erection placed over the doorway of a larger building, although in a few cases, as at Cranbrook, Kent, the *Porch* is formed of the lower story of the tower. The *Porch* served for two purposes: it was a place where the uninitiated and the censured might assemble and partake of such offices as were allowed them, especially that of hearing the Holy Scriptures and the Sermon; and after this they were severally dismissed with a prayer appropriate to the circumstances and condition of each. The penitents and catechumens assembled in the *Porch* were wont to ask the prayers of the more highly-privileged who passed through their ranks to partake of the communion of the faithful.

In very early days persons of rank or great piety were allowed to be buried in the *Porch*, before interments were permitted within the church, but this privilege was granted only to good and religious men. In pre-Reformation days parts of the services for baptism, matrimony, and the churching of women were performed in the *Porch*, and the ancient stoups for holy water are still found in the porches of our churches, although they have nearly all been mutilated. As we are considering here only the main parts of the plan of a church, the door with its symbolical carving or tympanum, dividing the porch from the nave, is dealt with in another chapter.



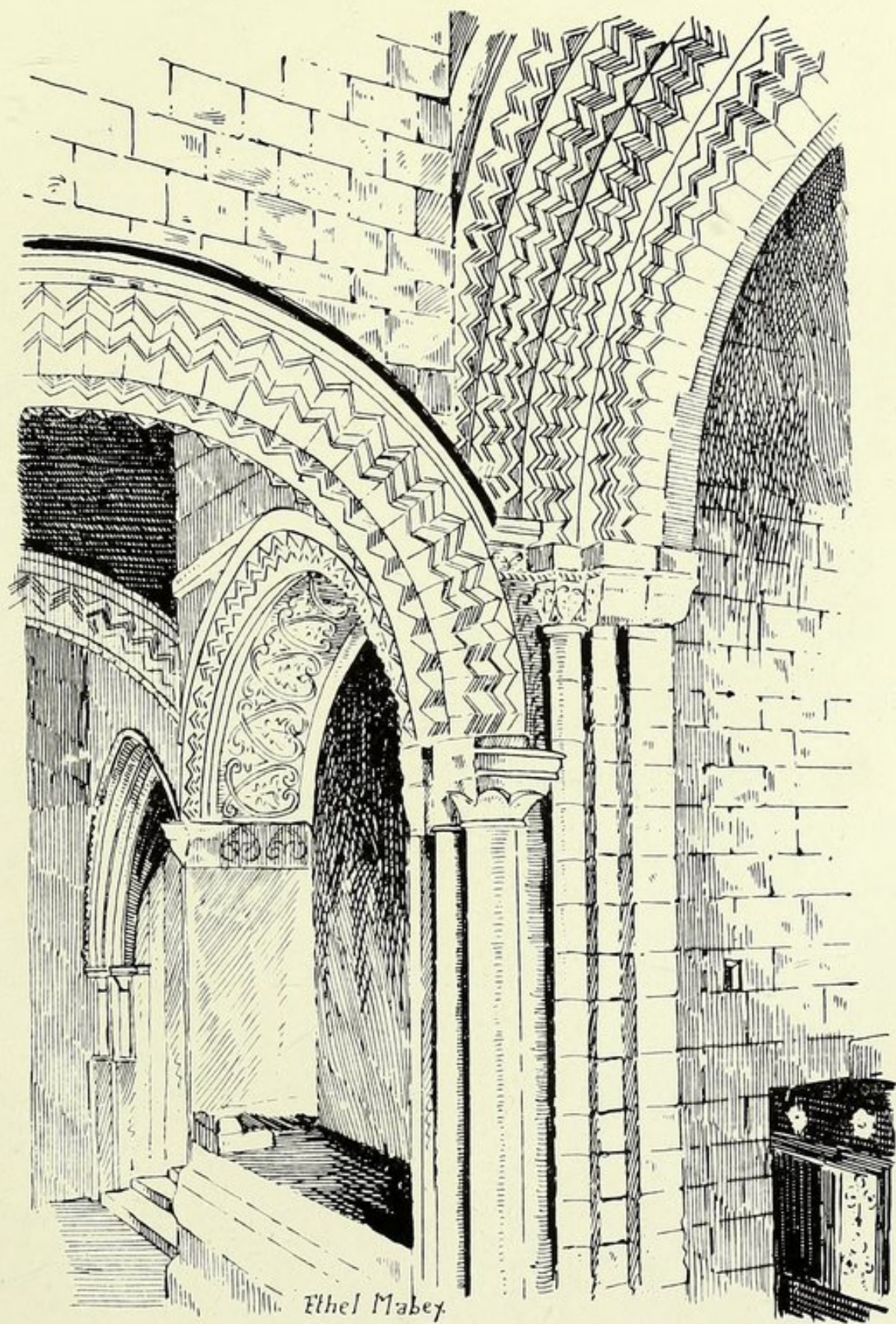
## THE GALILEE.

The "Galilee" Porch or Chapel, attached to so many of our Cathedrals and old Priory Churches, has a history and use which is largely conjectural. Mr. Parker, in his "Glossary of Architecture," says: "The term also appears sometimes to be applied to the nave,<sup>1</sup> or, at least, to the western portion of it, and in some churches there are indications of the west end of the nave having been parted off from the rest, either by a step in the floor, a division in the architecture, or some other line of demarcation. It was considered somewhat less sacred than the other parts of the building. Our finest example of a Galilee is that perhaps at Durham Cathedral, which is dedicated in honour of S. Cuthbert; and it is a curious fact that for some unknown reason women were not allowed in any church dedicated in the name of this saint. The Durham Galilee was built for the use of women, and dedicated in the name of the Blessed Virgin. In later times these large chapels were used for the marshalling of the processions on Festival and Saints' Days before they entered the nave. The term "Galilee" is thought to have been applied to porches situated on the north side of a conventual church or cathedral for the reason that when the Crusaders and pilgrims entered the Holy Land from the north, Galilee was the frontier province.

There is little doubt that the porch was used as a place for teaching pupils and catechumens, for Evelyn, in his "Memoirs," says, "That one Frier taught us in the church porch at Wotton." The stone benches still to be seen in

<sup>1</sup>The nave of a church is sometimes called the galilee, Low Lat. *galilæ*. Is this connected with "galley," a long ship? (S. O. Addy.)





*Elhel Mabey*

*The Galilee Porch,  
Durham Cathedral.*







many porches were no doubt the seats on which the scholars and catechumens once sat for instruction and advice. Mr. Addy tells us that "the practice of teaching in the porch of a church was borrowed from the Romans ; there was a direct continuity between the Roman and the English method."

The *Chancel*, derived from the Italian *Cancello*, is the choir or eastern part of a church appropriated to the use of those who officiate in the performance of the services. The term "choir," as applied to the chancel, does not appear to have been known in England until the end of the 13th century, and amongst its other names the chancel was known as *secretarium*. The chancel is considered symbolical of the Church Triumphant in Heaven, and here the Priest administers those Holy Gifts which are celebrated above all other Christian offices.

As the anonymous writer already quoted, says, "Through the chancel doors—the Gate of Death—we enter into the symbolic Heaven above. Here should rich materials and skilful workmanship make all as fair and glorious as aught of human fashioning may be ; for here those clothed in white raiment worship Him that liveth for ever and ever ; and here too, in their midst, is the Holy Table, the Throne of the King to whom we cry, still clinging to the symbol which has served for ages—'O Lord God, *Lamb of God*, Son of the Father, That takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.'"

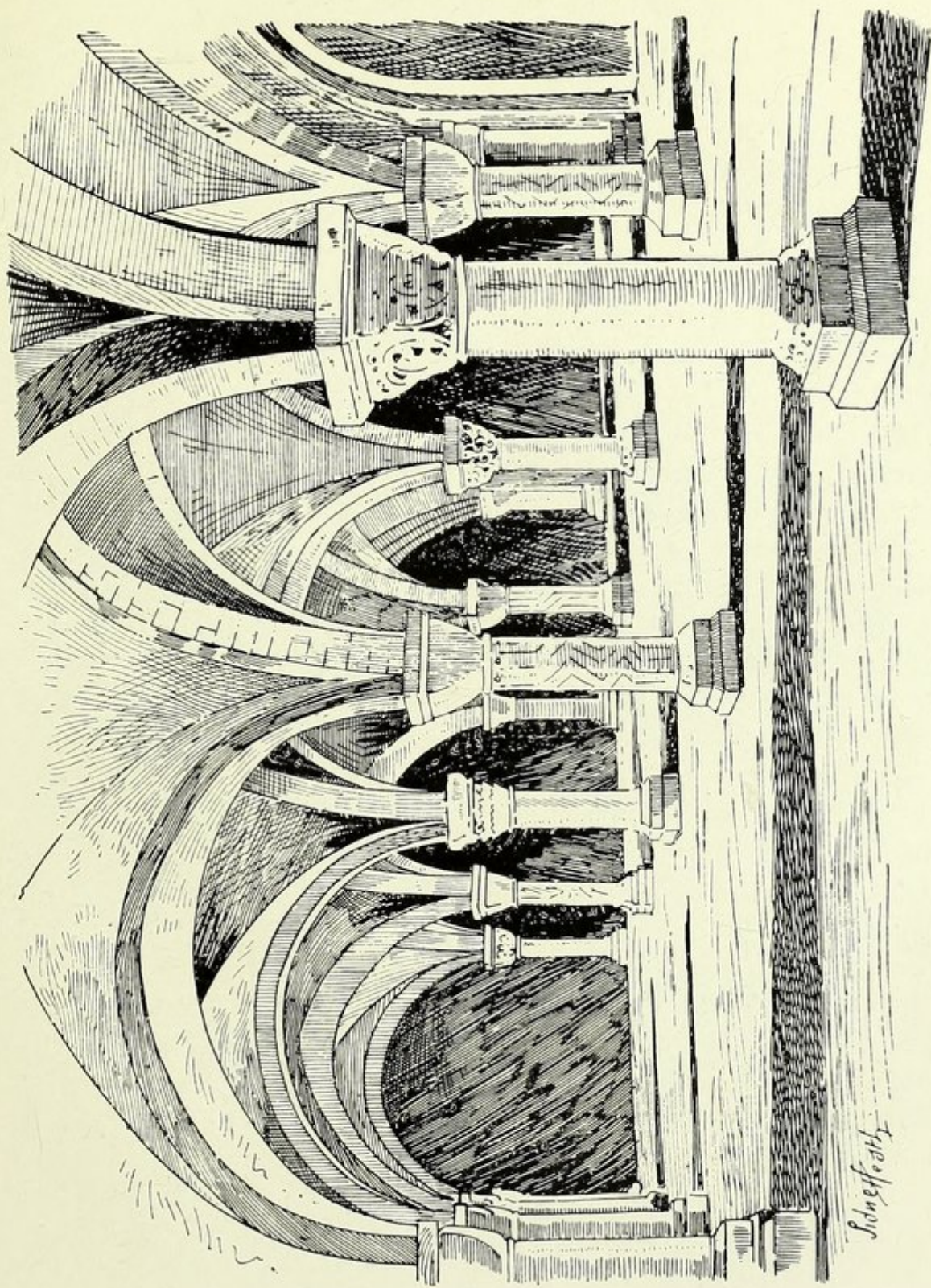
Many people must have been at a loss to account for the fact that so many of our smaller towns, and even villages, have such large churches. Leaving on one side the rural exodus to the larger centres of industry, we must remember that in early days there were no pews or seats in the churches, which were left with large open spaces



for the Processions carried out in them on patronal and dedication festivals, and, lastly, all the population were church-goers; there was no such thing as dissent.

Before 1547 the word *Procession* was synonymous with litany; and processions were enjoined by Henry VIII. in 1544, when he caused the Litany to be translated into English in order to encourage the attendance of the people at them. Processions were generally discontinued at the Reformation, but a few of them, as the Rogation Procession, have been somewhat revived of late years. The Crypt, sometimes called the *Undercroft*, is an underground cell or chapel, and there is abundant evidence that crypts were at one time furnished with altars, piscina, etc., for the celebration of the Mass. It is probable that the catacombs at Rome gave rise to their introduction, the similarity between our oldest crypts and the catacombs being very marked. Crypts are mostly subterranean, but some are only partially so, and they rarely extend beyond the limits of the choir and chancel, and are frequently found under the high altar only. They are architecturally valuable for the reason that so many of them have not been altered since they were built, and this even when no original stone remains of the superstructure. The crypts at Hornsea, Hexham, and Ripon, showed a marked basilical influence. The last two are attributed to S. Wilfrid, who founded monasteries in both places. The similarity of the plans, and the peculiarity of the structures makes it clear that they were both planned by the same hand. The model followed was the cubiculum and galleries of a Roman catacomb, and the principal vault in each bears considerable resemblance to the cubiculum adjacent to the cemetery of S. Callixtus, in which the bodies of SS. Peter and Paul are said to have remained for a considerable





*Sidney Smith*

*The Norman Crypt, Canterbury Cathedral.*

*Facing page 62.*







time. Our largest and most beautiful crypt is probably that at Canterbury Cathedral, dating from the Norman era. Of the crypt that once existed in the Saxon church here nothing remains. It was beneath a raised choir, and appears to have had several passages or divisions, but whether this formed part of the early church, or was one of the additions made by Archbishop Odo (A.D. 950), is uncertain.

Symbolical representations of the Church begin with the ark of Noah, passing by easy transitions to the ship of souls, and the ship of Jonah in the storm. As a type of Church militant the ark was very frequently used, and on tombs its implied meaning is that the dead expired in full communion with the Church. The vessel in full sail is also common as the symbol of safe conduct through the waves of this troublesome world, and, as we have seen, an even more appropriate symbol was conveyed when the fabric of a church was made ship-like. This was the case with most of the early Romanesque churches, where the apse that completed the basilica had the bishop's throne in the centre as the steersman's place, with semi-circular benches below for the clergy, so that a more than imaginary resemblance to a ship followed.



## CHAPTER III

### FONTS AND THE SYMBOLS OF BAPTISM

#### HEATHEN ORIGIN OF BAPTISM.

THE Sacrament of Baptism, the washing of the body with water, as a sign that the soul requires to be cleansed from sin, is not peculiar to the Christian religion. Both the Greeks and Romans used lustrations for those who were guilty of certain offences, and the same custom was employed by the Jews when admitting proselytes to their religion. It is obvious, then, that when our Lord accepted this rite at the hands of John the Baptist, he was investing an old custom with greater sanctity and holier significance.

#### EXCEPTIONS TO LATIN DERIVATIONS.

In most of the modern European languages the words expressive of baptism are derived from the Latin *baptizare*,<sup>1</sup> a fact that testifies to Latin having been the one ecclesiastical language of the Western Churches. The only exception is found in the German *taufen*, a word akin to our English "dip," which recalls the time when the mother-tongue was directed to be used in the baptism of converts. S. Boniface in his *Statuta*, directs

<sup>1</sup> Derived in its turn from the Greek βάπτειν, to dip, βαπτίζειν, to wash.



that the catechumens be taught to make the Renunciations and Confessions of Faith in Baptism "IN IPSA LINGUA QUA NATI SUNT," and directs any presbyter to leave the diocese who is too proud to obey this direction.

The idea of baptism as an initiation into Christian mysteries belonged naturally to the primitive days of the Church, when Christian doctrine was taught with great reserve; and the earliest description of an actual baptism is that recorded by Justin martyr during the 2nd century. (Apology, cap. lxxix.)

During the apostolic age no special times were appointed for the administration of this rite, the observance of which was determined by the varying circumstances consequent on the first establishment of the Faith.

#### SECRET BAPTISMS.

During the early days of the Church, converts to Christianity were usually baptised in secret to avoid persecution, but as the religion gradually became recognised it was forbidden to baptise in private. No complete order of Baptism has been preserved with regard to the usages of the early Irish and British Churches, but there are strong grounds for believing that the primitive British and Irish rites were based on the old Gallican system. Possibly the earliest baptisms in England took place at the river-side, the roadside, or in the wells of water found in so many of our old churchyards, and which probably date from long before the erection of churches. At a later period when fonts came into use, these were placed in the churchyards, and were sometimes enclosed in little buildings called Baptisteries. Still later the font appears to have been placed in the porch, where we



know part of the Baptismal and other services were enacted.

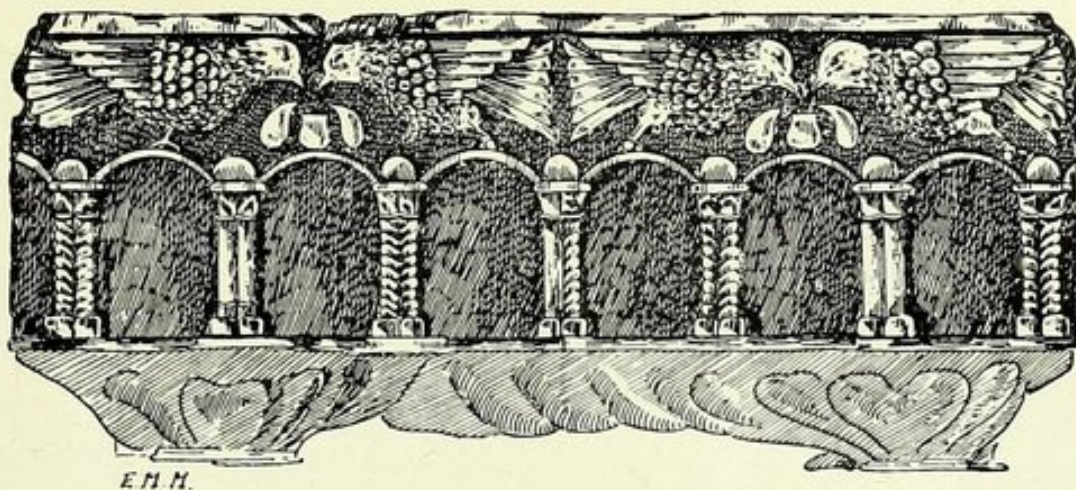
#### POSITION OF FONT.

Mr. F. A. Paley, however, in his book on "Baptismal Fonts," points out that many Norman churches had no porches, or such shallow ones that a font could not conveniently be placed in them. Eventually the font was placed in the nave, either in the centre or against one of the pillars, or sometimes, as at Luton, Beds., within a separate enclosure. At Canterbury the font stands in a small circular building called the Bell Jesus. It may be taken as a general rule that if a font is found anywhere eastward of the centre of the nave it has been removed from its original position, which was near the western or southern door, indicating, no doubt, that the Sacrament there administered symbolises the entrance into the Christian Church.

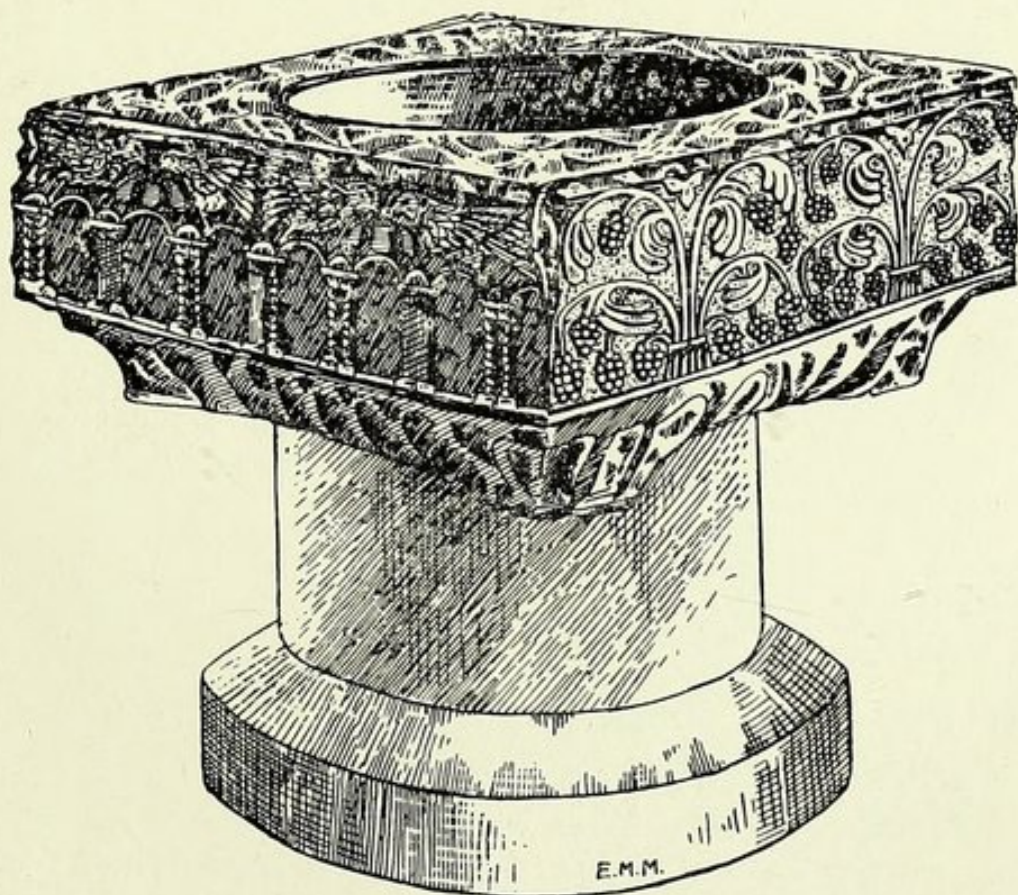
#### TIMES APPOINTED.

During the first five centuries baptism was publicly administered only twice a year, at the great festivals of Pentecost and Easter, by the Bishops or their presbyters, but as the number of candidates increased the rite was administered by the priests in every village. Whitsunday is, by inference, one of the three feasts appointed for communion in the rubric of the Church of England, as it was appointed in the councils of Agde, 506, c. xviii.; Toulouse, 1229, c. xiii.; and Auvergne, 533, c. xv. The font was hallowed with peculiar solemnity on the eve. As early as the time of Tertullian, the eves of Easter and Whitsunday were the occasions of the solemn public baptisms of the Church from regard to the great events of the Resurrection and descent of the Holy





*South Side.*



*Font at S. Mary Bourne.*

*South and East Sides.*

*By permission of Messrs. Bemrose.*

*Facing page 66.*







Ghost, in memory of the baptism of "the three thousand this day baptised by the apostles, the first Christians that ever were."

By early English canons, 601, c. iii., viii., 785, c. ii., and 740, c. x., baptism at the proper seasons, in conformity with older practice, is enjoined, and the times, of which Whitsun eve is one, are specified by the Councils of Winchester, 1071, c. vii., London, 1237, c. iii., 1258, c. i., Reading, 1279, c. iii., the constitutions of Othobon for England, Gerona, 517, c. iv., Ireland, 456, c. xix., Rouen, 1072, c. xxiv.

Easter and Whitsunday being the only times reserved for public baptism, all that were born after the latter date were baptised the following Easter, and all that were born after Easter reserved until Whitsunday, unless the danger of death hastened the administration of the rite. In the Eastern Church, the feast of Epiphany was also assigned for the administration of this Sacrament, in memory, it is supposed, of our Saviour's being baptised on that day. About the 8th or 9th century, the time for baptism was enlarged in the Latin Church, when priests were directed to administer the rite at all times of the year.

#### TOTAL IMMERSION.

Total immersion was the rule, and the canons of the Anglo-Saxon Church required that in the case of infants the rite should take place within thirty-seven days after birth, and in this connection it may be pointed out that our modern custom of baptism by aspersion, or sprinkling is only allowed, *not enjoined* by the rubric. This custom may have arisen in consequence of the old form of baptism being preceded by a long preparatory course (with the exception of infants), extending sometimes to several years, for there were three grades of catechumens alone,



*audientes, genuflectentes, and competentes*, and the necessity of baptising such as were sick or infirm may have caused the rite of what is called *Clinic Baptism* or sprinkling to be substituted for total immersion.

#### ANCIENT FONTS.

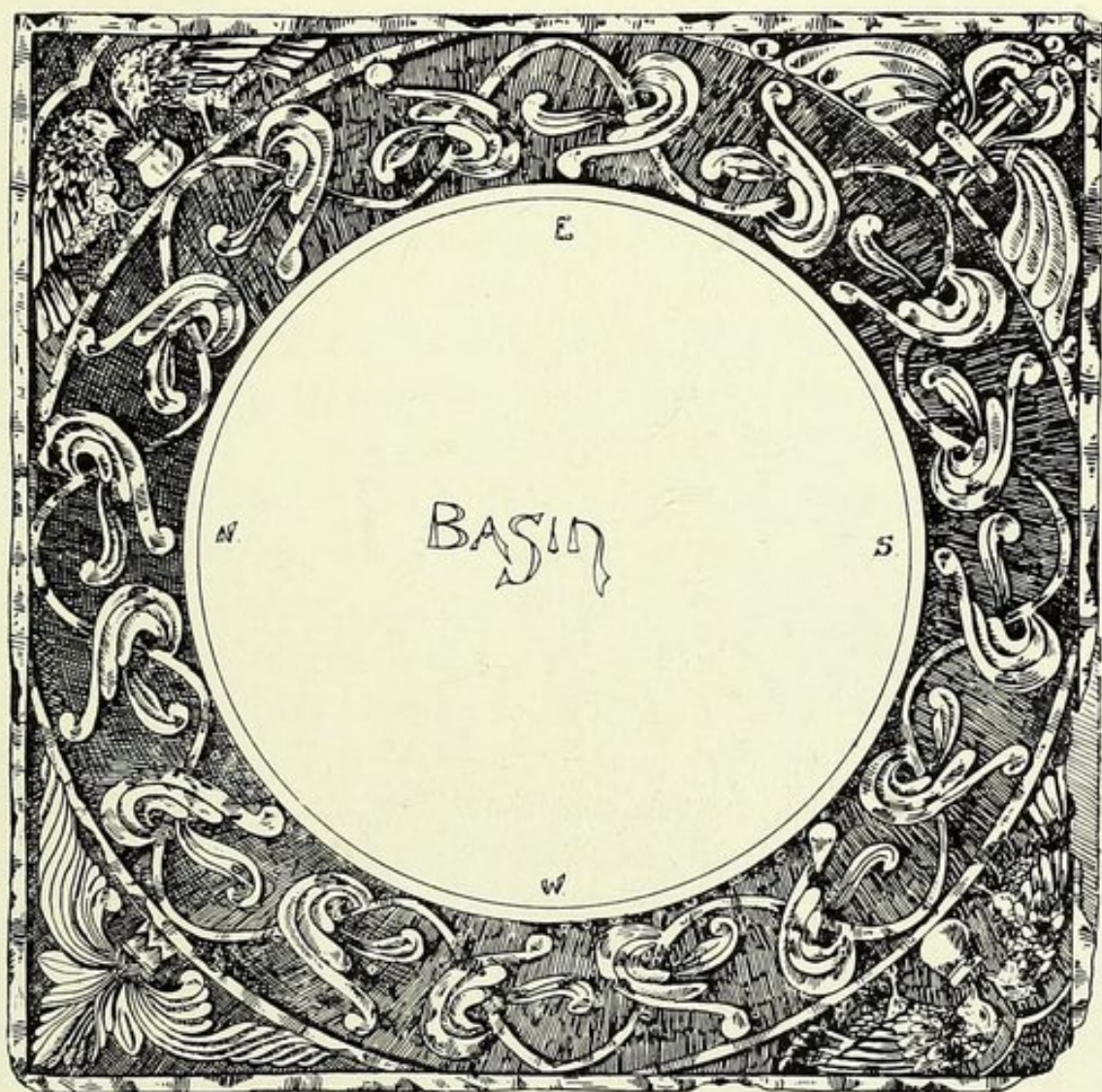
As the primitive Church made total immersion compulsory (with the exceptions above mentioned), it is obvious that the early fonts should be large enough for this purpose, otherwise they would have been quite useless for the only purpose for which they were made. A few modern antiquaries, however, dispute this, and assert that many genuine old fonts are not large enough for total immersion.

Mr. F. A. Paley, on the other hand, says, "It is well known that ancient fonts were made large enough for the complete immersion of infants. Exceptions to this almost universal practice are very rare; one or two instances are quoted in the "*Archæologia*," Vol. xi., p. 123. At Hortbling and Dembleby, Lincolnshire, are extremely small and *probably modern* fonts formed out of a stem or shaft." All that need be said here is that if there are any genuine old fonts not large enough for the immersion of infants, they could never have been used by a Church that insisted on such total immersion, as a vessel too small for this purpose would not be a font at all, whatever else it may have been used for. These small, ancient basins might possibly have been holy water stoups, as they could not be fonts.

#### GIVING OF SALT.

Adults in the early Church were admitted as probationers (catechumens) with certain ceremonies, such as signing the cross, giving salt as a token of divine wisdom and





*Ethel Nabey*

*Font at S. Mary Bourne.*

*Ornament surrounding Basin.*

*By permission of Messrs. Bemrose.*

*Facing page 68.*







knowledge (*sal sapientiæ*), the exorcism of the evil spirit, and a benediction. This initiatory rite soon lost its significance, and our Church, while abolishing the ceremony, has retained, with but slight alteration, the prayers that accompanied it. We need not enter at length here into the history of the Baptismal Service, except to remark that the statement to the effect that, by the baptism of our Lord, water was sanctified to the mystical washing away of sin has no Scriptural authority.

#### NO SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY.

Our Lord assigns as His reason for submitting to this rite that He did so in order "to fulfil all righteousness ;" but the early Christians drew the inference that He sanctified the water for us ; and this view is set forth continually in the writings of S. Augustine and S. Ambrose, and figures conspicuously in the early liturgies of the Eastern Church.

#### CONSECRATION OF WATER.

The consecration of water is first mentioned by Tertullian (*de Bapt.*, c. iv.) as brought about by invocation of God. S. Cyprian (*Epist.*, lxx., A.D. Januar) speaks of the water "being cleansed beforehand, and sanctified by the Bishop (a sacerdote)." S. Augustine, however, tells us that invocations were not regarded as essential to the validity of the Sacrament. In the 4th century, and possibly earlier, baptism was administered after dark, generally late on Easter Eve. The lights then used were for a practical purpose, but the symbolisers soon added doctrinal meanings. S. Gregory says : "The lamps that there shall kindle set forth in mystery that procession of many lights where-



with bright virgin souls shall go forth to meet their Lord, having the lamps of faith bright and burning."

#### NAMING THE CHILD.

The custom of giving the name at Baptism may have been derived from the Jews, who named their children at the time of circumcision, or from the Greeks and Romans. The analogy of circumcision with Christian Baptism is recognised both in Scripture (Col. ii. 11) and in early Christian writers; and so close was this analogy as to cause doubt whether in view of "eighth-day circumcision" any day earlier than the eighth were allowable for Christian baptism.

#### BAPTISM BY FIRE.

The Greeks carried the infant round the fire in order to dedicate him to their gods, after holding a festival called the Amphidromia; and on several of our fonts, as at Salehurst, Sussex; Norton and Youlgrave, Derbyshire; Winchester Cathedral, there figures the Salamander, represented as a lizard or serpent. The Salamander is generally thought, although such is a matter of doubt, to symbolise baptism with the "Holy Ghost and *Fire*." The Romans named the child eight or nine days after birth, when it had undergone a lustration, or religious ablution.

#### THE SALAMANDER.

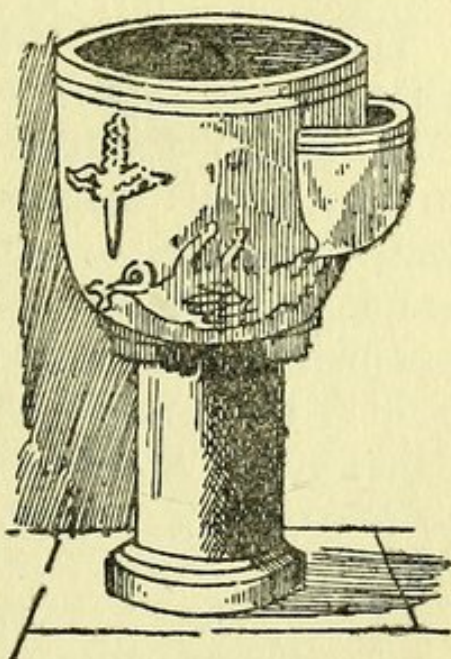
To return to the salamander, we shall find that it has long been credited with fabulous powers. Mr. John Vinycomb, in his "Fictitious Creatures in Art," says: "Less than a century ago the creature was seriously described as a 'spotted lizard, which will endure the flames of fire.' Divested of its supernatural powers, it is simply a harmless little amphibian of the newt family, from six to eight inches in length, with black skin and yellow spots."



Gregory of Nazienzen tells us that the salamander not only lived in flames, but was able to extinguish fire also. It is generally represented as a small lizard, as on Youlgrave font, here illustrated, with a knotted tail. It is often shown in the act of breathing forth flames, and we are told that it is a symbol of enduring and triumphant faith. The finest examples in England of the salamander are those on the fonts at Youlgrave and Norton, Derbyshire. At Haddenham and Studham the tail is bifurcated, and continues round the font as a rim.

#### MILK AND HONEY.

The first Prayer Book of Edward VI., following the manual of Sarum,<sup>1</sup> directed the priest to dip the child in the water thrice, "first dipping the right side, second the left side, and third, dipping the face toward the font, so that it be discreetly and warily done"; but if the child were weak it should be sufficient to pour water upon it. A very ancient ceremony connected with baptism was that of giving the newly-baptised a drink of milk and honey. Clemens of Alexandria says: "As soon as we are born we are nourished with milk, which is the nutriment of the Lord: and as soon as we are born again, we become entitled to the hope of rest, the promise of Jerusalem which is above, where it is said to



*Font at Youlgrave  
Church, Derbyshire.*

<sup>1</sup> Printed in 1530, being the last missal that was in force before the Reformation. This missal expressly requires and orders *dipping*.



rain milk and honey, for by these material things we are assured of that heavenly food." This practice was abolished at the Reformation.

The ceremony of anointing with ointment (retained in the Prayer Book of 1549) is also of great antiquity, and is mentioned by Tertullian, S. Ambrose, and S. Chrysostom. It was regarded as the token of the unction of the Holy Spirit. The curious appendage to one or two of our fonts, as at Pitsford, Northampton; and Youlgrave, Derbyshire (*see* illustration), is thought by some antiquaries to have been intended to receive the crewet of holy oil, or ointment, but no such assertion is made here.

#### FONT COVERS.

There is little doubt that early fonts, unless made of some hard or impervious stone, were lined with lead; and there are in England some twenty fonts entirely constructed of this material. As the fonts were always kept *filled* with water, the wooden covering became essential for keeping it fresh and clean, although the reason for covers assigned by Lyndwode is *propter sortilegia*—to avoid magic influences. It was Edmund, Archbishop of Canterbury (A.D. 1236), who directed that fonts should be covered and locked.

#### THE CHRISOME.

In our present Baptismal Service the vow of obedience, "Wilt thou obediently keep God's holy will," etc., was instituted at the Reformation. The white vesture, the symbol of innocence, and the oil of gladness are no longer appointed to be used, but the sign of the cross is retained. The white vesture in which the child was wrapped was



called the *chrisome*, and Jeremy Taylor speaks of "the phantasms which make a chrisome child to smile." The garment was worn for eight days, and was then laid up in the church as a memorial of the baptism.

The wearing of white garments was of universal custom in east and west alike. By their colour they signified innocence and joy, and by their material (generally linen) they were said to be associated with the deliverance from death.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE ALB.

The outer garment was the *alb*, which was often kept, not only as a memorial of the baptism, but to serve as a covering for the body after death. Constantine the Great, dying shortly after his baptism, was buried in the garments which he had then worn. At other times, as we have seen, they were presented to, and hung in, the church.

#### THE CHRISMALE.

The Chrismale, old English "chrisom" was originally the piece of white linen tied round the head for the purpose of retaining the chrism or holy unction upon the head throughout the week "in albis." Other things used at this rite were the "twisted thread," and the chaplet or corona, accessories that are retained in the Armenian, Russian, and other churches to-day.

#### THE CHRISM.

The Chrism, or holy oil, was mixed with balsam, and a modern recipe for its composition prescribes, besides oil

<sup>1</sup> The dead were usually shrouded in linen.



and wine, no less than thirty-six different kinds of aromatics.

The holy oil was contained in a vessel or flask called the Chrismal. (Ampulla.)

#### PISCINA.

The words *natalio*, *natalorium*, and *piscina* were used indifferently by ancient authors. Originally the *piscina* was a lake or pool in which living fishes were confined, and the word was so used by Cicero (B.C. 44), *Parad.* 5. 2.

The word also signified ponds in which ducks swam and cattle drank. Colum. I. 6. (*circa* A.D. 25).

Pliny, 3. 5. 9. (*circa* A.D. 77), uses the word to indicate tanks for the storage and supply of water; and the same author, Epist. 5. 6. (*circa* A.D. 100), states that swimming baths for men, whether the water was cold or hot, were called *piscinae*.

The word *Baptisterium* was used also to indicate an addition to a swimming bath, for Pliny, Epist. 2. 17. (*circa* A.D. 100), writes :—

“BALINEI CELLA FRIGIDARIA, SPATIOSA ET EFFUSA  
CUJUS IN CONTRARIIS PARIETIBUS DUO BAPTISTERIA  
VELUT EJECTA SINVANTUR ABUNDE CAPACIA, SI INNARE  
IN PROXIMO COGITES.”

“The cold-room of the bath, wide and spacious, from the opposite walls of which two basins, as it were (baptisteria), project, and are rounded into sufficient capacity to swim in, if you wish.”

Optatus says: “The name *piscina*, given to the baptismal font of which the water, the element of fishes, purifies us



from all stain and becomes the means of salvation, is derived from fish, symbolising Him from whom we are nourished, healed, and redeemed." (*Circa* A.D. 371.)

#### THE SIGN OF THE CROSS.

The sign of the Cross has been retained by our Church only in the office of Baptism, and its retention giving great offence to the Puritans, was discussed at the great Hampton Court Conference of the Bishops in 1603. The canon directs that the sign of the Cross is a thing having no virtue in itself, and is not essential to the validity of the Sacrament of Baptism, but recommended that it be retained "as a lawful outward ceremony and outward badge, whereby the infant is dedicated to the service of Him who died upon the Cross."

#### EARLY FONTS.

Fonts of nearly all periods of English Ecclesiastical architecture exist in such large numbers, that the main characteristics of each style can only be briefly indicated here. Of Saxon fonts very few remain, and even such as are thought to date from this era have caused endless discussion among archæologists. Mr. J. H. Parker writes: "No fonts exist which can reasonably be supposed to be Saxon,"<sup>1</sup> and with this opinion of so reliable an authority we will leave the reputed fonts of the Saxon era. Of Norman fonts there are large numbers, and they are frequently found in churches of which the whole structure is of a later period, thus forming the only existing links with the earlier edifices; for it may be

<sup>1</sup> Bede, A.D. 673-735, tells us that stone fonts were not used in churches in his time.



taken as a general rule that the mouldings and decorations of fonts corresponded with the architectural details of the buildings in which they were placed.

#### NORMAN SCULPTURE.

Norman fonts show more than those of any other period the religious mysticism, the favourite legends, and the historical incidents of the age. To the Norman sculptor nothing came amiss, dragons, fishes, birds, hunting, hawking, the saint, the bishop, and the soldier, are all expressed on fonts with remarkable skill and a never-ending variety. One would think that the particular symbols of baptism would have been the most appropriate decoration for fonts, but the Norman had no such scruples, such instances being the exception and not the rule.

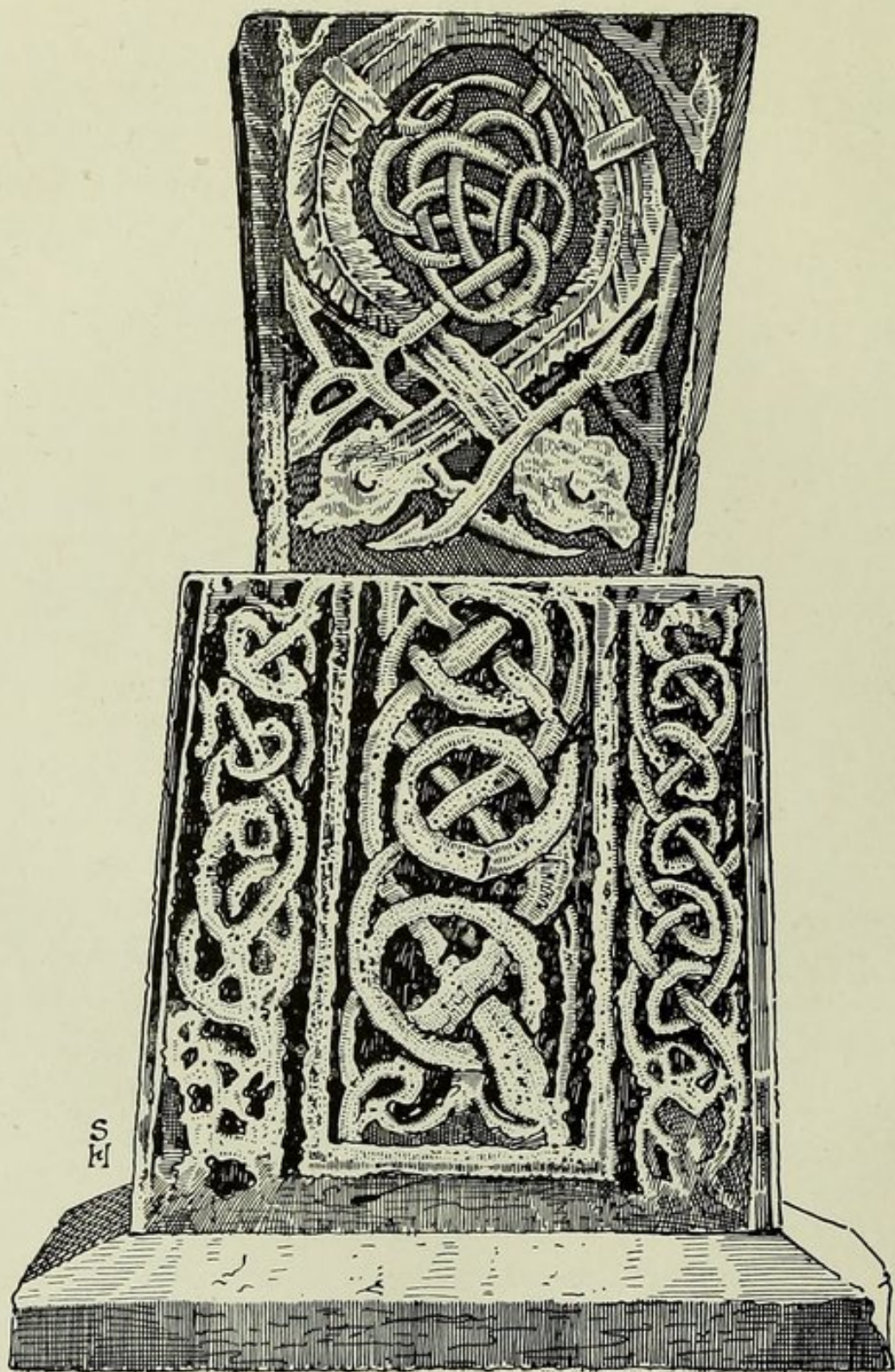
#### DECORATED AND PERPENDICULAR.

Norman fonts, which are very numerous, are usually either circular or square, and are generally supported with circular pillars, shafts or stems. The later fonts of this era, together with those of the Early English period, are mostly octagonal, and when devoid of ornament it is difficult to tell whether a font belongs to the late Norman or the Early English style. The octagonal form was retained for the most part during the Decorated and the Perpendicular periods. There are, however, Decorated fonts of hexagonal form at Rolvenden, Kent, and Heckington, Lincolnshire. It is somewhat strange that although this period of English ecclesiastical architecture produced so many beautiful churches, its fonts are disappointing, and lack both the vitality and variety of the Norman and the exquisite grace of the Early English periods.









East Side.

*Font at Dolton Church.*

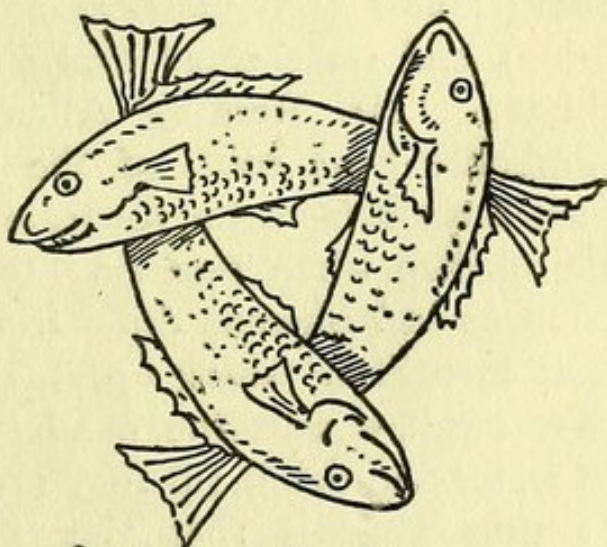
*By courtesy of "The Builder."*



In so far as regards execution the Perpendicular fonts are as much in advance of the previous forms, as those of the Decorated era are the worst designed and the most coarsely executed of them all.

#### SYMBOLS OF BAPTISM.

The symbols which refer exclusively to the Sacrament of Baptism in ecclesiastical art are somewhat rare, and it is not until a comparatively late period that we meet with any devices that appear definitely to set forth the rite of baptism, with the exception of the fish (found on tombs in the catacombs),<sup>1</sup> indicating perhaps the baptism by water, the only element in which fish can live. Sometimes three fishes are shown entwined in the form of a triangle, possibly intended to symbolise Baptism under the blessing of the Trinity. In later times the fish is surrounded by symbols of the Three Persons of the Trinity, but this has no more significance than the three entwined fishes.



*Symbol of Baptism.*

#### FONT AT S. MARY BOURNE.

The symbolic carvings on fonts rarely appear to refer exclusively to baptism, for although the dove figures

<sup>1</sup> Some antiquaries do not regard this as a Christian symbol, but merely as signifying that the deceased was a fisherman.

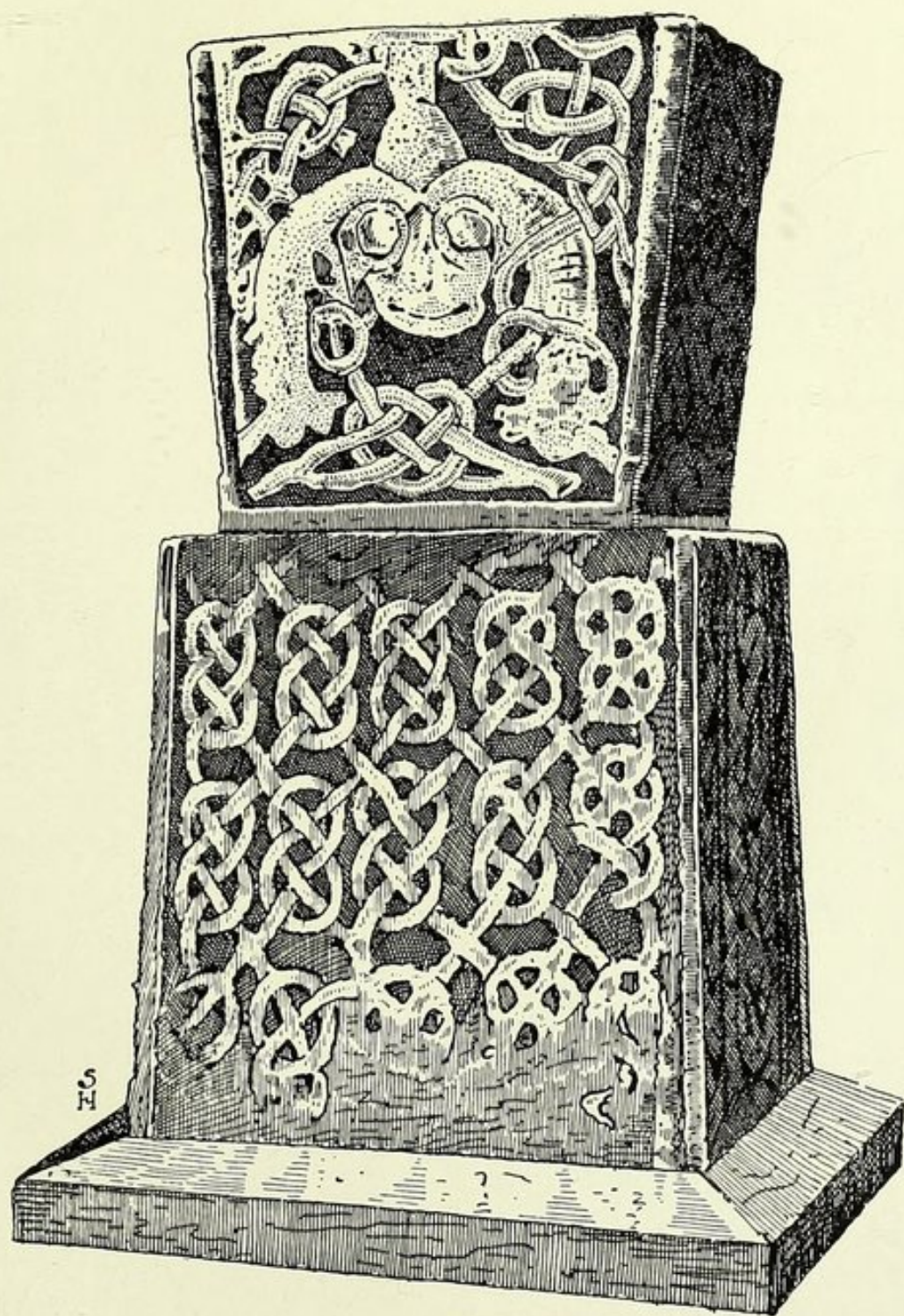


prominently on the font at S. Mary Bourne, Hants, here illustrated, it was more often used as a particular symbol of the Holy Ghost. The spandrils at two angles of the basin represent a pair of doves drinking from a vase or chalice, which is not shown bearing a cross, and one side of the font repeats the same imagery. The dove, as a symbol, is treated at length in Chap. XI., but it may be here remarked that the drinking doves are extremely rare in Norman sculpture in England, the only other examples, besides the one here described, being found at Winchester and East Meon, in Hants (on fonts), and on a sepulchral slab in Bishopstone Church, Sussex. Mr. Romilly Allen says the drinking doves symbolise "the souls of the faithful obtaining spiritual nourishment from the fountain of life at Baptism, or from the chalice when receiving the Sacrament of the Mass." "Doves and pigeons differ from all other birds by reason that instead of taking up small quantities of water which they swallow with the head raised, they *immerse* the bill in water and drink till they are satisfied." (H. C. March.) It thus appears that this particular device may symbolise either the rite of baptism or the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

#### THE DOVE.

Dr. H. Colley March, in his "Mythology of Wise Birds," says: "The etymological association of its name (A. S. *dufa*, Goth. *dubo*, dip or dive) gives the dove a special significance as a symbol of baptism, and may have been one of many reasons for its sculptured presence on dipstones or fonts." Symbolical sculpture on fonts is then very frequently met with, and the Old Testament types of Baptism (Noah and the Ark, The Fall of Adam and Eve)





South Side.

Font at Dolton Church.

By courtesy of "The Builder."

Facing page 78.







are freely introduced. As a symbol of the Third Person of the Trinity, the carved or painted figure of the dove appeared from a very early period in all baptisteries, and a golden or silver dove was often suspended above the font. These sometimes contained the holy oil used in Baptism or the extreme unction. Like the mystic fish and the lamb, the dove has more than one meaning, and it is used symbolically for the Divine Being and for the Christian worshipper, but it is most frequently used as indicating the presence of the Holy Spirit.

#### THE SHAPE OF FONTS.

It is quite certain that the various *shapes*<sup>1</sup> assumed by fonts originally had no symbolical significance whatever, although a contrary opinion has been expressed. Their forms were decided by architectural necessities, and by the conditions governing transport, rather than by any mystical reference to the rite of baptism. The symbolisers came after and not before the shapes had been fashioned. One can, however, say that the alleged symbolical allusions to the various shapes in which fonts are found are always appropriate if lacking in authority. Thus we find the circular font described as "the instrument by which imperfect man is made perfect, so it not inaptly bears a perfect figure." The square one is said to be in allusion to the heavenly city. "The symmetry of the glorified Church, the length of Faith, the breadth of Charity, and the height of Hope are all equal." Should the font be a *pentagon* (a very rare form), it is considered to be a

<sup>1</sup> "In considering the shape of fonts, we must bear in mind the difficulty which the ancient builders experienced in raising and conveying large blocks of stone." (F. A. Paley.)



remembrance of the "Five Wounds of our Lord," and if hexagonal, we are told to assume some reference to the Passion. By far the greater number of the later fonts are octagonal, and modern fonts are almost entirely of this form, which is regarded as a symbol of Regeneration, because six days created the old world and the man of sin, the eighth day the new man of grace and salvation.

Also on the sixth day the Redeemer exclaimed: "It is finished"; on the seventh He lay in the tomb, and on the eighth He rose again. It is perhaps unnecessary to point out that "spiritual regeneration" refers to that beginning of the spiritual life which takes place at Baptism. It is derived from Titus iii. 5: "According to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

#### THE OCTAGON.

Mr. F. A. Paley sums up the whole question very concisely when he says: "The octagon arose simultaneously, or nearly so, in Fonts and in capitals; and though in the former case a symbolical meaning, that of Regeneration, has been attached to this shape, yet its origin is apparently constructive, from removing each superfluous and projecting angle of a square. In some cases this is shown by the upper part of the bowl being octagonal, the lower square, as at Winfarthing, Norfolk, and Whaplode, Lincolnshire. Probably from this cause arises the fact that pentagonal, hexagonal, or heptagonal Fonts are extremely rare; namely, because these shapes are of less ready geometric formation." Fonts were generally spared during the Reformation and later perilous times owing, no doubt, to



the sanctity rightly attached by the early and the reformed religion to the instrument of such a Holy Sacrament as that of Baptism.

The font at Dolton Church, here illustrated, is referred to in Chap. XV. under *dragon*.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE ALTAR AND THE SYMBOLS OF THE EUCHARIST

#### PAGAN ALTARS.

THE most important portion of the interior furniture of a Church is the altar, a raised structure or table dedicated to the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

The altar is, of course, an adoption by the Christian Church of a pagan aid to worship ; and altars of gold and brass formed a very important part of the furniture of both Moses' tabernacle and the temple of Solomon. Pagan altars were usually of two kinds : some low and adapted for kneeling on, stood before the images within the temple, the others, much larger, were placed before the temple door, and used for the burnt offerings. As the scale on which the Greek sacrifices were carried out was very large, we are not surprised to learn that the altars used for this purpose were of a corresponding size.

In the early days of Christianity the altars were probably made of wood, but the Council of Epone, in France, directed, in A.D. 509, that "no altars should be consecrated with the chrism of holy oil, but such as were made of stone only," a custom generally observed in England until the Reformation. The slab of the altar, sometimes upheld by pillars, but more often by solid masonry, was marked on the top by five crosses, indicative of the five wounds of Christ.



S. Augustine (Epist. 185, c. 27) states that they beat the orthodox Bishop Maximinianus with the wood of the altar, under which he had taken refuge, and William of Malmesbury, in his *Vita S. Wulstan*, tells us that this Bishop of Worcester (1062-1095) demolished throughout his diocese the wooden altars which were still in existence in England as in ancient days, "ALTARIA LIGNEA JAM INDE A PRISCIS DIEBUS IN ANGLIÂ."

#### ONE CHURCH ONE ALTAR.

The rule of the early Christians appears to have been one Church one altar, and Cardinal Bona tells us that he could find no evidences of a contrary practice "till the time of Gregory the Great, and then only in the Latin Church." The custom of having subordinate altars may have arisen from the practice of the early Christians who considered the tomb of a martyr as a holy place fitted for the celebration of the Eucharist, which they regarded not only as beneficial to themselves, but as consolatory to the martyr who lay below. This probably led to altars being erected in various portions of a church, wherever some saint or patron was buried.

#### RELICS OF SAINTS.

Be this as it may, about A.D., 590, the custom grew up of having many subordinate altars in addition to the High Altar, and these were placed in transepts, aisles, chapels, crypts, etc., and it is rare to find a parish church of any size to-day without some traces of altars in various parts of the edifice. When stone altars were first introduced it became customary to enclose within them the relics of saints, and many churches on the Continent, if not in



England, owe their positions to the fact that on the spot where a saint's blood had been shed, a tomb or shrine was erected, for the protection of which a church was subsequently built. There is a general impression that the altar of the primitive church occupied the position in which it is usually found to-day, but this is open to considerable doubt, for when the chancel or "offshoot" was added on to the early oblong plan, the altar appears to have remained for some time in its original position, under the chancel arch. From the earliest period of which we have any knowledge the altar was usually placed, not against a wall as in modern times, but on a chord of the apse, when the church terminated in an apse; and when the end of the church was square the altar occupied a corresponding position, for the ancient rituals invariably contemplate a *detached* altar as when (in dedicating a church) the bishop is directed to go round the altar, or where the sub-deacon is directed, after having placed the Cross on the altar to go behind it. When it became usual to place several altars in a church it was found more convenient to place one or more against a wall. In a few instances the altar was replaced, not on the chord of the apse, but towards the middle of the nave.

#### EARLY POSITION OF ALTARS.

This position of the early altars seems to render void the theory of many writers that the "squints"<sup>1</sup> or oblique openings found in the walls of porches, etc., were intended to enable those who wished to have seen the elevation of the Host on the High Altar, if such occupied a position under the chancel arch.

<sup>1</sup> Commonly called Hagioscopes.



## NO ALTARS IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

The Court of Arches has decided that there are no altars in the Church of England, but only holy or communion tables. Both the terms *altar* and *table*, however, appear to be used in Scripture with reference to the celebration of the Holy Communion. S. Paul says to the Corinthians: "Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and the table of Devils" (Cor. x. 21). Again in the Epistle to the Hebrews we read (xiii. 10): "We have an Altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle."

In the first Prayer book of Edward VI. the words altar,<sup>1</sup> table, God's board, are used indiscriminately, but in the later revisions the word table alone has been retained. The Convocation of 1640 sanctioned the following canon: "We declare that this situation of the holy table doth not imply that it is, or ought to be, esteemed a proper altar, whereon Christ is again really sacrificed; but it is, and may be called an altar by us, in that sense in which the primitive Church called it an Altar, and in no other."

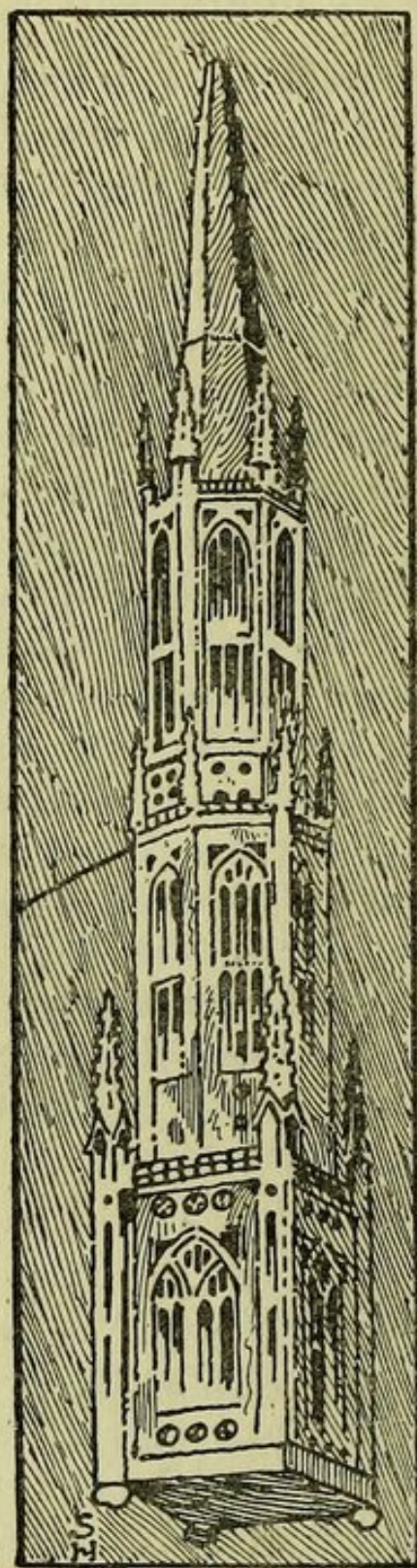
In the Prayer book of 1549 the title of the Communion Service was "The Supper of the Lord, and the Holy Communion, commonly called the Mass." In 1552, however, the title was altered to its present form.

## MASS.

The usually accepted derivation of the word *Mass* is that given by Cardinal Bona, who considered that it bore some relation to the old form of dismissing the congregation after the Communion, "ITE MISSA EST." Hence it came to mean not only the Holy Communion, but any holy feast,

<sup>1</sup> By the Ornaments Rubric stone altars were legal. Henry Gee, D.D. (The Elizabethan Prayer Book and Ornaments.)





TABERNACLE AT  
MILTON ABBEY.

and in this sense has been retained by us in such words as Candlemas, Michaelmas, Christmas, etc. The term *Communion*, as applied to the Lord's Supper, may have been taken from 1 Cor. x. 16, where we are said to be partakers of the body and blood of Christ, thus the sacrament is called a communion as uniting us with Christ and with each other.

#### RESERVATION OF THE SACRAMENT.

In mediæval days a part of the Eucharist was reserved to be sent to the sick, infirm, and absent, but this practice became much abused, and the Sacrament reserved for a variety of purposes, and it was worshipped upon the altar as the presence of God. Our modern custom is for the consecrated elements to be reverently consumed by the minister and communicants before they separate. At one time nearly all our churches possessed a Tabernacle or culver for the reservation of the Sacrament, but few now exist. There is one in Milton Abbey Church



(Dorset), here illustrated, and another, but of circular shape, in Wells Cathedral. The reservation of the Sacrament was everywhere observed in English Monastic Churches until their suppression, and in parish churches until 1549, or later in outlying districts. The Tabernacle containing the pix in which the Eucharist was reserved was suspended over the High Altar, so far in advance of the screen as not to hide its imagery. The opening would always face the east so that the priest turning from the altar could withdraw the pix when the Tabernacle was lowered.

#### THE PIX.

The pix, or pyx (Lat. *pyxis*), was the box which held the consecrated host. Fuller enumerates among the payments at Waltham Abbey (History, p. 17), "Item, For a Pix of Pewter, two shillings. This was a Box wherein the Host, or consecrated wafer, was put and preserved."

And again, in the same book, "Item, for a Pax copper and gilt, five shillings. . . . A piece of wood or metall (with Christ's picture thereon), was made, and solemnly tendred to all people to kiss. This was called the Pax, or Peace, to show the unity and amity of all there assembled, who (though not immediately) by the Proxie of the Pax kissed one another."

The second of the ordinances made for the government of the army in the reign of Richard II (1386), says, "Also that no man be so hardy to touche the sacrament of the aulter nor the pyxe wherein it is enclosed upon payne to be draune, hanged, and his hedde to be smeten of." This ordinance was still in force during Henry's campaign in France, for, in Nicholas's *Battle of Agincourt*, we read (pp. clvii., clviii.): "There was brought to the king in that



plain, a certain English robber, who, contrary to the laws of God and the royal proclamation, had stolen from a church a pix of copper gilt, found in his sleeve, which he happened to mistake for gold, in which the Lord's body was kept ; and in the next village where we passed the night, by decree of the king . . . he was put to death on the gallows." Woodcuts of both the pax and the pix are given in French's *Genealogica Shakespeareana*, and show very clearly the difference between them.

#### TABERNACLES.

Several old writers speak of the Tabernacle, as does Lyndewode, who calls it the "*consuetudo anglicana*," and Thomas Becon, writing later than the reign of Edward VI., mentions the same custom. In the reign of Mary the Tabernacle was dispensed with and the Eucharist reserved in "a little coffer upon the hie altar," and such is the present practice in the Church of Rome.

In a description of the Benedictine Church of Durham, at the time of the Dissolution, we read that "over the High Altar did hang a rich and most sumptuous Canapie for the Blessed Sacrament to hang in it." In a contemporary drawing (*circa* 1532) of the High Altar at Westminster, on the occasion of the funeral of Abbot Islip, the pix, covered with a veil, is shown beneath a triple crown, hanging from the flat canopy, which projects from the top of the screen high above the altar. It may be mentioned that the canopy is the survival of the *ciborium*, from which the Eucharist was suspended over the earliest Christian altars of which we have any record.

Dr. H. Colley March<sup>1</sup> writes : "During mediæval times,

<sup>1</sup> "The Pagan-Christian Overlap of the Wise Bird."



in both Eastern and Western Churches, a vessel, shaped like a dove and called a peristerion, was suspended before the High Altar by a chain from the roof of the edifice. It opened on the back, and in the body of it the Blessed Sacrament was reserved. In the year 370 S. Basil the Great reserved the Host in a dove made of gold ; and in the year 474 Perpetuus, Bishop of Tours, left by will a silver dove to Amalarius, a priest. In England this receptacle was called a culver. One, made of "latyn," a sort of brass, is mentioned in the churchwardens' accounts of S. Dunstan's, Canterbury, in 1500, and in 1596 a culver was repaired of the Church of Kirton-in-Lindsey."

#### ANTIQUITY OF CHURCHYARDS.

It has been well established that a large number of our churchyards are of far greater antiquity than the churches within them, and that long before the erection of the material structure the early converts to Christianity in the outlying districts met for worship on a piece of enclosed ground, "God's acre," where they gathered around a cross of wood or stone. The rite of baptism was administered at the wells of water, still found in or near our oldest churchyards, but generally seen under the wall half in and half out of the churchyard. The Sacrament would be administered by means of a small portable altar, called the super-altar. One of these made of jasper mounted in silver and of circular shape is preserved at S. Alban's Abbey, and another of wood encased in silver was found at the opening of a Bishop's grave in Durham Cathedral in 1838.

Mr J. H. Parker, in his "Glossary of Architecture," says :  
 "A super-altar of silver was found in the coffin with



the body of S. Cuthbert when his grave was opened in 1827."

#### PORTABLE ALTARS.

In his account of the translation of S. Acca, about the middle of the 11th century, Simon of Durham says there was found upon the saint's breast a wooden table in the fashion of an altar, made of two pieces of wood joined with silver nails. Leland also records that down to his time a portable altar, said to have been used by Bede, was preserved at Jarrow. These super-altars appear also to have been used in churches away from the High Altar, but it was necessary for those wishing to use them to obtain a license from the Pope. Modern altars, or communion tables are now generally placed at the eastern end of the chancel (which position, however, does not apply to all churches or to some cathedrals), opposite the font telling of the new birth by baptism; thus the Communion table symbolises the perfection of the life we received at the font. Nothing, therefore, in the spiritual sense, can be beyond the altar, as it typifies the end of the Christian life, indicative of the stability of that faith, which, like its Lord, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

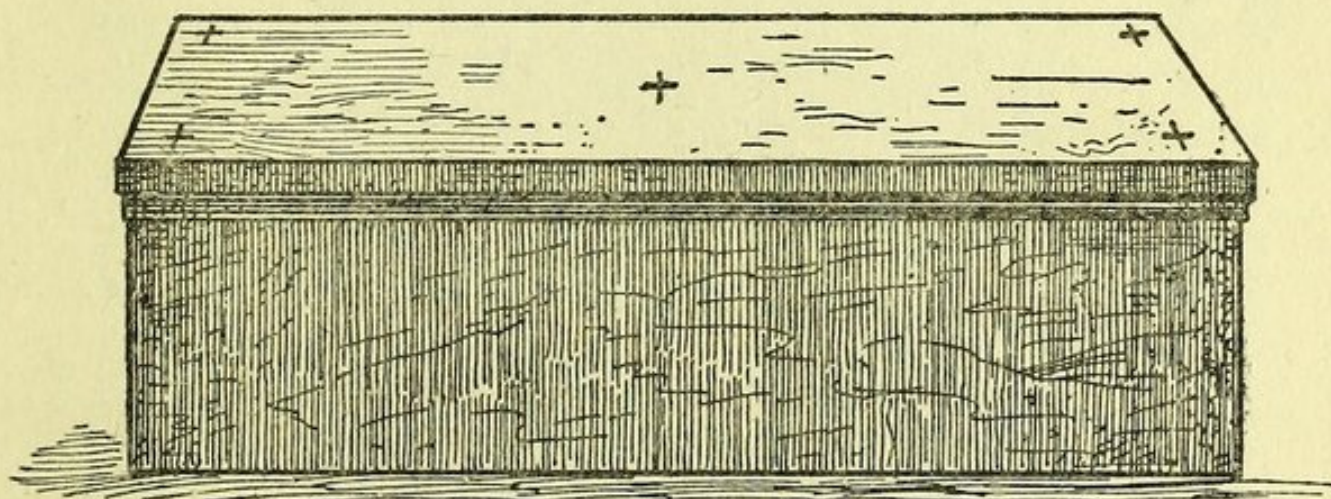
#### EXISTING HIGH-ALTARS.

In England altars were generally taken down about 1550, set up again during the reign of Queen Mary,<sup>1</sup> and again removed during the second year of Elizabeth. So complete was their destruction at this period, or in the

<sup>1</sup> "I am inclined to think that the restoration of the stone altar was regarded as the most important reparation, and was practically universal." Henry Gee, D.D.



subsequent devastations of the Puritans, that very few now remain. High-altars, however, may still be seen, though of course not in use, at Arundel Church, Sussex; Porlock Church, Somerset; Dunster Church, in the same county; Hartland Church, Devon; and in the ruined Church of S. Mary at Ripon. In the little church at Corton, Dorset, the old stone altar is intact, and what is probably unique is the fact that it occupies the eastern end of the chancel, and is still in use, although the top is covered by a wooden board. Queen Elizabeth's "Articles" of the year 1564,



*Original Stone Altar at Arundel, Sussex.  
Showing the "Five Wounds."*

required "that the parish provide a decent table, *standing on a frame*, for the Communion Table." Hence it appears that by the word table the slab or board only was meant, thus the slab at Corton was placed unfixed on the old stone base, which is a very fine example of a Pre-Reformation altar. It is thought that this escaped destruction by reason of Corton having been one of those free chapels which had been suppressed and deprived of its revenues in 1547, three years before the Chantry Act of I. Edward VI. This altar is marked with the Five Crosses.



## COUNCIL OF TOURS.

The fourth canon of the second Council of Tours (A.D. 567), forbids the lay people to stand among the clergy, whether at vigils or at mass, and reserves all that portion of the church which is on the altar-side of the screen for the clerks engaged in the service, yet the sanctuary was to be open for the purpose of praying and communicating, both to laymen and to women. The sanctuary of a church



*Bench End in Talland Church  
Winged Figure with Chalice.*

containing the altar was naturally held to correspond with the Holy of Holies of the Jewish Temple, and was frequently called by that name. Neale, however, in his *Eastern Church*, tells us that with the Nestorians the Holy of Holies is not the sanctuary, but a small recess at the east end of it, into which not even the priest enters, and wherein there is nothing but a cross. The earliest representations of the



Eucharist seem to refer principally to the *agapæ*, or suppers, which preceded the actual eucharistic breaking of bread. In the earliest days of persecution these suppers were celebrated in the catacombs, or near the tombs of martyrs. Representations of bread and fish occur constantly in the Callixtine Catacomb, with a man in the act of blessing the bread. Seven or more baskets of bread are placed near a table at which seven persons are sitting. The table is round, and fishes are also placed on it. At Talland Church, near Polperro, Cornwall, many of the old, oaken bench-ends terminate in winged figures shown in the act of administering the Eucharist. One is engaged in consecrating the bread, whilst another holds the chalice. Other figures are shown with the hands resting on closed books, or scrolls supported by low desks. As not one of these figures is wearing the proper Eucharistic vestments, but only surplices, they belong to the time of the Reformed religion, possibly of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and they are not symbols but representations of the Holy Communion.

#### EUCCHARISTIC SYMBOLS.

The symbolical representations which allude to the Eucharist are the very rarest of all the ecclesiastical symbols. One of the earliest, as found in the Catacombs, consists of a cup with three small loaves, marked with crosses. A little later we find a chalice with a wafer, marked with a cross, issuing from it; and yet another variety shows a small altar bearing a chalice and bread, marked with a cross. Thus we see how few are the symbols that have been employed throughout the centuries to set forth the sacrament of the Holy Communion.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Doves drinking from a vase or chalice are thought to symbolise the Eucharist as well as the rite of Baptism. (*See Chap. III.*)



## ALTAR-TOMBS.

A passing reference may be made to what is called an altar-tomb, although the relation it bears to the first part of its name is of the remotest, being so called from its general resemblance to the stone altars of pagan times; and even the word altar-tomb, to describe such a monument, is quite modern, for Leland always writes of them as High-tombs. They are often found with a recumbent effigy in Chantry Chapels and the like, where there were subordinate altars at which masses were said for the souls of the departed by monks called the Chantry Priests, and many bequests, both in lands and money, were left for this purpose, but these were all annexed at the Dissolution.

When the stone altar gave place to the Communion Table, the latter generally occupied the place vacated by the former<sup>1</sup> (usually at the east end of the chancel), but this position gave umbrage to the Puritan mind, and resulted, during the Cromwellian period, in the Communion Table being placed in the middle of the chancel, with seats all round for the communicants; an arrangement still found in a few English Churches, and in Jersey; but, generally speaking, this puritanical position was discarded at the Restoration, when the Communion Table was usually placed against the eastern wall of the chancel.

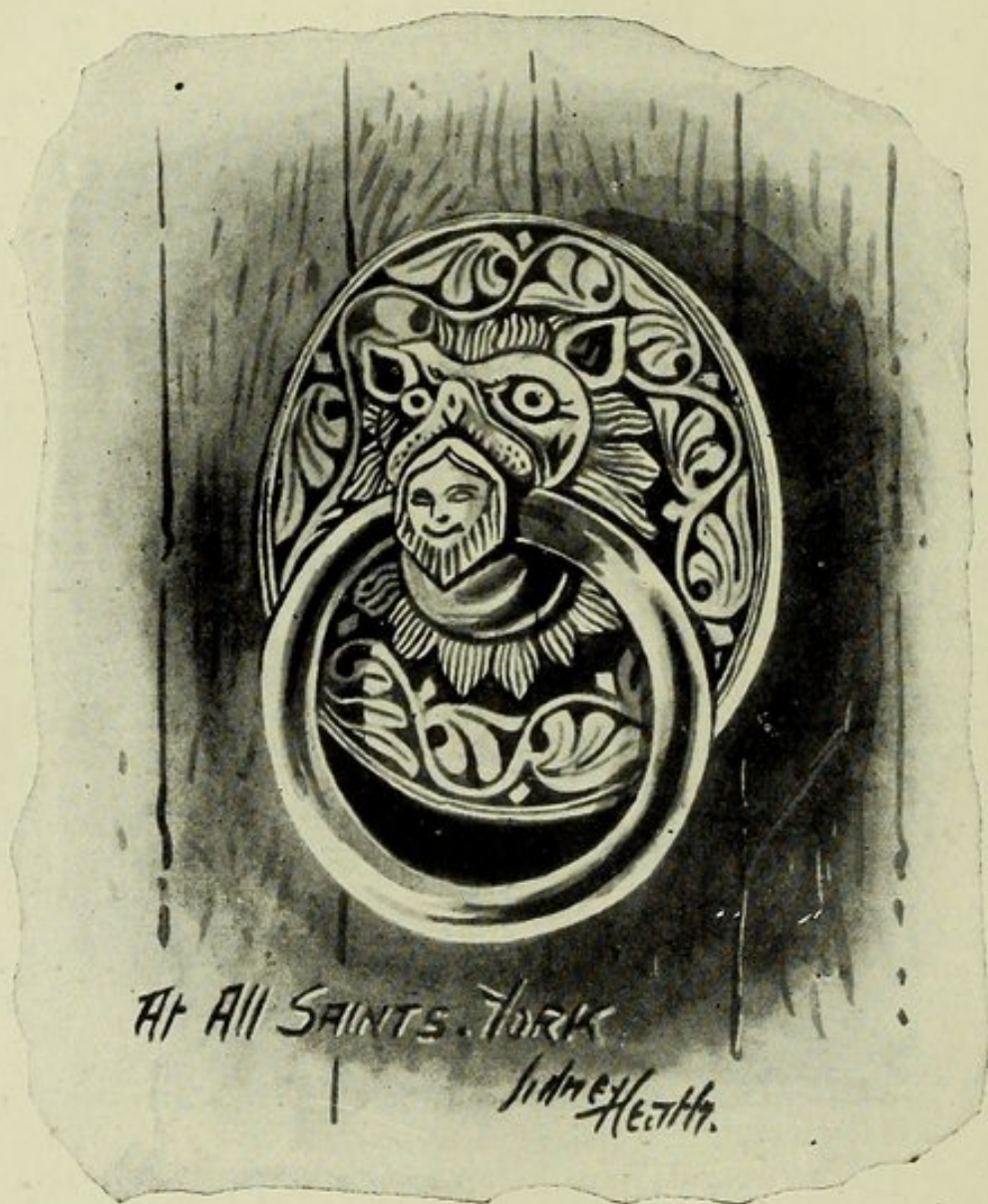
The asylum afforded to a fugitive from the vengeance of his enemies dates back to long before the Christian era. In heathen lands the temples of the gods enjoyed this privilege; but it is doubtful if the sanctuaries

<sup>1</sup> This was the direction of the Injunctions, but there was no uniformity. (See Lansdowne MSS. 8, F. 16. British Museum.)









*Reputed Sanctuary Ring,  
At All Saints, York.*

*Facing page 95.*



of the Christian Church were founded on either the heathen or the Jewish model. It is more probable that they grew up naturally with the needs of the times, for in early days men were apt to take the law into their own hands, and it became necessary for the Church to devise some system of protection for those charged with any crime until they could obtain a fair hearing.

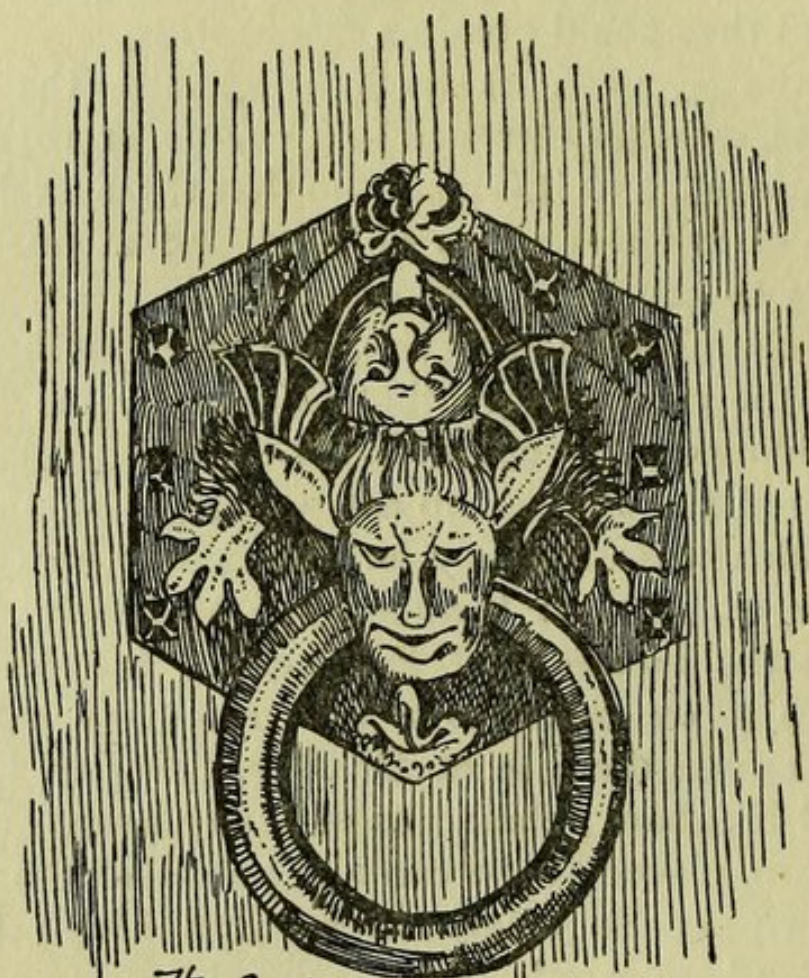
That the English Bishops supported the national sanctuaries, whether attached to a church or royal palace, is unquestioned, and it is also true that these shelters were the cause of evil as well as of good, and at one time the evil seems to have predominated.

When churches, monasteries, and religious houses first obtained the right of granting Sanctuary, the altar and inner buildings only were intended to be thus used, but as this required the refugee to eat and sleep in the church itself—which was expressly forbidden—the area of safety was enlarged, until it included the refectories, cloisters, and even the houses and lodgings of the Monks, and sometimes it extended to a mile on every side of the building, as was the case at Durham, Beverley, Edmondsbury, and Hexham ; the limits of safety being marked by four crosses, placed at the cardinal points of the compass, and known as Sanctuary Crosses, on which the word "Sanctuary" appeared.

We need not enter here into the general history of the privilege of sanctuary, with its curious customs of banishment, and its associations with many royal persons, but the right of claiming Sanctuary continued practically unimpaired down to the Reformation, by which time these institutions had become so numerous, and so given over to the housing of criminals, that after various Acts of Parliament had seriously curtailed their



privileges, they were nearly all abolished during the reign of James I. The springing up of guilds and corporations able to look after and protect their own members took the administration of public order out of the hands of the clergy, and gave the final deathblow to a custom which



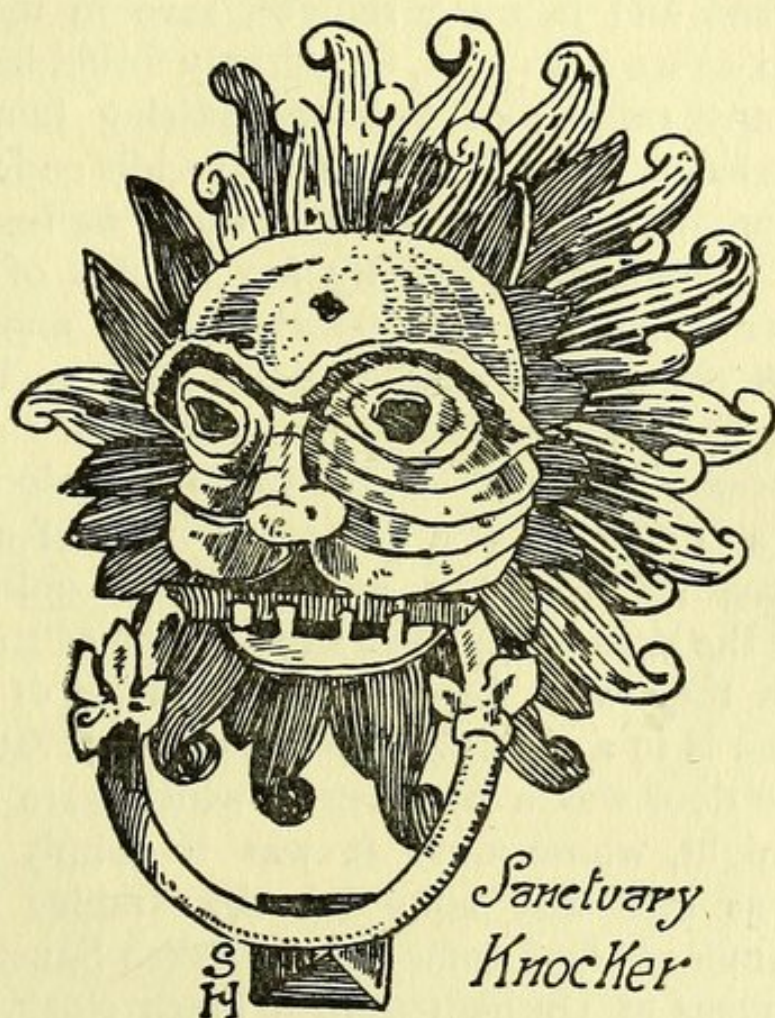
*At S. Nicholas  
Church. Gloucester*

had exercised such a powerful influence in Christendom for centuries.

Although generally abolished, the right continued to hold good in a few isolated spots as protection from civil process, the best known being "White Friars," or "Alsatia,"



of which Sir Walter Scott has given us so interesting an account in "The Fortunes of Nigel;" and in Scotland, the Palace of Holyrood had attached to it, until a few years ago, a Sanctuary to which debtors could fly from arrest, but this, owing to many abuses, was suppressed in 1880.



The only Sanctuary Knecker remaining in England to-day, that is above suspicion, is that at Durham Cathedral, and this notwithstanding that many of our old churches claim to possess genuine Sanctuary Kneckers. There are, of course, many Sanctuary Kneckers in the sense that they are



on the old Priests' doors leading to the Sanctuary, but these, with the exception perhaps of a few Collegiate Churches, as S. Nicholas, Gloucester, and the Church of the Holy Rood, Stratford-on-Avon, have no claim to be regarded as anything more. Few, if any, parish churches (although in early days they had the right) possessed the means to feed and house a refugee, save in the Church itself, which, as we have seen, was strictly forbidden. Thus we find many records of fugitives passing hundreds of parish churches at the risk of their lives while endeavouring to reach Durham, Hexham, or some other well-recognised Sanctuary. We have extremely few records of fugitives applying for Sanctuary at a parish church, and even in such records as exist the refugee seems to have been very hard pressed before he made such application.

The Durham Knocker is on the south door of the Cathedral, and consists of a grotesque head of a dragon, the ring coming from the mouth. It is quite hollow inside, and the rims of the eyes show traces of the enamel with which they were formerly filled. It is of the 14th century, and is in a remarkable state of preservation.

Over the door was a chamber in which were watchers, day and night, whose duty it was to admit fugitives. As soon as one was admitted the Galilee bell was tolled to announce that someone had taken Sanctuary.

The refugees at Durham wore a black cloak, with the yellow cross of S. Cuthbert on the left shoulder.

The Frithstól, or Freedstool, still to be seen in the Churches of Hexham and Beverley Minster, is literally the *peace-stool*. It was placed near the altar, and was regarded as the most sacred place of refuge for those claiming the privilege of Sanctuary. These seats were usually of stone, and existed in such abbeys and churches



as possessed the right of admitting refugees. Spelman tells us that the Frithstól formerly at Hexham was inscribed as follows :

“ HÆC SEDES LAPIDEA *FREEDSTOLL* DICITUR I. E. PACIS CATHEDRA, AD QUAM REUS FUGIENDO PERVENIENS OMNIMODAM HABET SECURITATEM.”



## CHAPTER V

### THE CROSS AND ITS SYMBOLISM

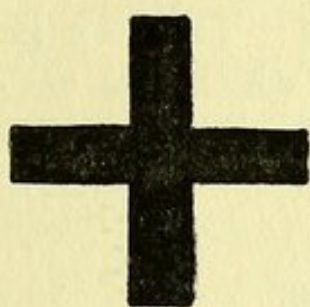
#### THE SIGN OF THE CROSS.

NOTWITHSTANDING that it does not appear in the catacombs,<sup>1</sup> that it has been found on tombs and cisterns in Arabia dating from long before the Christian era, and that it was originally a heathen sign, the signature of the great god Frey, and the symbol of Osiris and of Venus, the Cross is regarded to-day as the most perfect symbol of our Blessed Saviour. This, the instrument of His Passion, has become the sign of our salvation, the symbol of the Atonement, while as an emblem of Christ the Cross is of equal importance with the Lamb, and in many representations of the Blessed Trinity our Lord is portrayed by the Cross alone. As has already been stated there is little doubt that by the Cross the early Christians consecrated almost every act of their daily lives. Tertullian tells us that it was usual for persons to sign their foreheads with the Cross (FRONTEM SIGNACULO CRUCIS TERERE) on entering their various domestic occupations, on going out or coming in at their meals, on going to the bath or to bed. The meaning attached to the sign of the Cross, as a token of a Christian soldier, is probably derived from an old heathen custom

<sup>1</sup> Except in conjunction with the sacred monogram and one solitary example of the Tau Cross.



by which a general, in order to know his soldiers, was allowed to brand them on the forehead. S. Jerome says, that as a Christian he bore on his forehead the banner

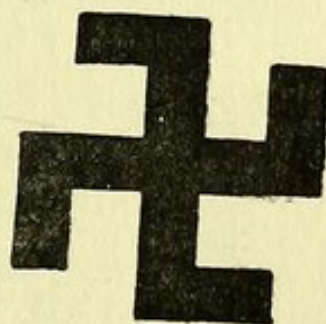


*Greek*

of the Cross; "VEXILLUM CRUCIS IN MEA FRONTE PORTANS." It is considered that our Christian form of making this sign was suggested by that in Hermann's *Consultation*, in which it was placed immediately after the exorcism. "Take the figure of the holy Cross in thy forehead, that thou never be ashamed of God and Christ thy Saviour, or of his Gospel;

take it also on thy breast, that the power of Christ crucified may be ever thy succour and sure protection in all things."

The official or public use of the Cross as a symbol of Christian faith began with Constantine, although it had doubtless been employed as a private and secret sign from much earlier times. In the Catacombs it is frequently found combined with the monogram of Christ, and its use as an emblem of His person is of great antiquity. After the publication of the Legend of the Cross, churches were dedicated in the name of S. Cross, or the Holy Rood. As Christian emblems the decussated (S. Andrew's) Cross, together with the Tau or Egyptian Cross, and their varieties, are probably the most ancient, but all belong to the earliest age of Christianity, just as they are all Christian adoptions of pre-Christian signs. These





particular varieties are supposed to be ancient signs accepted by the Christians as being sufficiently like the Cross associated with our Lord's suffering, and yet of a form so well known to their heathen contemporaries that it would not shock their prejudices. Thus we get another example of the judicious way in which the early Christians set to work to transform pagan signs into Christian symbols.

#### THE WOOD OF THE CROSS.

Bede states that the wood of the Cross on which the Saviour suffered was—the upright of cypress, the cross-piece of cedar, the head-piece of fir, and the *suppedaneum* or foot-piece of box. This differs from the Eastern tradition, which substitutes olive and palm for the fir and box.

#### THE TAU CROSS.

From the earliest times the cross as a symbol had manifold meanings. Transformed from a pagan into a Christian sign it may be said to have stood for all things to all men. Its Egyptian form (*see* illustration) was connected with the great traditions of ancient learning. To the early Christians it represented One who was their all in all, and to the later ones it symbolised Christ's death for them, their life and death in Him; and although Christian feeling has shown in more modern times a tendency to regard the Cross as an exclusive symbol of our Lord's death, it was not so regarded in earlier days,

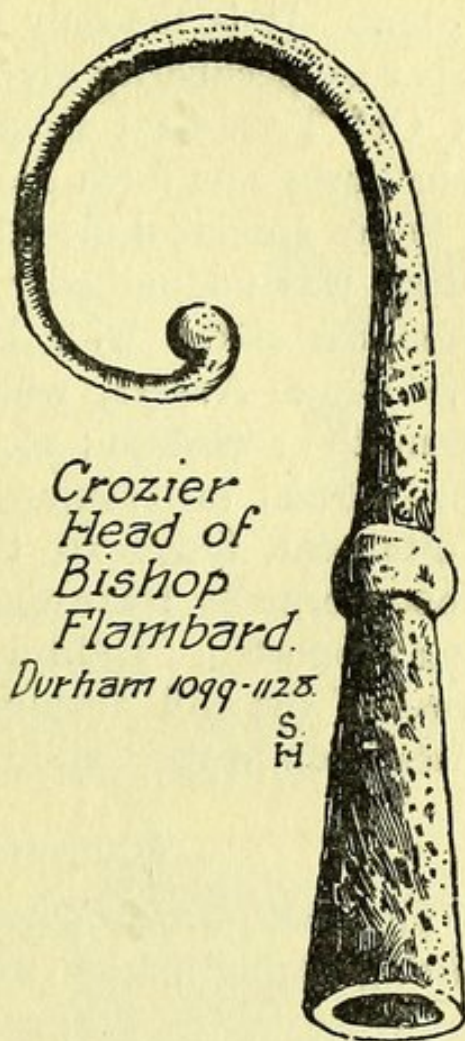


*Tau Cross*



when it undoubtedly had a wider and perhaps a happier application. Latter-day Christian emotion, the source and inspiration of Christian art, is responsible for the degradation of the all-embracing Cross of the early Christians to the mere crucifix of the Renaissance.

Though all forms which ecclesiastical crosses assume may be regarded as particular emblems of our Lord, or as symbols of His sacrifice and suffering, yet in addition to this general signification, they may be considered as demonstrative of particular facts connected with the Christian faith, and, as we shall see in another chapter, the early artists showed considerable ingenuity in developing monograms of the Saviour's name in which this sacred emblem should appear.



#### DERIVATION OF TYPES.

Nearly every variety of cross, and they are almost endless, has been derived from two principal types, the Greek and the Latin, the great exceptions being the Anticipatory Cross and the Ecclesiastical Crosses. The Anticipatory Cross consists of three limbs only, and has many other names, as the Tau Cross, from its resemblance



to the Greek letter  $\tau$ ; it is also called the Cross of S. Anthony, while the heraldic term for it is the Cross Potent. It is the only imperfect form of the symbol, but this very peculiarity gives it its value as an expressive sign of Old Testament Dispensation, whereas the Cross with four limbs sets forth the Gospel of Christ.

Some special difficulties are connected with this cross, which was undoubtedly a pre-Christian emblem. It has been associated with Egyptian nature-worship through the *Crux Ansata*, which was regarded as a sign of strength or wisdom; secondly, it has been traced through the crosses of Hebrew origin, and through their Old Testament types to the Christian faith, such as the wood borne by Isaac, the Tau on which the brazen serpent was supported. Didron says the Tau is the anticipatory cross of the Old Testament. It appears in a sepulchral inscription in the Callixtine Catacomb.

#### ECCLESIASTICAL CROSSES.

The *Ecclesiastical Crosses* are two in number, and have as distinguishing marks two or three transverse arms. They



*Patriarchal Cross*

are generally used as a mark of hierarchical distinction, the Pope alone being entitled to the Triple, and Cardinals and Archbishops to the Double Cross. This latter is known in heraldry as the Patriarchal Cross.

All the other varieties of Cross are based on either the Latin or the Greek Cross, the great distinction between which is that the former type includes those with four unequal limbs, while the latter comprehends those which have all their limbs equal, and can be circumscribed by a circle.



## THE LATIN CROSS.

*The Latin Cross* is often called the Calvary Cross, as it is supposed to have the form of that on which our Lord suffered, and it is generally employed to symbolise the Passion, or the

Atonement, by the Latins or Western Christians. It is sometimes accompanied by five marks indicative of the five wounds received by our Lord, and occasionally the crown of thorns appears at the intersection of the limbs. In a few instances this Cross is shown with

its members pointed at the ends, in which case it is understood to set forth the sufferings of our Lord, and when it assumes this form it is called the Cross of Suffering.



*Cross of Suffering*



*Latin Cross*

## THE GREEK CROSS.

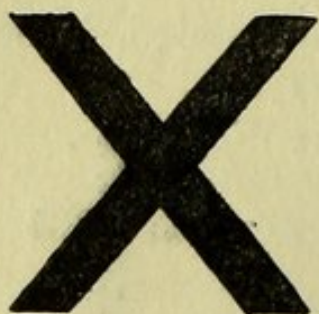
*The Greek Cross* is one in which the four arms extend equally in length, and is the accepted symbol of Christianity, which spreads its blessing equally over the four quarters of the world. Almost all the Crosses used in heraldic charges are of this type, and the same may be said of decorative and architectural Crosses generally, in which the Latin type is but rarely used.



*Conventual Seal  
of Rochester.  
showing the Saviour  
crucified on a Greek  
Cross.*



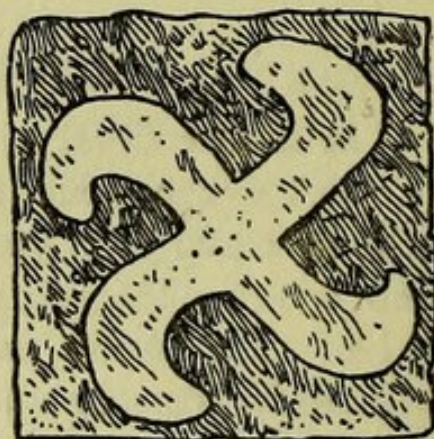
The Conventual Seal of Rochester shows the Saviour crucified on a Greek Cross.



*S. Andrew's*

*S. Andrew's Cross* is usually included in the Greek type, although not formed in the manner common to that variety, for although its arms are equal, they do not join at right angles. It derives its name from being the supposed instrument of S. Andrew's martyrdom, but it is also used as a symbol of suffering and humility. In heraldry it is called the *Cross Saltire*.

The *Fylfot Cross* is used principally in heraldry. It is often called Thor's Hammer. Thor, the god of Thunder, was a great Scandinavian divinity, and the hammer of fylfot shape, together with the mallet, were his symbols, and with them he is reputed to have performed many wonderful feats. It is of rare occurrence in ecclesiastical buildings, but is found on several ancient Dutch coins, and on a terra cotta vase discovered on the site of ancient Troy. In England it is found on many mediæval bells in that part of the country where the Norse settled, as Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. The connection is that bells were endowed with influence over thunder and lightning. The fylfot is the sacred Swastika of the Buddhists, and was used by them many centuries prior to the Christian era. It has been found on the dress of a



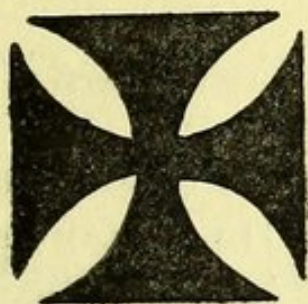
*Roman Tile with  
fylfot, in Dorset  
County Museum.*



fossar, as depicted in the Catacombs at Rome, and it was used as an ecclesiastical ornament during the 14th century, possibly as a symbol of strength and protection.

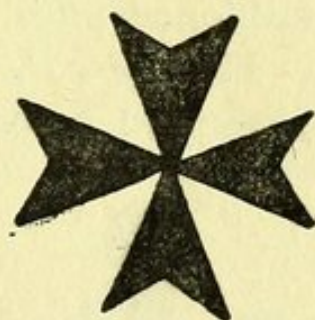
The *Maltese Cross* is composed of four spreading arms,

resembling fishes' tails, joined in a small centre. It is sometimes called the eight-pointed Cross.



*Patée*

The *Cross Patée* is frequently confounded with the Maltese Cross, but differs from that



*Maltese*

example inasmuch as its radiating lines may either be straight or curved as here illustrated. Its form is identical with the solar-cross of pre-historic times, and the sign of the great pagan god, Frey.

The *Cross Botonée*, or *Cross Trefflée*, has the extremities of its arms ornamented with trefoils.

The *Cross Pommée* has arms terminating in balls or circles, and is a variety rarely used save in heraldry.

The *Cross Moline* has the extremities of its arms divided into two curved members.



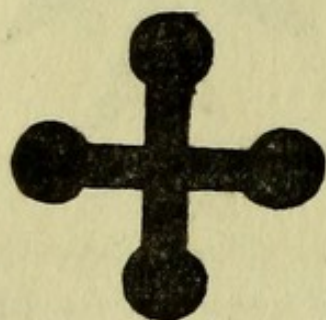
*Moline*

The *Cross Fleurie* is a beautiful form, and one which figures largely in all departments of ecclesiastical art. Its arms are generally quite straight with the ends finishing in ornament of a triple-leaved character. This is one of the few Crosses which are occasionally found in the Latin form.



The *Cross Patonce* is another highly ornate example. The arms are curved and spread out as they radiate from the centre. Many ecclesiologists consider this variety to be the most beautiful of this particular symbol. It is found in both the Greek and Latin types, but when in the latter form it is not so pleasing perhaps as when it is fashioned after the Greek type.

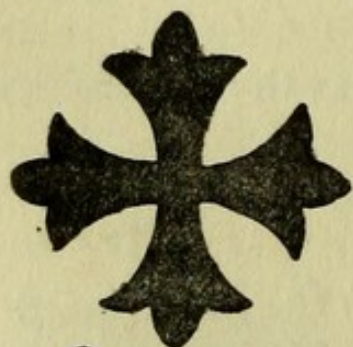
The *Cross Potent*<sup>1</sup> is formed of four Tau Crosses, and is a form used almost exclusively in heraldry.



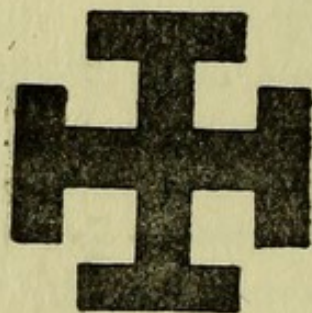
*Pommee*



*Botonee*



*Patonce*



*Potent*

The *Cross Crosslet* is one very frequently met with in art and heraldry. It is composed of four Latin Crosses joined together, and it usually assumes the Greek form.

There are many other forms of the symbol, but as their use is chiefly confined to heraldry and the purely decorative arts they are of little use to

the student of Christian Symbolism, and they can all be found in any up-to-date book on heraldry.

#### THE STATION CROSS.

The term *station cross* is derived from the Roman

<sup>1</sup> The badge worn by the pensioners of S. Cross Hospital is of this form.



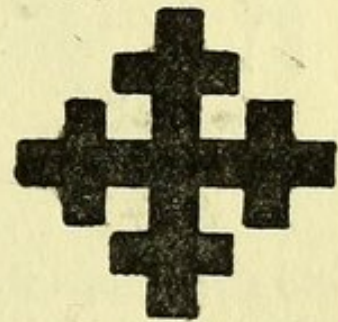
military term *statio*, and is applied to a large cross on the chief altar, or in some principal part of a church. Processional Crosses may be traced to the use of the Labarum in Constantine's army, and to his substituting the Cross for the Dragon on the standards of cohorts.

#### CHURCHYARD CROSSES.

Churchyard Crosses do not come within the scope of this volume, and would indeed require a whole book to do them justice. It may, however, be mentioned that many of them date from long before the erection of the churches in their immediate proximity, as they were set up to mark and hallow the enclosed yard, the common meeting place of the early Christian communities. The old Cornish Crosses are particularly valuable links of the pagan Christian overlap, on which the Saviour hangs free, without a cross, in the Scandinavian manner.



*Fleurie*



*Crosslet*

#### MEMORIAL CROSSES.

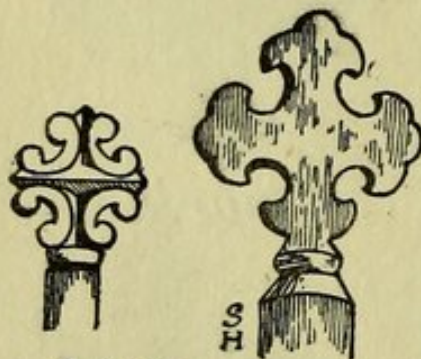
It was formerly the custom in this country, as it still is on the Continent, to erect crosses by the roadside and in the open market places of our towns and villages, and numerous examples still remain as at Dunster, Winchester, Cheddar, Glastonbury, Malmesbury, and Salisbury. Crosses were also erected to commemorate battles and remarkable occurrences, of which the famous Queen Eleanor Crosses



are possibly our most beautiful examples. These are memorials of the places at which her corpse rested each night on its journey to London for interment. They were largely designed by an Irishman, William de Hibernia, and were entirely the work of English hands.

#### GABLE CROSSES.

Ornamental stone crosses were erected as finials to the gables of churches, and many beautiful varieties of gable crosses are still to be found. Few exist of the Norman



*Gable Crosses  
Salisbury.*

period, but of the early English style we have happily many examples of great beauty and elegance. In the Decorated period a crown of thorns is often seen hanging on the cross, and during the Perpendicular era the Latin Cross became a more definite feature than it had been in any of the previous styles. Even these purely architectural enrichments

did not escape the attention of the parliamentary visitors, who regarded them as "superstitious" relics. The journal of William Dowsing gives a good indication of what was destroyed by these Puritan iconoclasts. "J. Suffolk, at Haver., Jan. the 6th, 1643. We broke down about an hundred superstitious pictures—and 200 had been broke down before I came. We took away two popish inscriptions with *Ora Pro Nobis*; and we beat down a great stoneing Cross on the top of the Church."

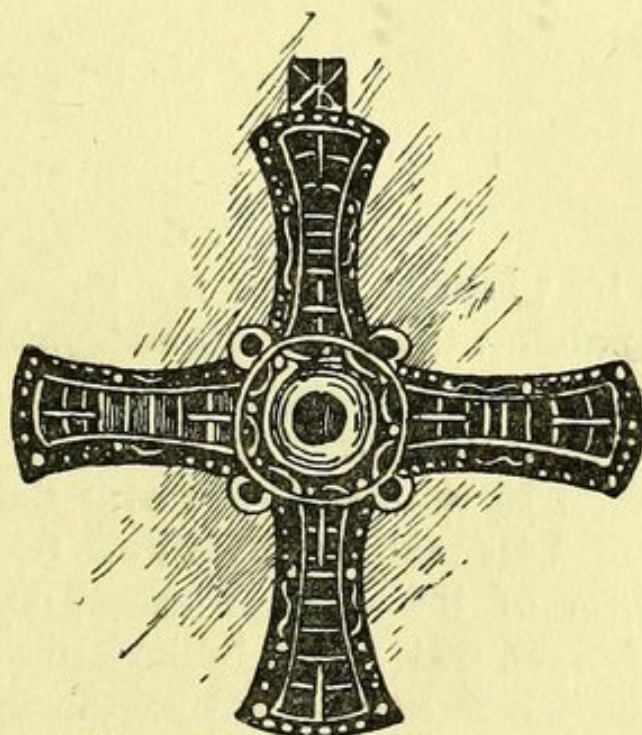


## THE PECTORAL CROSS.

The Pectoral Cross appears to have been derived from the breastplate of the high priest, and the earliest account of one of these ornaments is given by Hoffman, *Lex Univ.*, and dates from the 9th century.

Innocent III. traces its use by the pope to the vesting of the high priest under the Mosaic law (*De Sacro Altaris, lib. I, cap. 53*). Be this as it may, it soon became general for the early Christians to wear crosses hung around their necks.

Pugin in his *Glossary* says that the pectoral cross is now considered an emblem of jurisdiction, hence when a bishop<sup>1</sup> enters the diocese of another, he, although wearing the cross, conceals the same. The example here illustrated is the Pectoral Cross of S. Cuthbert preserved in Durham Cathedral.



*The Pectoral Cross  
of S. Cuthbert.*

## AN ACT OF SACRILEGE.

Among the minor acts of sacrilege as set forth by the Trullan Council is the following :


(II). Drawing of figures of the cross upon the ground, thus causing the symbol of our salvation to be trodden upon.

<sup>1</sup> The pectoral cross never appears to have been included in the *official* vestments of a bishop.








## CHAPTER VI

### THE SACRED MONOGRAMS

THE Christian use of the monogram symbol is involved in almost the same chronological difficulties as that of the cross. The monogram is only a phonetic or letter-symbol, whereas the cross is a graphic symbol appealing to the mind by its association with the whole life and death of our Lord, and of His whole teaching and Church. The form of the original monogram, sometimes called the *chrisma*, was the initial letter of our Lord's name, with the Greek letter P across the intersection of its limbs—thus  (Chi-Rho).

#### EARLIEST EXAMPLES.

A subsequent modification turned the  into the Egyptian , bringing the monogram into the form of the penal cross, . There are practically no instances of the public use of the monogram until the time of Constantine, but there is little reason to doubt, that, like the cross, the monogram was privately used from a very early period.

Some writers are of opinion that the monogram and the cross were adopted simultaneously by Constantine, and were then considered as one and the same symbol. In any case it is quite certain that  and  were the first and original monograms of our Lord's name. A later



monogram constructed on the same principle was I.H.C., from the first three Greek letters of the name Jesus, and may possibly have been of Byzantine origin. The lower Greek



*Early Monograms from Catacombs.*

abbreviation for the Lord's name is  $\text{I}\Sigma$ , but it was developed by inserting the H so as to evolve at length the I.H.S. of later times.

With the exception perhaps of the cross, the monograms devised by the early Christian artists to express the sacred names of our Lord, are of more frequent occurrence in ecclesiastical art than any other symbol. It will be noticed that in all these monograms the cross forms an integral part of the design. It appears certain that the earliest monogram was that which expressed the word Christ in Greek ( $\text{XPICTO}\Sigma$ ), the abbreviation  $\text{XP}$  in several forms being found on the tombs in the catacombs. Sometimes these forms are enclosed in circles as emblematic of the perfect nature of Christ.

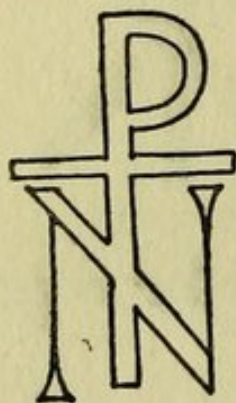


*Monogram from Catacombs*



## GREEK ORIGINS.

It may as well be stated at once that all our Christian monograms of the Saviour's name are entirely derived from Greek origins, and that even when they became a prominent feature in the Latin Church, they rarely under-



went any alteration of form, just as they have never lost their original signification. A rather peculiar form of the monogram is that showing the combination of a Latin N with other letters purely Greek, and of this symbol Didron gives the following explanation.

"These monograms were of Greek origin, but the Latins did not abandon them, or modify them according to the form of the Roman letters, until a very late period. In the catacombs and early mosaics, the monograms of Christ and of the Virgin are in Greek letters—IC̃, XC̃, and M̃P̃, Θ̃Ỹ. The alpha and omega have continued in use in this country (France) down to the present day."

Thus we see that while the above-mentioned monogram is Greek, the N, signifying Nazarene, is Latin.

The letters frequently found on the title-board of the cross I.N.R.I. are the initials of *Iesus Nazarene Rex Judæorum*, Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.

It was a general custom with the Greeks to use the first and last letters of the name Jesus Christ, and using for a symbol these letters with the sign of contraction placed over them. Thus, *ις* stood for Jesus, the *ι* (iota) and *ς* (the ancient sigma), being the first and last letter of *ιησους*; and in the same manner *χς* stood for Christ, the *χ* (chi) and *ς* being the first and last letter of *χριστος*.



## THE I.H.S.

The most popular monogram, however, in England, and the one most frequently found, is the I.H.S. In its original form this monogram has the sign of contraction placed over it, but when the Latins adapted it they made the mark of contraction intersect the upper member of the H (eta), and by this means a very beautiful and graceful monogram was evolved. There is a very popular and widespread idea that the monogram I.H.S. signifies Jesus Hominum Salvator, but this interpretation, touching and appropriate as it may be, is quite erroneous, for the letters are merely an abbreviation of 'IHΣΟΥΣ—Jesus. This monogram has always been a great favourite in England, and apart from its appearance on crosses, patens, chalices, etc., it is frequently found on coins, and domestic ornaments and utensils, as firedogs, grates, and andirons.





## CHAPTER VII

### THE SYMBOLS OF GOD THE FATHER

IN the earliest days of Christianity there were peculiar difficulties, both religious and artistic, attaching to any personal representation of God the Father. Artists very naturally shrank from any attempt to delineate His awful majesty, and it was many years before they grappled boldly with the subject.

#### DIFFICULTIES OF REPRESENTATION.

Artists had also to contend against the ill will of the early Christians to all imagery, for these had but recently become converts from a religious system which consisted largely in adoring images and statues. The newly adopted religion, too, had originated from Judaism, a religion in which every pictorial representation, whether of God or man, was rigidly proscribed.

Religious teaching pointed in the same direction, and S. John Damascenus declares that the essence of the Divine nature ought not to be represented, since it hath never been revealed to human eye, and that if artists venture to represent the Father, it must be under the aspect of the Son, for the Father and the Son are one, and he who hath seen one, hath seen the other. The difficulties felt by artists in attempting to create a visible form out of an invisible substance, combined with the



declaration of S. John, no doubt accounts for the fact that until the close of the 13th century, there are very few portraits of the Father as distinct from those of the Son.

#### THE HAND.

During the first eight centuries and even as late as the 12th century, in all forms of Christian art, God the Father was represented, or His presence indicated by a single symbol, a hand, which is usually shown as issuing from a mass of clouds. The hand also appears in representations of several subjects from the Old Testament, principally connected with events in the lives of Abraham and Moses. The origin of this symbol is lost in pagan obscurity. In the Scriptures, frequent mention is made of the Hand and the Arm of the Lord, and this symbol was used for a very long period. The Hand varies in both its form and position. Sometimes it is shown closed or grasping some object which it is presenting to the person below. At others it is open, with the fingers, from which rays of light issue, extended; which form is said to be symbolical of Divine grace and favour. As a rule, however, the Hand is depicted in the act of blessing, giving either the Greek or the Latin benediction, between which there is a great difference.



#### THE GREEK AND LATIN BENEDICTIONS.

The former has the third finger bent towards the palm, and is crossed by the thumb, while the second and fourth



fingers are curved inwards. This form symbolises the name Jesus Christ, by representing the four letters which begin and end the name in Greek. The first finger stands for the letter I (iota), the second  $\Sigma$  (the ancient *sigma*), the third finger being crossed by the thumb supplies X (chi), and the fourth finger indicates another  $\Sigma$ , thus forming IC-XC, the Greek monogram of Jesus Christ.

*Ecclesiastical  
Seal*



*showing Latin  
Benediction*

The Latin benediction does not represent letters. It

shows the third and fourth fingers closed upon the palm, leaving the thumb and first and second fingers extended, an arrangement that may be said to symbolise the Trinity, in whose name the benediction is given.

Dr. March writes: "The thumb, stout and strong, denotes the Chief Person of the Godhead; the third finger, taller

than the others, denotes Christ, the most important Person in man's salvation; and the second finger, as between the others, denotes the Holy Ghost proceeding from the Father and the Son. The two digits upon the palm



denote respectively the Divine and the human nature of Jesus. The Latin benediction is, therefore, a sign of trinity in unity."

#### DEVELOPMENT OF THE FULL FIGURE.

The Hand continued to be used as a symbol of God the Father until the 13th and 14th centuries, when a gradual transition took place. The first addition was to put an arm on to the hand possibly in allusion to the words of the Canticle, "He hath showed strength with his arm." Then the face appeared, shortly followed by the bust, and finally by a series of gradual transitions the full figure appeared.

So far, however, the Father has no cast of countenance peculiarly His own, no particular type of personification, so that in these early presentments an inscription was required to differentiate the symbol from that of the Son, from which, in both facial expression and costume, it would have been indistinguishable.

#### THE AGED MAN.

Gradually, however, as the artists became bolder, or the religious mind more ripe for a personified symbol of the Father, the hair and beard became longer, prominence was given to the cheek bones, and the forehead was furrowed with lines, until the contrast between paternity and filiation was fully developed.

From towards the close of the 14th century until the first years of the 16th century, further attempts were made to give an increased sense of sovereignty and pomp to the figures of God the Father. The aged, simply clad man of previous years was deemed an unworthy portrait of the



supreme God Himself, so artists searched for some grander model, and they took the most exalted types of regal, political, and pontifical power with which they were familiar.

#### PAPAL AND IMPERIAL TYPES.

Thus in Italy, France, and those countries where papal jurisdiction was all-powerful, nothing was considered more fitting for a representation of God the Father than a figure of the Pope, but that there should be no mistake as to Who was portrayed the papal tiara is adorned with one, two, three, and occasionally as many as four or five crowns, signifying how infinitely God was superior to the Pope. In Germany, where the Pope held but little sway, the same idea was carried out by investing the figure of God the Father in imperial instead of papal robes, and in England, where the Pope had long been held in low esteem, it was not deemed wise to depict the Eternal Father in the insignia of the papacy. We see, then, that in the first ages of Christianity the portrait of God the Father was interdicted, then cautiously introduced disguised under that of the Son, eventually appearing in a form of paternity distinct and unmistakable.

There are many contemporary criticisms of these anthropomorphic representations of God the Father, which depict the Supreme Being Himself in the guise of *fallen man*.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SYMBOLS AND REPRESENTATIONS OF GOD THE SON

#### EARLY EMBLEMS OF CHRIST.

SETTING aside the various monograms of His name, and the anagram of it as expressed by the emblematic fish, to which attention is called later, there are but two classes of representations of our Lord—those which point to His Divinity and Lordship, and those which commemorate His Passion and Suffering. The earliest of the former class is the Good Shepherd, and of the latter the symbolic Lamb. Both are frequently represented in the catacombs, on wall frescoes, sarcophagi, lamps, etc., and both are among the earliest extant emblems of our Saviour. Our Lord's comparison of Himself to the Good Shepherd occurs in various passages in the Scriptures, and the figure has frequently united with it two or more sheep in addition to the one carried on His shoulders, or borne in His arms. Although found in Christian art of the earliest period this pictorial emblem made no attempt at individual portraiture, the face being quite devoid of expression, but it doubtless helped in later times to create a demand in the mind for a more realistic presentment, for the Good Shepherd is only symbolical of Christ's humanity, not of His passion.



## THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

It is doubtless one of those symbols or emblems derived from His own words, "I am the Good Shepherd and know my sheep, and am known of mine." This emblem, although having the highest authority for its adoption, was for some reason rarely used after the 8th century, and by the year 1000 it appears to have completely died out. The



reason for the disappearance of this beautiful and appropriate emblem was possibly due to the fact that the idea of a shepherd watching over his flock was a much used symbol of both the Jews and the pagans, but this very fact made its adoption easy, for it could give no offence to pagan prejudices.



## PAN.

The figure of the Good Shepherd was a favourite symbol in every age, and one very common in pagan art. Mercury was worshipped under the name *Cirphorus*, or the Ram-bearer, and was thus represented in paintings. More frequently the god Pan appears under that figure, generally bearing in his hand the instrument to which he has given his name. The Roman use of this image to illustrate the shepherd's tender care of his flock recalled the inspired language in which Isaiah depicts the Almighty's loving-kindness towards his people.

## THE MULCTRA.

The figure of the Good Shepherd as an emblem of Christ is frequently represented with a vessel hanging on His arm, suspended on a tree, or lying on the ground. This is a *mulctra*, or milk-pail. The Lamb, being the emblem of Christ, the *mulctra* is considered symbolic of the spiritual nourishment derived from Him. Another early emblem of Christ, as shown in the catacombs, represents Him as Orpheus, seated among birds and beasts, and playing a lyre. Tradition partakes somewhat of the significance of history when, in commemorating the cycle of the elder poets, it commences with Orpheus, who was not of Hellenic descent, but belongs exclusively to the sacerdotal era and symbolical mythology.

## THE STORY OF ORPHEUS.

Orpheus, it is perhaps unnecessary to say, was a musician who produced such harmony from his lyre that all nature, animate and inanimate, trees, birds, beasts,



and fishes, cast out the ferocious in their nature and immediately became endued with gentleness and amiability. Then Orpheus fell in love with Eurydice, who when walking in the long grass was stung to death by a serpent, and carried off to the realms of darkness, where she was given over to the infernal powers that inhabited that region. The love of Orpheus, however, combined with his power of harmony, succeeded in subduing the fiery potentates of hell, and so he rescued his beloved Eurydice. Here, then, was a pagan story that with a little modification was soon made to resemble the history and character of Christ, and these points of resemblance, so gratifying to the early Christian, could give no offence to his pagan contemporaries.

#### THE SYMBOLIC LAMB.

The symbolic Lamb, earliest symbol of our Lord's Passion, connects the Old Testament with the New, and unites in itself all and every type of His sacrifice from the death of Abel to S. John's vision of the slain victim. The Lamb has the same high authority in Scripture as the Good Shepherd. Under the Mosaic law Christ was typified by the lamb, and the prophets frequently employed the emblem in speaking of the coming Messiah. In the gospel according to S. John i. 29, we read, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world," and in the 36th verse, "Behold the Lamb of God." In the catacombs are many representations of this symbol. The earliest displays the Lamb in a standing posture, without the nimbus, but sometimes with a cross borne on the head, or the Greek monogram  $\frac{P}{X}$ .



Towards the end of the 6th century the wounds of the cross are represented on the sides and feet of the Lamb, and after this date it is usually shown bearing a cross, symbolical of the Passion, and a banner with a cross upon it. In these instances it is usually nimbed, and the symbol is known as the *Agnus Dei*.

#### THE AGNUS DEI.

The Agnus Dei versicle runs: "Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi Miserere nobis," but is usually called the "Agnus Dei."

It was an ancient custom to distribute to the worshippers, on the first Sunday after Easter, particles of wax taken from the Paschal taper, which had been solemnly blessed on the Easter Eve of the previous year. These particles were burned in houses, fields, and the like, as a protection against evil influences or thunderstorms. The Paschal taper was anciently thought to symbolise the pillar of fire which guarded the Israelites, and the *Agnus Dei*, the Passover Lamb. At the Trullan Council (692), to be mentioned later, it was decreed among other things that Christ should no longer be pictured in churches under the guise of a lamb, but in human form.

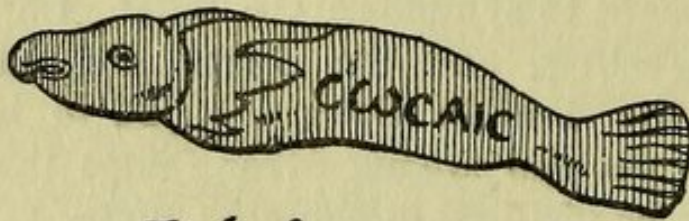
To return to the Paschal Taper, or Candle. This is possibly a remnant of the ceremonial of Constantine, but it cannot be traced to a period earlier than the 6th century. In the old ritual it was compared to the pillar of fire. So high and ponderous were these candles that one at Chartres weighed 72 lbs.; at Rheims, 30 lbs.; at Rouen, 40 lbs.; and at Canterbury and at Westminster, in 1557, 300 lbs. At Durham the candle nearly touched the



vaulting, and according to the Sarum Use, it was to burn throughout the octave at mattins, mass, and vespers; and from it every taper in the church was to be rekindled. The Durham candle was kept under the stairs leading to S. Cuthbert's shrine, and set up from Maundy Thursday until the Wednesday after Ascension Day, just behind the three silver lamps, that hung before the altar. This candle was so tall that it had to be lighted through the roof of the church. The author of "Rites of Durham," tells us that it was "estimated to be one of the rarest monuments in England."

#### THE EMBLEMATIC FISH.

At an early date (4th century) it was discovered that the five Greek letters forming the word fish (Ι. Χ. Θ. Υ. Σ.) when separated supplied the initials for the five words



*Fish from  
Catacombs*

Jesus Christ (the)  
Son of God (the)  
Saviour, and this undoubtedly caused the fish to be adopted as a secret sign of the primitive Church, although like the Vine and the Dove

it was a symbol with manifold meanings.

The anagrammatic use of the word ΙΧΘΥΣ for the person of the Lord was perfectly natural under the continued dangers of persecution, and one that would attract no notice from the uninitiated, but the pleasure derived from the anagram, and the ease with which this, a pagan



sign, was made to conceal Christian doctrine, seems occasionally to have overcome the thought that Christ used the fish as an emblem of His people and not of Himself. It is, however, a symbol of very frequent occurrence in the paintings and sculptures of the primitive Church, and our Lord's parabolic use of it is frequently depicted, as where the fishes in the Church's net, or caught by the hook of the fisher, correspond to the lambs of the fold, or to the doves, represented in the catacombs on the tombs of the faithful.

#### THE DOLPHIN.

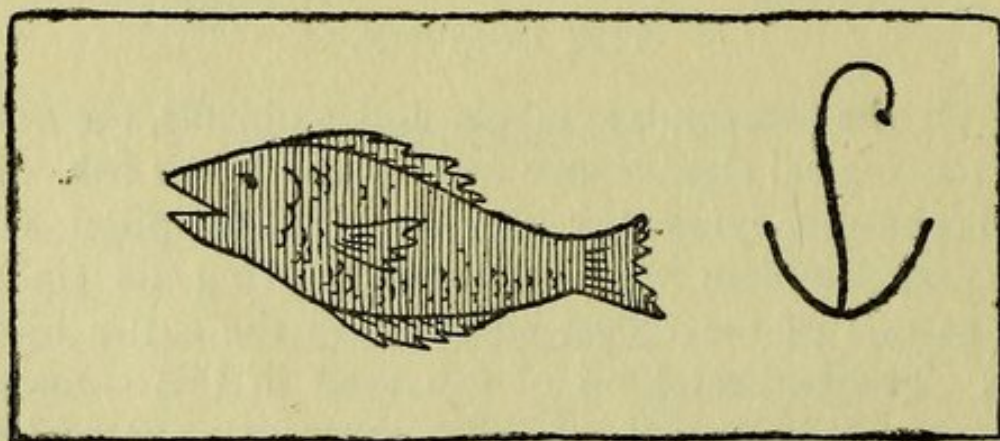
Of all the catacomb symbols and emblems, the first in both theological significance and in age is the fish. It is found accompanying the first dated inscription which bears any emblem whatever, thus proving its right to rank as one of the oldest emblems in the entire hieratic cycle. The earliest kind of fish used in this connection appears to have been the dolphin, representative of Christ as Giver of Eternal Life. The dolphin was a common decorative feature of classical art, and its appearance on the Christian monuments, while expressing Christian doctrine to the initiated, would give no offence to the pagan mind. Julius Africanus (A.D. 220) says: "Christ is the Great Fish taken by the fish-hook of God, and whose flesh nourishes the whole world." S. Augustine exclaims: "ΙΧΘΥΣ is the mystical name of Christ, because he descends alive into the depths of this mortal life, as into the abyss of waters."

"The fish in whose mouth was the coin paid as tribute money," says Jerome, "was Christ, at the cost of Whose blood all sinners were redeemed."



The allusion of the fish to the ordinance of baptism is dealt with in Chap. III., but it was also regarded as a symbol of the sufferings of our Lord, and in this connection S. Prosper of Aquitaine writes: "The Saviour, the Son of God, is a fish prepared in his passion, and by whose entrails we are constantly daily nourished and enlightened."

Sometimes the sign is found inscribed on pagan tombstones used to enclose the *loculi* of the catacombs, to give them a Christian character. It rarely occurs alone, but is



*Fish and Anchor a.d. 234 the earliest dated inscription in the Catacombs that bears an emblem.*

associated with other Christian emblems, as the Anchor or the Dove. A remarkable instance of the use of this emblem occurs on the seal of Aberdeen Cathedral, whereon is represented the Nativity, with the Blessed Virgin and S. Joseph, but instead of the infant Saviour, a fish is lying upon the manger. The date of this seal has been fixed at about 1250.

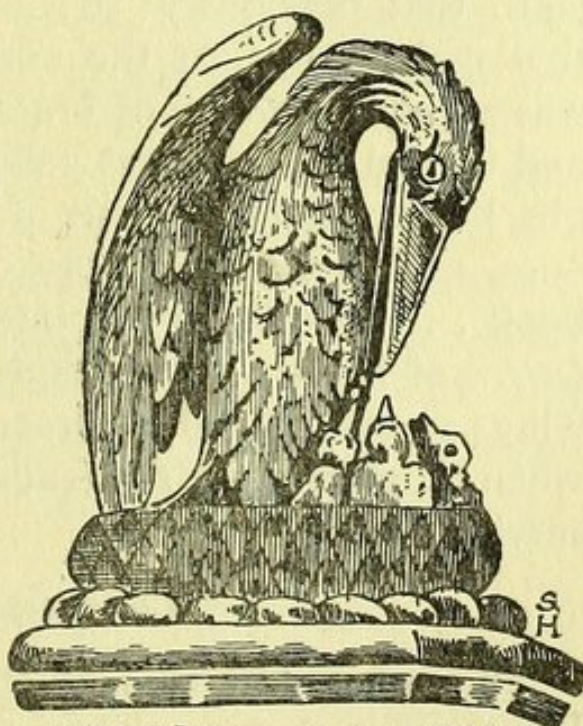
Having been the first definite Christian emblem to appear, it is perhaps not altogether strange that the fish was also



one of the first to be discontinued, for after gradually falling into disuse during the 4th century, it was entirely abandoned at the beginning of the 5th century. Its disappearance is to be explained in a large measure by its anagrammatic character, and it affords a striking example of that *disciplina arcana* of the primitive Church, which, as we have repeatedly seen, employed signs in common use; for the early believers had not so much to devise new symbols as to divert the signification of the pagan forms into a channel of Christian thought.

#### THE PELICAN.

In later times a somewhat favourite emblem of the Saviour was the Pelican, usually represented surrounded with her young, whom she is feeding with her blood. It is thought that this emblem originated with the old naturalists who, noticing that this bird had a crimson stain on its beak, propagated the report that it was accustomed to feed its young with the flowing blood of its breast, which it tore for the purpose. In this belief the early Christians adopted the Pelican as an emblem of Christ, who set forth our redemption through His blood. This emblem is usually called the Pelican in



*The "Pelican in her Piety"  
in S. Nicholas Church,  
Yarmouth.*



her Piety.<sup>1</sup> The figure of the Pelican *vulning* herself, as it is heraldically expressed, is to be found in many of our Churches, as at Ufford, Suffolk, where a beautiful example terminates the carved font cover, whilst another, almost as good, occupies a similar position at North Walsham, Norfolk.

The Ufford example is thus referred to by the notorious William Dowsing:

"There is a glorious cover over the font like a Pope's triple crown, with a Pelican picking its breast, all gilt over with gold." Brass lecterns of an old date occasionally show representations of the pelican (instead of the eagle), of which the finest example is the lectern in Norwich Cathedral. From the "Ancient Rites of Durham" we learn that previous to the Reformation there was one in that cathedral—"At the north end of the high altar there was a goodly *letteron* of brass, where they sung the epistle and Gospel, with a great pelican on the height of it, finely gilt, billing her blood out of her breast to feed her young ones, and her wings spread abroad, whereon lay the book . . . also there was lower down in the quire another *lettern* of brass with an eagle on the height of it, and her wings spread abroad, whereon the monks laid their books when they sung their legends at mattins or other times of service."

#### THE VINE AND LION.

The other emblems of our Lord do not call for any lengthy description. They are the Lion and the Vine, but both have manifold meanings. The Lion as an emblem of Christ is rare. It is thought to have been derived from the

<sup>1</sup> This subject forms the finials of the gate-pillars of a house situated between Upwey and Nottingham, Dorset.



passage in Revelation v. 5, where Christ is called "the Lion of the tribe of Judah." Ecclesiologists have been somewhat at a loss to attach any particular Christian meaning to the Lion, an animal that has been used as an ethnic symbol of strength and courage from the earliest times. The most probable solution is that it indicates the ideas of watchfulness and vigour, and as such it not infrequently occurred in Christian churches of the Lombardic era, and it was adopted, like the vine and the fish, as an authoritative image. Leader Scott, writing about the Romanesque or Transition architecture of Italy, says, "Between A.D. 1000 and 1200 the lion is to be found between the columns and the arch—the arch resting upon it. In Italian Gothic, from A.D. 1200 to 1500, it is placed beneath the column. In the first it points to Christ as the door of the Church. In the second, to Christ the pillar of faith springing from the tribe of Judah." (*The Cathedral Builders*.) The real meaning of the Vine in Christian symbolism is that assigned it by our Lord's words in S. John xv.: "He is the vine, His servants are the branches, bearing fruit only while they abide in Him." This symbol, one of the very oldest, shared the fate of the Good Shepherd and the Fish, and did not exist as a sacred emblem after the first five or six centuries.

#### THE TRULLAN COUNCIL.

The Quinisextum, or Trullan<sup>1</sup> Council, held at Constantinople in 692, gave a great impetus to the literal representation in place of the symbolic, although such was a natural, and, one would think, an inevitable development from the cross, for when the Christians became sufficiently

<sup>1</sup> Held "in Trullo," that is, in a domed building.



free from persecution as to be able to present the cross free from the disguise of its one or other pagan forms, they frequently placed the Lamb at the intersection of the limbs of the cross. For a long period this was deemed a sufficient emblem of the Saviour, and one that became so general that there appears to have been a danger of the reality being forgotten in the symbol, and the symbol being accepted as the reality. The above-mentioned Council, therefore, set forth among other things that—

“ In certain venerable pictures and images the Precursor S. John is represented pointing with his hand towards the Lamb of God. We adopted this representation as an image of grace ; to our apprehension it was a shadow of that Lamb, Christ our God, Whom the Law exhibited to us. Having then in the first instance accepted these figures and shadows as signs and emblems, we now prefer to them grace and truth, that is to say, the fulness of the Law. In consequence of this, and in order to expose to all regards perfection even in paintings, we determine that for the future, in images of Christ our God, He shall be represented in His human form instead of in that of the Lamb as in former time. We must contemplate all the sublimity of the Word through the veil of His humility. The painter must, as it were, lead us by the hand to the remembrance of Jesus living in the flesh, suffering and dying for our salvation, and thus obtaining the redemption of the world.” And again, that “as the antitype is better than type or symbol in all representation, the literal representation of the Lord shall take the place of the symbolic Lamb on all emblems of His sacrifice.”



## PERSONAL REPRESENTATIONS.

This was the first step towards a personal representation, although the old symbol continued to be used, and Guericke tells us that crucifixes did not appear in churches until after the 7th century, possibly in deference to the pagans, who would have recoiled from any connection of the Infelix Arbor with a Divine Being. The Christians, from purely charitable motives, may have refrained from any personal addition to the cross, but crucifixes were undoubtedly used for private devotion long before public opinion was ripe for their general introduction into churches. They are also found on carvings, paintings, medallions, mosaics, etc., of a very early period.

The Iconodulist transition, as set forth at the Constantinopolitan Council was one well suited to the Northern mind, and to the sacramental theory of pain, but it fell in also with the tendency to personification advancing on symbolism which the Western nations inherit, and which Mr. Ruskin, in his Oxford lectures, pointed out as the idolatrous tendency of Greek art.

## PICTURES OF THE CRUCIFIXION.

It is, however, essential for us to distinguish between the use of a crucifix as an object or instrument of devotion, and that of a pictorial presentment of the Crucifixion as a scene, although all the representations of the crucified Lord, whether exhibited with or without a background, are symbolical, even when lacking in historical realism or artistic emotion. The earliest efforts were purely symbolic, not distracting the imagination by a vivid presentment of an actual event, nor arousing feeling through the sense of artistic beauty. These early representations dwelt on the



*meaning* of the event, rather than as depicting Christ in the act of death for man. The concentration of thought upon the bodily sufferings of our Lord we shall refer to later, for the attempt to portray the facial expression caused by bodily suffering only dates from just before the Reformation. In early work also the nails are always four in number, two for the feet and two for the hands. The upraised arms, the crossed legs, and the three nails, are of comparatively modern date. The earliest crucifixes are essentially narrative, and the scene of the Resurrection is so frequently introduced into the same composition that one is led to think the subject would have been too painful without it for the eyes of the early Christians.

#### ITALIAN INFLUENCE.

It was not long, however, before the growing and vigorous art of Italy took the crucifix into its especial care, and the rise of mediæval asceticism, its somewhat marked inclination to dwell particularly on the agonies of the Passion, with its attribution of sacramental efficacy to pain, carried everything before it. It was introduced freely before the Reformation by Cimabue and Angelico, since when a somewhat artificial use has been made of this line of thought, especially in the painting and sculpture of the Roman Catholic Church. Each succeeding century added some fresh indication of the degradation and agony of the Saviour, until the climax was reached in Albert Durer's<sup>1</sup> "*It is finished.*"

<sup>1</sup> The religious pictures and drawings of Albert Durer and his contemporaries show very clearly that by this time symbolism had lost all its early significance.



## THE MAN OF SORROWS

Little by little the full-robed Christ was divested of the tunic, then the tunic was wittled away until it became a mere *perizonium*, or loincloth. The crown of glory was displaced by the one of thorns, and the whole energy of the artists was directed to excite compassionate emotion by the exhibition of the *Man of Sorrows*. In this concentration of thought on our Saviour's sufferings art may have been the gainer and religion the loser, for, as has been fittingly said, many seem to have considered the final scene of the Redemption of Man as an opportunity of displaying newly-acquired powers of facial expression and knowledge of anatomy. The triumph of art gave the deathblow to symbolism.

## DIDRON'S CRITICISM.

Didron says: "From the 10th to the 12th century men were content to indicate, to pass lightly over, or even altogether omit, the miracles of charity, in order that every episode of the Passion might be fully developed in minute detail from its commencement, even to the Crucifixion . . . in the 11th and 12th centuries, the robe becomes shorter, the sleeves disappear, and the breast is already uncovered in some instances . . . the countenance of the crucified Redeemer becomes more sorrowful, and the impress of physical suffering is stamped upon His Divine form."

## MICHAEL ANGELO.

And again: "Artists plunged lower and lower still into the depths of a miserable materiality, until the time of Michael Angelo, by whom Christ is portrayed in the Last Judgment, under the aspect of a Jupiter Tonans, and



appearing from his gesture as if prepared to chastise the human race with actual blows. How melancholy is such an aberration of the mind in a man of genius ! degrading thus the entire Deity, and particularly that one of the three Divine persons, whose ineffable love to mankind makes him in very truth the most perfect type of gentleness and mercy."

Of the really great Italian artists of the Middle Ages, only Fra Angelico, Francia, Perugino, and Fra Bartolomeo, remained true to essentially Christian principles. Their paintings show to what nobility of thought and purity of conception religious art can attain when practised by men imbued with devout religious sentiment. These artists were the last of Italy's purely religious painters, for Raffaele, although a far greater genius than any of them, did not confine his efforts to religious subjects, and his inspiration was more often of a heathen than of a Christian character, and this notwithstanding the faultless artistic beauty, and even the spirituality of his works. This was still more the case, as Didron has pointed out, with Michael Angelo, who, when treating of the loftiest themes of Christianity, is essentially pagan in the mental qualities which permeate his art. Such applies with equal force to Titian, to Veronese, and to Correggio, whose works display a vigour of intellect and a technical perfection, almost beyond compare ; but we look in vain for any evidence of that devotional inspiration, and genuine religious conviction that is so conspicuous in the art of their less talented, but more devout predecessors.

#### AGES OF DIVINITIES.

Before turning to the early representations of the crucified Saviour, as found in England, there are one or



two iconographic facts to which attention must be called. In the first place, it will be noticed as a general rule that the youthful figure of Christ, as depicted in the guise of the Good Shepherd and on the early crucifixes, becomes older with the centuries in proportion as the age of Christianity itself progresses. The Virgin, on the contrary, who is shown in the catacombs as being from forty to fifty years of age, becomes more and more youthful, until at the close of the Gothic era, she is depicted as a young girl of eighteen. The youthfulness of Christ on the most ancient Christian monuments is very striking, and from the first ages of Christianity down to the 12th century His presentments are distinguished by youthfulness and grace. The other thing to be considered is that representations of God the Son are far more frequently found than those of God the Father; and Christ in all Christian art has been more honoured than the Father.

Didron writes: "The God whose person is more peculiarly esteemed is unquestionably Jesus. He has been, without a single intermission, represented at every era, and under every possible form. . . . At the time when the hand of God only is shown, Christ is depicted at full length, and of every age; beardless or with a beard, of the age of eighteen or that of thirty."

#### THE VERONICA.

Very different from the sublime and beautiful face of the early Christ is that shown on the "Veronica" presentment of our Lord. He wears not a nimbus but a crown of thorns. The legend attached to the Veronica picture is to the effect that as the Saviour was bending under the Cross on His way to Golgotha, a pious woman,



Veronica, offered him her veil or kerchief wherewith to dry the sweat on His face. When she received again the kerchief an image of the face remained miraculously impressed upon it. There are other versions and traditions to the effect that a portrait of Christ<sup>1</sup> was painted by an unknown person, Veronica, who took it to Rome in 700. In 1011 an altar was dedicated in its honour, and to-day this portrait, though but rarely shown, is one of the most famous relics of S. Peter's. Yet another explanation is that "Veronica" is an anagram of "*vera icon*," a true image, and this is somewhat borne out by mediæval writers, who use the word *veronica* more often to designate a picture than as the name of a woman.



*Veronica*  
*S. Austell, Cornwall.*

The only example of the Veronica appearing on an English Church, with which the author is acquainted, is that sculptured on S. Austell Church, Cornwall, and is here illustrated.

<sup>1</sup> We have the express statement of S. Augustine that, in his day, there was no true likeness of the Saviour, of the virgin, or of S. Paul. The claim to the possession of a veritable image was of much later date.



Among the earliest emblems and representations of the Saviour in this country, are those found on early presentments of the Trinity (*see* Chap. XII.) on the Saxon Roods, as found in Hampshire and elsewhere, possibly on a few of the old Hogbacks of Lancashire, and on the old Celtic crosses of Cornwall. In the earliest personified forms the Saviour is clothed in a tunic, and hangs free, without a cross, in a very different manner from that depicted by the Latin crucifixion.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE ROOD AND ROOD-SCREENS

#### AN EARLY CROSS.

THE earlier history and evolution of the Rood from the primitive cross has already been dealt with in the previous chapter, when attention was also called to the earliest representations found in England. Among the more interesting of these are those depicted on the old Cornish crosses, as at St. Buryan, where a short, plain cross with equal arms represents the crucified Saviour hanging free, with unbent limbs. The figure is clothed in a tunic reaching to the knee, the waist being encircled by a band. In the massiveness of its proportions this sculpture possesses something of a Byzantine character, and bears much resemblance to the illustrations of the old crosses of Constantinople. It has been attributed to the Roman-Christian era,<sup>1</sup> and may well be of this antiquity.

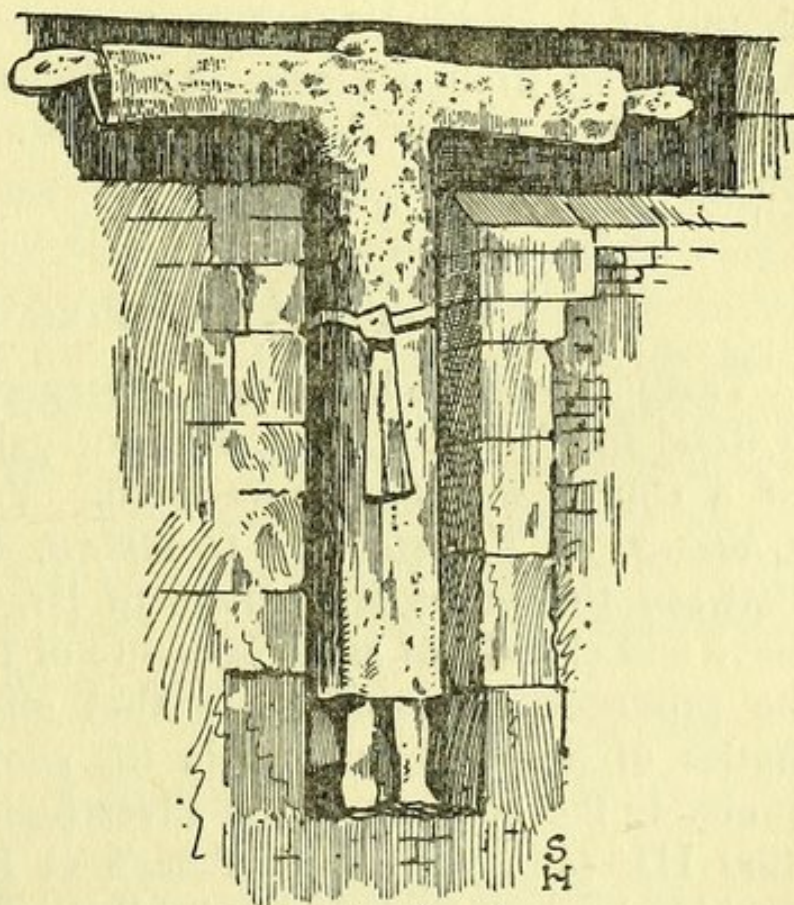
Another very remarkable representation of the crucified Lord is that now built into the exterior east wall of the south porch of the parish church of S. Matthew, Langford, Oxfordshire. Here, again, the figure is fully clothed in a long tunic, which in this case reaches nearly to the ankles, and a band encircles the waist. The head has disappeared, but this sculpture must certainly rank as one of the very earliest representations of an English crucifixion.

<sup>1</sup> *Archæological Journal*, Vol. ix., p. 305.



## SAXON ROODS.

The well-known Saxon Rood at Romsey is of much later date than the Langford example. It is built into the inside south wall of the choir. The crucifixion is treated in the usual Byzantine manner, with the limbs of the Saviour unbent. On each side of the top arm of the cross is an angel, and on either side of the shaft are S. Mary and S. John, the shaft being exceptionally long to allow of the figures of the soldiers being placed below those of the chief mourners. The soldiers are holding the spear and sponge, while some foliage, possibly indicative of the *Tree of Life*, springs from the foot of the cross.



*Early Rood at  
Langford  
Oxfordshire*

Another early Rood is that built into the exterior wall of the nave of the church at Breamore, but as the body of the Saviour is bent, this is probably of a later date than the Romsey example.



The Rood at Headbourne Worthy is built into what was the original west wall of the nave, and although still in the same position it is really within an annexe which was erected in the 15th century for the protection of the Rood, and to give shelter to the worshippers. Here, as in the other examples, the Saviour hangs on the cross in the ancient Byzantine manner. On each side are the figures of S. Mary and S. John, and above is the *Dextera Dei* issuing from a cloud. The feet of the Saviour are supported on a *suppedaneum*, and those of His companions on brackets.

#### INTRODUCTION OF ROODS.

There appears to be no satisfactory evidence as to when a Rood fixed aloft upon a beam or gallery in the middle of a church was first introduced. Pugin states in his *Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament*, that these crosses between the naves and choirs of large churches, or the nave and chancel of small ones, are of great antiquity, but he produces no evidence to that effect. The earliest notice of a *crucifix* set up in the centre of a church is probably the account of the silver figure set up by Pope Leo III. (A.D. 795), in S. Peter's at Rome, but there is nothing to show that this was a Rood in the sense that it was raised upon a beam or gallery, although such may have been the case.

There is, however, abundant evidence that a gallery bearing much resemblance to the rood-loft or jube existed in early churches. Pope Martin I. had the canons of the Lateran Council read from the rood-loft of S. Cyprian's Church, but whatever may have been the precise form of the structures in question, there is absolutely no evidence



that they were surmounted by a Rood before the 12th century. The name jube, for the rood-loft or gallery, was given in allusion to the words "JUBE, DOMINE, BENEDICERE," which were pronounced from it immediately before certain lessons in the Roman Catholic service, and which were sometimes chanted from this gallery.

#### POSITION OF SCREEN.

Screens are found in churches in various situations, sometimes enclosing the choir, at others separating subordinate chapels, and previous to the Reformation a screen always divided the nave from the chancel. Where these are still standing they are generally found to partake of the architectural characteristics of the building wherein they are found, and their position is generally either immediately behind the piers of the chancel arch, or along their centre line, the latter arrangement being perhaps the more frequent.

#### USES OF SCREEN.

The screen was so designed with mullions, tracery, panels, etc., that although the people could have some insight into the priests' offices, yet these were to be partly concealed from view. Above it was a platform or gallery, called the rood-loft, rood sollar, or holy loft, from which were read parts of the gospels, epistles, lections, letters of communion, etc., and from it penitents were absolved, episcopal benedictions pronounced, and elect abbots presented to the people.



## ROOD-LOFT AND BEAM.

When the lower framework of the screen was sufficiently strong the loft or platform was constructed upon, and formed an integral part of it, but in the majority of cases the woodwork was of so slender and delicate a nature as to be incapable of supporting a heavy weight, in which case the loft was supported on a separate beam, and only connected to the screen by some intervening ornament. Where this occurs the beam is found to have been built into the chancel wall on either side so as to provide adequate support for the loft it was intended to carry.

The rood-loft was usually approached by a narrow stone staircase, entered by a doorway near the screen, and terminating in another doorway at the level of the loft. The stairway being for the convenience of the priest, it will be readily understood why both entrance and exit are almost invariably within the church, although in a few instances the loft appears to have been reached by a staircase having a doorway on the outside of the church.

## STAIRWAYS.

The position of the stairway varied ; sometimes it is found in the thickness of the wall, or in a projecting buttress, and as it has been found on the north, south, east, and west sides of the screen respectively, it is evident that no particular importance was attached to its position. It generally finished at the level of the loft, but at Kenton, Devon, and S. Austell, Cornwall, it is carried up to the full height of the roof.

The main purpose of the rood-loft was to support the great Rood, or figure of Christ crucified, and its attendant



saints and images, so that from its commanding position and great size it was the cynosure of the eyes of all worshippers.

Thomas Fuller, the rare old divine who was for some time the Rector of Broadwindsor, Dorset, says :

#### SYMBOLISM OF THE ROOD.

“ The Rood was an image of Christ on the Cross, made generally of wood, and erected in a loft for that purpose, just over the passage out of the Church into the Chancel. And, wot you, what *spiritual mysterie*, was couched in this position thereof? The Church (forsooth) typified the *Church Militant*, the Chancel represents the *Church Triumphant*; and all who will pass out of the *former* into the *latter* must go under the *Rood-loft*; that is, carry the cross, and be acquainted with affliction.”

#### ATTENDANT IMAGES.

The Rood was invariably accompanied by two images, one of the Virgin Mary, the other of S. John, which, like the first, were made of wood. Occasionally in large churches there were one or more additional figures, being as a rule those of the patron saint, or saints of the churches wherein they are found.

#### CANDLES AND LIGHTS.

Lights were placed before the Rood and attendant images, as well as on the High Altar, and they formed a leading feature in many of the ceremonies of our parish churches up to the time of the first year of Edward VI.;



and there are many records relating thereto, as the following from the Churchwardens' accounts of S. Martin, Outwick, London :

“ 1509 paid to Randolf Merchũnt, wexchandiller, for the Pascall, the taps (tapers) affore the Rode, the Cross candelles, and Judas candelles. . . . ixs. iiij<sup>d</sup> .”

#### THE REFORMATION.

These lights, no doubt, had their own distinct and appropriate symbolism, and the cost of providing them must have been a heavy expense. Rood screens remained in position until the reign of Henry VIII., when the great religious movement which led to the dissolution of the monasteries furnished an abundant incentive for the removal or destruction of images, although during Henry's own lifetime this was as a general rule done without any violent break in the general arrangements and accustomed religious observances of the churches. The first changes did not relate to the images and altars, etc., as such, but limited the use of lights before them ; and it was likewise commanded that the Bible was no longer to remain a closed book to the laity. The royal command to this effect ran as follows :

“ Every parson or proprietary of every parish church shall. . . . provide a book of the whole Bible, both in Latin, and also in English, and lay the same in the Quire, for every man that will to read and look therein.”

This had been preceded by the order commanding the publication in English of the Paternoster, the Apostles' Creed, and the Ten Commandments.



## EDWARD VI.'S INJUNCTIONS.

With Edward VI. on the throne many more edicts were issued, producing a series of vital changes in the religious services. The injunctions numbered thirty-six, but many of them only confirmed and expanded those issued by his predecessor.

Rood<sup>1</sup> and Rood-loft, if not exactly laid low, as Froude affirms, were stripped of their images, paintings, candlesticks, etc., and they were in a great many cases entirely removed from the churches.

Edward VI.'s injunctions were very explicit :

## IMAGES DESTROYED.

"3. That Images abused with Pilgrimages, and offerings thereunto, be forthwith taken down and destroyed, and that no more wax candles or tapers be burnt before any Image, but onely two lights upon the High Altar before the Sacrament shall remain still, to signifie that Christ is the very light of the world.

"28. That they take away and destroy all Shrines, covering of Shrines, Tables, Candlesticks, Trindills, or rolls of Wax, Pictures, Paintings, and other monuments of famed miracles, so that no memory of them remain in Walls or Windows, exhorting their Parishioners to doe the like in their severall houses."

<sup>1</sup> "It was *ultra vires* to pull down the rood-loft in 1559. Similar irregularity occurred in Edward's reign." Henry Gee, D.D. (Elizabethan Prayer Book p. 145.)



Those images which were not removed or destroyed were secretly hidden or sold to parishioners (and were in many instances set up in their original positions during the next reign), as appears by an entry in the Churchwardens' accounts of Ludlow:

"1548. Received of William Philipps for a image of Jhesus that stood in Beawpie Chapelle, x<sup>d</sup>.

#### MARY'S EDICTS.

With the Catholic Mary on the throne there commenced a gradual return to the old forms and ceremonies, but so complete had been the work of stamping out the old observances, the accumulation of centuries, that it was impossible to restore the ceremonial to its former grandeur in so brief a reign, although by a new statute she repealed all the laws relating to religious uses issued by her brother Edward.

#### ELIZABETH'S REFORMATION.

With the death of Mary on 17th November, 1558, another turn was given to the wheel of fortune or misfortune in the forms of worship. As Fuller said, "New lady, new laws," and these last introduced by Elizabeth were more drastic in character and more harshly interpreted than any which had preceded them. Everything that savoured of Romanism was not simply removed but mutilated or destroyed, and rood-lofts were not spared. A study of the Churchwardens' accounts during the reign of Elizabeth will show hundreds of entries relating to payments of sums of money for defacing images, burning the Rood, and destroying altars. The chancel *screen* was spared, and Elizabeth's order reads, "that there remain a



comely partition betwixt the chancel and the church . . . and where no partition is standing, there to be one appointed." (British Museum, 5155 aa. 7.)

#### WARNING TO WORSHIPPERS.

The symbolism of the Rood has already been alluded to, but this brief account of one of the most interesting portions of our old churches must close with the statement that attached to many of the screens was a warning :—

"EFFIGIEM CHRISTI, QUUM TRANSIS, PRONUS HONORA :  
NON TAMEN EFFIGIEM, SED QUEM DESIGNAT, ADORA."

which may be translated—

"Christ's image when thou passest, bow before,  
Yet not the effigy, but Whom it means, adore."

In the term *Rood*, as applied to these screens, we see what is probably another instance of the pagan-Christian overlap to which attention has already been called. The Rood is the figure of Christ crucified, yet one of Woden's titles was Lord of the Gallows, and the gallows was called Woden's tree. It was also called the steed of Woden, so that "Woden's horse" and "the gallows" came to be synonymous terms, in the same way that in mediæval poetry the Cross is called "Christ's palfrey"; and in one of the *Blickling Homilies* we read: "God's Son suffered upon the *rood*-gallows, or *róde galgan throwode*," that is, died on the gallows tree.

Skeat derives the word *Rood* from the A. S. *ród* = gallows, O. S. *róda* connected with Aryan root *rudh* = to grow. The Holy Rood has been traced back to "Aaron's rod that budded." Several representations of the Crucifixion, as on the font at Lenton, Notts, show the limbs of the Cross



terminating in leaves which may be regarded, with similar arboreal forms, as a survival of the tree or "budding rod." The use of the word *tree* to designate the Cross has been retained in large numbers of hymns, as the following :—

" Faithful Cross, above all other,  
One and only noble Tree ;  
None in foliage, none in blossom,  
None in fruit thy peer may be.  
Sweetest wood and sweetest iron,  
Sweetest weight is hung on thee."



## CHAPTER X

### THE SYMBOLS OF THE PASSION AND ASCENSION.

THE symbols of the Passion include all those which tell of our Lord's Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane; His Betrayal; His maltreatment by the soldiers; and His Death upon the Cross. The Agony is rarely symbolised, but when it is, the usual symbol consists of a cup, in allusion, no doubt, to our Lord's own words. (Matt. xxvi. 39, 42; St. Mark xiv. 36; St. Luke xxii. 42; St. John xviii. 11.) As a rule the cup bears on its side a Cross of Suffering. (*See Chap. V.*)

### THE BETRAYAL.

The Betrayal is represented by eight symbols—the Sword, the Club, the Lantern, the Torch, the Ear, the Rope, the Thirty Pieces of Silver, and the Head of Judas. These obtain their authority from many passages in the Gospels. The symbols of Suffering are seven—the Basin and Ewer, the Rope, the Pillar, the Scourge, the Scarlet Robe, the Crown of Thorns, and the Reed.

### THE PASSION.

The Passion symbols which speak of our Lord's death are more important perhaps than those mentioned above. The principal symbol is the Cross, described at length in



Chapter V. The other symbols are the three Nails, the Hammer, the Pincers, the Ladder, the Sponge and Reed, the Spear, the Title board of the Cross (I.N.R.I.), the Seamless Garment, and the three Dice.



*BENCH END at Braunton  
with Symbols of the Passion.* S. H.

These Symbols of the Passion are of frequent occurrence in our churches, on the reredos, misereres, or bench ends. They appear on the bench end, here illustrated, at Braunton Church,<sup>1</sup> Devonshire, whereon is the Hammer and the Ladder, borne on shields. Other bench ends on which are depicted the Instruments of the Passion are found at Poughill, Cornwall. At Trent, near Yeovil, there are four inscribed "Ave Maria." It must, however, be mentioned that although these particular examples

are very good, yet they were erected at a time when

<sup>1</sup> This church contains a very fine set.



symbolic art had lost much of its early significance, and when the great revival of classical learning was at hand to give a final blow to such "superstitious relics" as graven images and symbols. The very nail-marks of our Lord have not eluded the keen search of the symboliser; that in the right Hand is called the Well of Mercy, that in the left the Well of Grace; the spear mark is the Well of Love, and the marks in the feet constitute the Wells of Pity and of Comfort.

The Pelican appears occasionally as a symbol of the Crucifixion in which cases she is, as when used as an emblem of Christ, *vulning* herself (*see* Chap. VIII.). In mediæval times the Brazen Serpent upon the Tau Cross was used to set forth the Crucifixion, as also the slaying of the Paschal Lamb and the Sacrifice of Isaac.

#### THE RESURRECTION.

The Resurrection is usually symbolised by either the Lion, the Phoenix, the Peacock, or the Pelican. The Lion was possibly adopted because the old naturalists believed it was always born dead, or in a state of torpor, but that, in the space of three days, it became endowed with life by the breath, or the roaring voice of its sire. The Phoenix, as a Christian symbol, dates from very early times, and is found in the catacombs. The ancient fable, too well known to need repetition here, no doubt caused it to be accepted as a symbol of the Resurrection of our Lord.

The Peacock owes its symbolic position because it renews its plumage yearly, and it also figures as a symbol of Immortality by reason of the ancients considering its flesh to be incorruptible.

Of the Ascension the only symbol appears to be the



Eagle shown in the act of flying upwards. In pictures of the Ascension it was usual to introduce only the feet of the Saviour, the remaining portion of the figure being left out, while in a few cases the presence of our Lord is merely indicated by his foot-prints, no part of the figure being visible. The Old Testament types have also been used to set forth the Ascension, such as the Translation of Enoch and the Bearing to Heaven of Elijah in the chariot of fire. These types appear in the "Biblia Pauperum" together with drawings of the Ascension.

#### THE BENNU.

Dr. March writes<sup>1</sup>: "The ancient Egyptians, in their evolution of a doctrine of immortality, made grallatores the symbols of their creed. The Bennu, *Ardea bubulcus*, a sort of heron, was sacred to Osiris, the god of Agriculture. It was the emblem of resurrection, and betokened the rising again of the sun, the return of Osiris to the light. It was sacred also to the planet Venus, whose appearance, sometimes in the evening, and anon as the morning star, was a sign of the renewal of life."

#### THE PHOENIX.

From the Bennu the conception of the Phoenix was evolved, for the story of the Phoenix springing anew from the ashes of its funeral pyre is of much later date, although strongly believed in by the fathers of the Christian faith. Lactantius (A.D. 300) composed a poem on the bird in which he tells us among other things that whether

<sup>1</sup> "The Mythology of the Wise Bird."



masculine, feminine, neither or both, happy is it to need no marriage. Its lust and delight are to die, that it may be born again. Rufinus, who lived a hundred years afterwards, used this story as an argument in support of the Incarnation. "Why," he asks, "should it seem wonderful that a virgin should conceive, when the Eastern bird appears to be born or reborn without a consort? for he is always only one, and ever succeeds himself by birth or rebirth." The Phœnix would easily become adopted in Christian symbolism for the Resurrection, and its name would connect it with the palm tree. Thus the name, the tree, and the bird, with its mythical allegory, all connect the Eastern and Greek traditions with the central Christian doctrine.

In the catacombs the Phœnix is nimbed and perched on the boughs of a tree by the side of S. Paul; and on the ancient basilica of S. Paul at Rome, a sculptured figure of the Phœnix, together with its name, appears over the doorway. S. Clement of Rome (1st century) uses the Phœnix as an argument in favour of a Resurrection, in the following passage: "Let us consider that wonderful sign which occurs in the Eastern countries; that is to say, Arabia. There is a certain bird called a Phœnix. It is the only one of its kind, and it lives 500 years. When the time of its dissolution draws near that it must die, it makes itself a nest of frankincense, myrrh, and other spices, into which, when its time is fulfilled, it enters and dies. But as its flesh decays, a certain kind of worm is generated, which being nourished with the juice of the dead bird puts forth feathers; and when it is grown to a perfect state, it takes up the nest in which the bones of its dead parent lie, and carries it from Arabia, in Egypt, to the city called Heliopolis."



## THE COCK.

A cock in the act of crowing has been used as a symbol of the Betrayal, but as it alludes directly to Peter's denial it cannot be rightly classed with the symbols of Christ's sufferings. Representations of this bird occur on tombs from an early period. When not associated with the figure or emblem of S. Peter, it is used as a symbol of the Resurrection, as our Lord was supposed by the early Church to have broken from the grave at the early cock-crowing.



## CHAPTER XI

### THE SYMBOLS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

DURING the first eleven centuries the Holy Ghost was almost exclusively symbolised by a Dove, possibly because it is recorded in the words of the Evangelist that at the baptism of our Lord, the Holy Spirit descended as a Dove upon Him.

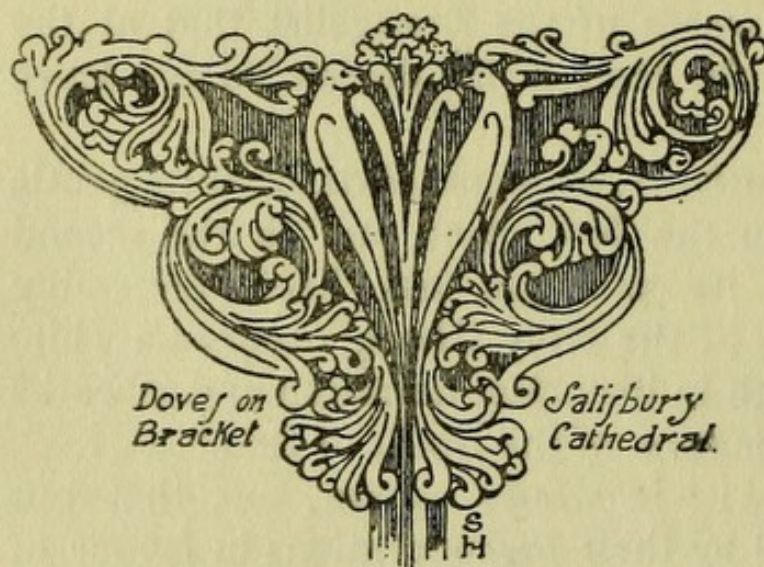
Didron says : "The Dove, amongst birds, from its gentle and loving nature, in the first place, and in the second from the purity of its plumage, has been preferably selected as the image of the Holy Ghost. Indeed a white Dove is regarded, both in historical narration and in works of art, as the impersonation of the Spirit of God."

Dr. March<sup>1</sup> writes : "It would appear, too, that our Saxon forefathers led by their preconceptions in favour of a wise bird to a ready adoption of the dove as a symbol of the Holy Ghost, naturally supposed that the λόγος, or verbum, or word, in the opening sentence of S. John's Gospel was the Third Person, and not the Second Person, of the Trinity. They were further confused as to the proper relationship of the Dove by a discovery that the sum of the numerical letters in the term *περιστερά* was 801, and so possessed a value identical with that of the letters Α Ω, Alpha and Omega, which Christ had assumed as his own title."

<sup>1</sup> "The Mythology of the Wise Bird."



Again: "By the Greeks doves were ranked as wise birds. . . . The amatory disposition and fecundity of the dove made it a suitable associate for a goddess of love and maternity. In the East the favourite sacrifice to Istar, or Astarte, was this bird. And it is a highly significant fact that young pigeons and turtle-doves were sacrificed to Jahveh, under the Levitical law, as an atonement for the impurity of childbirth, whilst similar offerings were brought by the Virgin to the Temple at Jerusalem after the birth of Christ." This connection of



the dove with maternity lingered in Christian writings and records for many centuries; and in the *Blickling Homilies*, A.D. 979, we read: "The Holy Ghost abode in the holy womb nine months, and then the queen of all the maidens

gave birth to the true Creator and Consoler of mankind, when the gold-flower came into this world and received a human body from S. Mary, the spotless virgin."

In representations of the Baptism of Christ, the Dove is usually shown in the act of descending, with wings outstretched, and issuing from its beak a bright stream of light falls upon the Saviour. Sometimes the Dove is nimbed, and at others it is shown without a nimbus. The Holy Ghost was also symbolised by a group of seven Doves, who are understood to represent the seven Spirits



of God, the seven Gifts of the Spirit, or the one Holy Spirit in His seven-fold manifestations of Grace. The idea of the Spirits was no doubt suggested by the following passage in Isaiah xi. 1, 2 : "And there shall come forth a Rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots, and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel and Might, the Spirit of Knowledge, and the fear of the Lord." S. John also speaks of the seven Spirits in Rev. v. 6, 11, 12, but these differ materially from those of Isaiah.

In an illuminated Benedictional of S. Æthelwold, Bishop of Winchester (A.D. 963-985), the tongues of fire that fall upon the heads of the twelve apostles on the day of Pentecost issue from the beak of a Dove, and during the 13th and 14th centuries Christ is repeatedly represented as receiving inspiration from seven Doves.

In the catacombs the symbolic dove appears to bear several meanings. It usually figures as the symbol of peace, in which case it bears the word PAX, or carries an olive branch in its beak. The dove may also be regarded as a token of innocence according to the injunction, "Be ye harmless as doves." They appear also to stand for pious Christians, or for the souls of departed saints, as a dove is sometimes depicted resting on each arm of the cross ; and Tertullian calls the sanctuary *columbæ domus*.

Didron writes : "Ornithological forms have been employed by Christianity, not merely as expressive of swiftness and velocity, but of spiritual nature and the incorporeal essence. . . . Angels, bodiless spirits, are represented with wings on their shoulders ; they have always two, sometimes six, as is the case with the Cherubim and Seraphim." And again : "Acting on the



same principle, but giving it a more extended application, artists have lent the wings and form of a bird to allegorical figures created by their imagination. By pagans as well as Christians the wind has generally been personified by a head blowing puffs of wind, and violently agitating a pair of wings joined to the neck."

In the centre of the vaulting of the nave of Norwich Cathedral there is a large circular opening through which, we learn from the sacrist rolls, a man on Whitsunday, habited as an angel, was let down with a thurible<sup>1</sup> to cense the Rood. Lambard mentions another custom at S. Paul's: "I myself, being a child, once saw in S. Paul's Church, at a feast of Whitsuntide, where the coming down of the Holy Ghost was set forth by a white pigeon that was let to fly out of a hole that is yet to be seen in the midst of the roof of the great aisle, and by a long censer, which, descending out of the same place, almost to the very ground, was swinging up and down at such a length that it reached at one sweep almost to the overt gate of the church, and with the other to the choir stairs of the same, breathing out over the whole church and company a most pleasant perfume of such sweet things as burned therein." Similar openings have been discovered in the vault of Exeter Cathedral and other large churches. Occasionally a silver dove was let down during the service as a symbol of the descent of the Holy Ghost. In 1662 the following ceremony was recorded by Mr. John Greenhalgh, as taking place in the Church of Dunkirk: "As they went up again in the midst of the body of the church, the priests and the whole procession stood still singing very loud, 'Veni Creator Spiritus,' and then was acted the memorial of the day. In the top of the arched

<sup>1</sup> A censer for burning incense. Lat. *Thuribulum*.



roof of the cathedral, which is very high, there is a cupola, or great round hole, as round and broad as a mill-stone. In this hole was first made a flash of fire lightning, as if the heaven opened there; then descended from thence a living milk-white dove—it was let down by a pulley with a small string, with its wings and tail expanded and spread by two very small white sticks at the back of them, to which the feathers were tied with white thread, and could scarce be perceived; but I, standing very near, did discern it; and this done, the dove looking prettily about, as a dove will, descending by degrees; when it came near over the priests' heads, it stayed hanging and hovering over them a good while, they still singing 'Veni.' Then it was drawn up by degrees into the cupola, out of sight, and after this, out of the same great hole in the roof were thrown down, as it were, many cloven tongues of fire, which came down flaming over the priests' heads; but they, instead of receiving them, opened to the right and left and let them fall to the floor, saving their shaven crowns. I perceived these were papers besmeared with some sulphurous matter, to make them blaze better; and at the coming down of these tongues there was a great shout set up in the church that the town rang again. Lastly, there was thrown down a shower of holy water, which fell in drops upon the people to sprinkle and hallow them. So ended the procession of all the foolish fopperies of the forenoon."

The same ceremony, with but slight alterations, is still to be seen in many Roman Catholic countries to-day.

About the 10th century a rival symbol appeared to the dove in representations of the Holy Ghost.

This was a human form, but its adoption was much more limited, and its duration far shorter than that of



the dove. Although the human symbol does not seem to have gained much favour, it was used from its first institution in the 10th century till towards the close of the 16th century, when it was again entirely superseded by the earlier and undoubtedly the more appropriate symbol.

One of the most celebrated representations of the Holy Ghost depicted in human form is that mentioned in a MS. attributed to S. Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, and who died in 988. In this MS. the three Divine Persons are shown in human form. The Father wears the robes of an emperor, and is a man of great age. The Son holds His cross and appears to be of about thirty years of age, while the Holy Ghost exhibits no distinguishing attribute, and is young and almost beardless.

In other cases the humanised form of the Holy Ghost shows Him varying from infancy up to an advanced period of old age; and lastly, He appears as of a great age, with a long beard, white hair, and a deeply-wrinkled forehead.

It has already been stated that these deified human figures appeared late, and they are far less numerous than the dove, finally disappearing at the time of the Renaissance.

One of the Popes in a bull prohibited the use of this humanised form, as on the occasions when He did so appear, the symbol was apt to be confounded with that of the Eternal Father, who was also represented as an aged man.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE SYMBOLS OF THE TRINITY

BEFORE we turn our attention to the signs and symbols that have been used to set forth the ever Blessed Trinity, it may be well to summarise briefly the origin and meaning of this phrase. Humphrey, in his *Treatise on the Book of Common Prayer*, says: "The word Trinity is first applied to the Godhead by Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, about A.D. 170. He says the first three days of creation are types of the Trinity—that is to say, of God, His Word, and His Wisdom."

#### DEFINITION OF THE TRINITY.

Sabellius considered that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were but three different phases under which the one Divine Essence has been revealed to man; and Arius maintained that the Son was not of the same substance with the Father. Tertullian (A.D. 194) tells us that one Praxeas came from Asia to Rome, and went subsequently to Africa where he was one of the sufferers in the cause of Christ. He entertained some curious notions in respect of the Deity, and although he signed a recantation, he afterwards fell back into his former principles. He denied what we call the real Trinity, but in its place



advocated the Unity of God by declaring that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were one and the same. He argued, says Tertullian, that "the Father Himself descended into the Virgin, was born of her, suffered, and was, in short, Jesus Christ." He held the Word of God to mean nothing more than the word of his mouth, the emission of his voice.

#### PRAXEAS.

Praxeas and his band of followers considered the *personality of the Son* to be a disparaging representation of our Lord, whom they held to be "the Supreme God Himself, who had revealed Himself in human nature, and had appeared in a human body. God, they said, was to be considered in two different relations—(1) The hidden, unknown Being, as He was before the Creation, the *Father*; and (2) in so far as He revealed Himself the *Son of the Logos*; and further, that it was only in virtue of these considerations "that Christ, as the most perfect revelation of God the Father, was called the *Son of God*."

This, they said, was a doctrine eminently calculated to *dignify* Christ. Tertullian wrote an elaborate argument against the works of Praxeas, which is of interest to us only because we there learn that the doctrine of the Trinity, as defined in the first Article ("That in the Unity of the Godhead there be three persons of one substance, power, and eternity,") was maintained in the 2nd century. As Praxeas and his followers did not reject the accusation of maintaining that God the Father suffered in the Crucifixion, they obtained the name of *Patripassians*; and from denying the plurality of persons in the Godhead they were called *Monarchians*.



The reader will probably not be surprised to learn that the idea of a trinity, in so far as it indicates a three-fold personality, dates from long before the Christian era. Thor was represented as a man with three heads, and the sign of Woden was the triskele. This conception of a trinity was, says Dr. March, "henotheistic," for "when any member of the triad was worshipped apart he was adored as supreme."

#### THE INDIAN TRINITY.

The Indian idea of a trinity, a sort of triune elementary force, is found in the conceptions of many nations. It is the doctrine of triple primary power, and unites the idea of destructive with creative and preservative power, in which the principle of destruction is equal, if not superior, to a benevolent deity.

The Christian Church for a long period in representations of the Trinity, indicated the Father by a right hand, the Son by a cross, and the Holy Ghost by a dove. Full, personal effigies began to be made about the 12th century, and became very general by the end of the 15th century. Frequently when the Holy Ghost is symbolised by a dove, the bird is shown escaping from the mouth of the Father, but in northern Europe the dove as a rule stands at the right hand of the Father, or is perched on His shoulder, "and in all cases approaches its beak to the Father's right ear; and so again suggests the verbum, the Divine wisdom, the Wise Bird."<sup>1</sup>

Didron ("Christian Iconography") says: "During the first eight centuries Trinities were merely in a state of

<sup>1</sup> "The Mythology of Wise Birds" (H. C. March).



experimental preparation; various modes of treatment were then attempted, which re-appeared in a more complete state of development in succeeding centuries. Not one really perfect group of the Trinity is to be found either in the catacombs or upon ancient sarcophagi."

#### ANTHROPOMORPHIC EXAMPLES.

The anthropomorphic representation of the Trinity, (*i.e.* not the heresy to which that name has been given, but the presentment of Divine persons in human form), was naturally repulsive to the early Christians, to whom it would have appeared as a revival of image-worship; and even in much later times such a representation was considered contrary to sound teaching, as it deprived of its force the doctrine of the Incarnation, and such forms have for the most part been removed from our churches, into which they were not allowed until a late period.

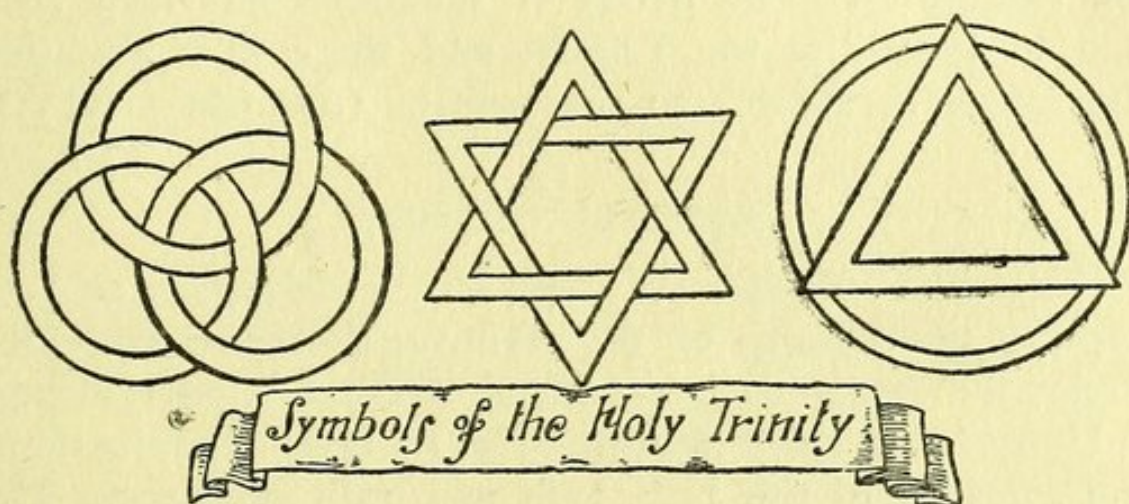
After the 9th century, however, anthropomorphism began to be used in presentments of the Trinity. Didron writes: "According to our creed, God the Father begot the Son, and the Holy Ghost proceeded from both; it therefore became necessary, in accordance with hierarchical law, to represent the Son on the left hand of the Father, and the Holy Ghost between the two." But there are exceptions to this rule, as when the Father, contrary to hierarchical law, is placed in the centre, the Son on his right hand, and the Holy Ghost on His left.

In the 12th century, the Father holds the cross to which the Son is attached, and the Holy Ghost (with but few exceptions) hovers over, or is whispering to the Father.



## THE TRIANGLE AND CIRCLE.

The Trinity, in opposition to anthropomorphism, was symbolised by the triangle, which Didron regards as "a correct image of the three persons resolving themselves into one single God." The 13th century saw the circle used as symbolic of God, thus three entwined circles, the indissoluble union of the three persons, were used as an abstract or geometric symbol of the Trinity.



Few examples of symbols setting forth the mystery of the Holy Trinity are met with before the 9th century, but from the end of this century figures began to be employed. At first only one human form appeared, that of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost being indicated by the Dove and the Cross, or Lamb, their respective symbols. A little later two figures appeared, the Father and the Son, the Holy Ghost being still symbolised by the Dove.

## THE DOVE.

A 14th century MS. in the British Museum shows the Father and the Son invested with nimbi, and clothed alike,



with the Dove between them. In a Saxon MS., also in the British Museum, the composition is the same, save that Christ is represented by the *Agnus Dei* instead of a human form. Another form of the Trinity is that which presents the Father supporting a crucifix, with a Dove perching on the upper limb of the Cross.

Sometimes the Three Persons are shown by the Hand, the Lamb, and the Dove. Possibly the earliest symbol of the Trinity was the equilateral triangle, which appears in the catacombs. The trefoil or shamrock has also been said to symbolise the Trinity, and there is a tradition concerning S. Patrick to that effect. (*See* Chap. XIV.)

#### GEOMETRIC SYMBOLS.

Other symbols are two intersecting triangles, said to express the infinity of the Trinity, the three entwined circles indicating, we are told, the "Three Eternal Beings in Unity." All these figures appear on MSS., illuminations, and paintings of the 12th, 13th, and 14th centuries. The form so frequently used in modern times is one that came into prominence during the 16th century. It shows the triangle encircled with divergent rays with the name of Jehovah, in Hebrew characters, in the centre.

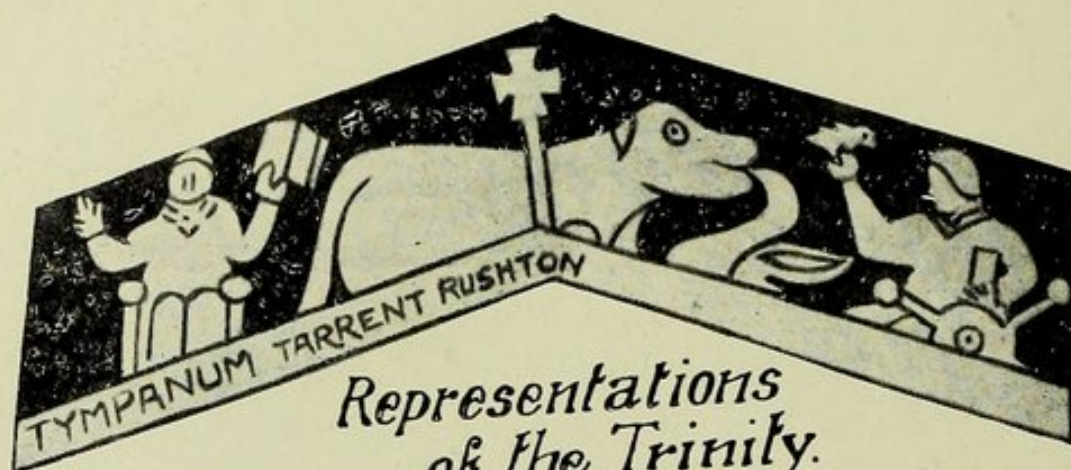
#### THE TARRANT RUSHTON EXAMPLE.

The representation of the Trinity on the tympanum of the south porch of Tarrant Rushton Church, Dorset, (*see* illustration) shows decided characteristics of pagan influence. The stone faces inwards above the inner door of the porch and is not architecturally *in situ*. The Father is shown in the dexter position enthroned on a faldstool. He sits facing forwards with hands raised, the right in









*Representations  
of the Trinity.*



*At Abbotsbury Church*



*At Piddletown Church. on  
1525. Brass.*

*Facing page 169.*



the attitude of the Latin Benediction, and the left holding an open book (a similar position to that shown on the Barfreston tympanum, *see* Chap. XVI.).

The Son, symbolised by the Lamb, is in the centre of the group with His face turned from the Father towards the third person. The Lamb is not invested with a nimbus, but bears the Greek cross, as a standard, on the right shoulder, and the Tree of Life is seen issuing from His lips. In the *Byzantine Guide to Painting* the artist is instructed how to represent the Parable of the Vine: "Christ, carrying the Gospel upon His breast, and raising both His hands in blessing, saith: "I am the Vinestock, and ye are its branches." The apostles are encircled by the branches of the Vine, *which sprang from His Body*. Dr. March says:<sup>1</sup> "In Christian art things usually issue from the body by the mouth. The Dove thus proceeds from the Father. Demons thus escape from the possessed. The soul thus leaves the body of a dying man."

#### THE ABBOTSBURY EXAMPLE.

Another uncommon representation of the Trinity is that sculptured on the west wall of the tower of Abbotsbury Church, Dorset. This stone, like the one above described, is not architecturally *in situ*, and it is thought to have been removed from the neighbouring abbey at its demolition. The omnipotent Father is seated on a central canopied throne. He is bearded, wears a frontlet, and is nimbed. A tippet fastened by a brooch is across the chest, and His feet are bare. The right hand is giving the Latin Benediction, and His left upholds the upper limb of a Latin cross.

<sup>1</sup> "The Pagan-Christian Overlap of the Wise Bird."



The crucified Son, with head inclined to His right, has a short beard and hair falling to the shoulders. Around His head is either a plain nimbus or a crown. His feet rest on a globe, the world that He came to save. The Holy Ghost, in the guise of a Dove with out-stretched wings, gives the Father the divine message. This being uttered within the nimbus of the Father, no nimbus appears upon the Dove. The arch-moulding of the stone springs on either side from capitals. That on the dexter shows a branch of the Tree of Life; that on the sinister a grotesque animal, the Monster of Sin and Death.

Another very similar group is that depicted in a corner of a brass to Nicholas Martyn, in Piddletown Church, Dorset.

The Father uncrowned, but invested with a nimbus, is seated on an elaborate throne. His hair and beard are long, and He is clad in a flowing robe. His right hand is in the posture of the Latin Benediction, while His left supports a Tau cross, on which is the Son, who also is nimbed. This group is, however, an incomplete representation of the Trinity as the Dove does not appear.

#### THE TREE OF LIFE.

The Fruitful Vine was certainly used extensively in early Christian art, but the Tree of Life symbol is one of the very oldest in the world's history, although in many cases one cannot doubt that the symbolism was added to existing forms and was not the source of them.

"Yggdrasil,<sup>1</sup> the Holy Ash, the Teutonic Tree of Life, on which hung Woden for nine whole nights that he might win for mankind the secrets of wisdom, grew by

<sup>1</sup> "The Pagan-Christian Overlap of the Wise Bird." (H. C. March.)



Weird's Brook. . . . The conception Yggdrasil, the Holy Ash, lingered beneath that of the instrument of crucifixion, the Holy Rood. Some of the earliest representations of the Christian cross in this country gave it a distinctly arboreal appearance."

#### OTHER ENGLISH EXAMPLES.

Other representations of the Trinity to which attention may be called are at Boughton Aluph, Kent; at Cobham Church and Faversham Church, in the same county.

The Boughton Aluph example is a mural painting *circa* 1480-1500, the period when anthropomorphic representations became somewhat common. The background of the painting, which shows the Father presenting the Son, is powdered with the monogram **i b c** in black letter characters. Beneath the centre of the picture is a globe on which are inscribed three circles. A small figure with uplifted face and hands, shown on the lower edge of the Father's robe, is thought to indicate the donor of the painting. Similar representations of the Trinity became very popular for adorning patens and sometimes chalices. From Nightingale's "Church Plate of Dorset" we find that John Chandler, Dean of Salisbury, records that at Sherborne, he found in A.D. 1405 a paten bearing in the centre an image of the Holy Trinity.

The Faversham example occurs on a canopy that once belonged to the monumental brass of William Thornbury (*ob.* 1480), and at Cobham a similar subject enriches the canopies upon the brasses commemorating Sir Nicholas Hawberk (*ob.* 1407), and Sir Reginald Braybroke (*ob.* 1405). As a rule these 15th century representations on brasses show a globe at the feet of the Saviour.



## STAINED GLASS.

Representations of the Trinity in stained glass are extremely rare, they having nearly all been removed with other "idolatrous images"; but examples remain at Trotterscliffe, Kent, and at Trinity Church, York, whereon the Saviour lies on the lap of the Father, an altogether abnormal representation, and one for which there appears to be no authority or precedent whatever.



## CHAPTER XIII

### SYMBOLIC LIGHT

THE nimbus, halo of light, or glory used to express the deification of certain persons, cannot by itself be regarded as a symbol, as it conveys no meaning when used alone. It is of ethnic origin, and originally invested the whole body as a fringe of light. By degrees it became restricted to the head, which was regarded, not unnaturally, as the seat of this Divine radiance. The nimbus and its compounds are doubtless Christianised forms of the solar disc, for the heads of the heathen gods were adorned with nimbi in every way similar to those which figure as Christian attributes. It is a figure of great antiquity, and one which quickly became a symbol of Divine power. As the sun has always been the greatest natural phenomenon—the material source of all light and heat—so the statues of pagan gods were clothed with fiery emanations. Apollo was crowned with sunbeams, Jupiter bore the lightning, Diana's diadem was the crescent moon; and the heads of the Burmese and Japanese gods have around them emanations like those of the classical Apollo, while the Chinese represent Confucius with nimbi in every way corresponding to those which adorn Christian saints, divinities, and martyrs. The nimbus has been derived from the Egyptians, the Etruscans, and from India, where it encircles the heads of



the Hindu mythology; but whatever may have been its origin it was regarded by the early Christians as a symbol only of honour and dignity, and was entirely disassociated with the idea of sanctity. As a symbol of power the Byzantines assigned it to their figures of Satan. Didron says: "Political power, the energies of nature, and the genius of evil, are sometimes dignified with this attribute, but very rarely, and only when pagan influences have been infused into the symbolism of Christianity."

As a Christian attribute the nimbus is of comparatively late date, and Didron has laid it down that, as Christian attributes, nimbi do not appear before the 6th century, and that at this time, and even later, there was no invariable rule for its introduction, the same monument showing persons sometimes with and at others without it. The nimbed figures in the catacombs are of a late date, for in all the earliest examples of Christ and His apostles, the nimbus is conspicuously absent. It appears in the frescoes in the catacomb of S. Pontianus, assigned to the second half of the 9th century, and many of the earlier paintings appear to have had the nimbi added in later times. Didron writes: "The meaning of the nimbus is the same as that of the Greek noun *νεφάς*; and it also signifies cloud, that is to say, the place in which are formed rain, hail, or snow, either of which may be intended by the Greek word."

The Romans used the expression *nimbus florum* to indicate a shower of blossoms.

From about the end of the 6th century the use of the nimbus became common in all branches of Christian art, the only distinction being that the nimbus of Christ was usually cruciform, that of other holy personages generally plain, but here again there was no invariable rule. It is



worn by the three Holy Persons of the Trinity, whether represented together or apart, and it also distinguishes the Virgin Mary, the apostles, saints, angels, and prophets.

Unlike the crown or coronet used to denote a sovereign or titled person, which is placed horizontally on the head, the nimbus, up to about the 15th century, was placed on the back of the head, like a flat disc or plate. In the 16th and 17th centuries this form gave place to a circlet or ring, which is shown as hovering over the head. The nimbus fell into disuse in the 17th century.

The nimbus of God the Father is distinguished by having three rays or bars upon its field, reaching from centre to circumference. These rays are sometimes plain lines, while at others they are very wide, and usually in the latter case are decorated with letters, designs, or precious stones. The Greeks often inscribed the nimbus of the Deity with three letters, O. Ω. Ν.—“Omicron, Omega, Nu,” signifying “I am.” The Latins, following this example, sometimes placed the word “Rex” in the same position as the Greek letters. Both Latins and Greeks occasionally employed other forms, as an equilateral triangle, or even two triangles, and where these do not bear any inscription, a circle of divergent rays is usually shown. The lozenge-shaped nimbus has also been found, but why this form was ever adopted has never been settled, as unlike the other two, both symbols of the Trinity, the lozenge form seems to have no particular application.

Some authorities do not consider the three rays of the nimbus, commonly found on representations of God the Father, to have any connection with a cross (the fourth limb being hidden by the interposed head), but consider it more likely that the tri-radiated nimbus was used to symbolise the great and unapproachable Trinity. In proof of this



contention it has been urged that in those cases where no part of the nimbus is hidden the rays are never more than three in number, as in representations of the Veronica, where there was every opportunity for the display of a fourth limb had the artist wished to indicate a *cruciform* nimbus. Didron says: "It seems doubtful if it can actually have been intended to decorate the field of the nimbus of God with a cross; the form of the ornament which marks the nimbus of divine persons is not borrowed, as one might be led to believe, from the instrument of our Saviour's suffering."

The nimbus of God the Son differs little from that of the Father, and frequently the Lamb, His own particular emblem, is found invested with a plain nimbus, on which is a monogram of His name, or the alpha and omega.

The Holy Ghost is but rarely represented in human form, but when this is the case He is generally invested with a cruciform nimbus, and occasionally with a triangular one, but these are never inscribed with the Latin and Greek letters so common to the nimbi of the Father and the Son.

The Aureole, or *Vesica Piscis*, is an extended form of the nimbus, and one that encircles the whole figure instead of being confined to the head. It is found both as a pointed oval and of circular shape, while more rarely it follows the outlines of the body as a fringe of light. In Italy it is called a *Mandola*, or almond, and the idea of any peculiar symbolical meaning being attached to it appears to have been adopted exclusively by English antiquaries in modern times. Albert Durer first applied the name *vesica piscis* to a pointed oval formed by two equal circles, cutting each other in their centres, and it is an extremely common form for mediæval ecclesiastical seals.



It is generally agreed that it has no mystical reference to the early use of the Fish as an emblem of Christ or as a symbol of Baptism.

Although regarded as an attribute of divinity the Aureole does not belong exclusively to representations of the Deity, but in its general application may be taken as indicative of power and energy exalted to the highest degree, and in this sense it is the fitting attribute of Supreme Power or Divine Omnipotence, notwithstanding that it has been found enclosing the bodies of the Virgin and the Saints.

The Glory is a combination of the nimbus and the aureole, and as it sets forth the most exalted state of deification it is the acknowledged attribute of God the Father.

Saints and Angels are never depicted with a cruciform nimbus unless they are personifications of God, or in some way represent Him, but are invested with nimbi composed of any number of radiating lines except three.

The Virgin Mary has usually a circular and highly-ornamented nimbus.

The Holy Apostles are generally shown with circular nimbi, generally plain, but sometimes richly decorated with colours, inlaid with gold, *repoussé* work, or jewels.

In a few instances we find records of men who had attained a considerable degree of sanctity, being honoured with the nimbus while still living. When this was the case it is found to be of quite a different form from the nimbus bestowed on the Deity, angels, and saints. It is square in shape and placed upright behind the head, with the lower edge parallel to the shoulders. In symbolic art the square has always been regarded as inferior to the circle or triangle, and was thus used to symbolise the earth, while



the circle indicates eternal existence. We must remember, however, that the square nimbus is peculiar to Italian art of the 9th and succeeding centuries, and is never found on ecclesiastical illuminations, mosaics, or carvings of any other nation.



## CHAPTER XIV

### EMBLEMS AND ATTRIBUTES OF THE EVANGELISTS, APOSTLES, AND SAINTS

COTGRAVE has defined an emblem as "a picture and short posie," expressing some particular conceit; and Francis Quarles describes it as "but a silent parable." Bacon, in his "Advancement of Learning," says: "Embleme deduceth conceptions intellectuall to images sensible, and that which is sensible more fully strikes the memory, and is more easily imprinted than that which is intellectuall." Emblems, of course, have been drawn from hieroglyphics, fable, mythology, and pagan philosophy, but we are only here concerned with their religious application. The symbols, emblems, and attributes of the Evangelists appear to have been designed for the purpose of individualising them, and the earliest and most primitive emblems are those found in the catacombs—the four Scrolls, the four open Books, and the four Rivers. The scrolls and books are indicative of the four Holy Gospels, and as such they are depicted in the catacombs, enclosed in circular aureoles, placed between the arms of a Greek cross; a very similar representation occurs, with miniatures of the Evangelists, in the famous "Book of Kells," an early MS. preserved at Trinity College, Dublin; and yet another is found in the "Gospels of St. Cuthbert," an MS. in the British Museum. The four



rivers also appear in the catacombs, where they are found issuing from a small mound (the Church of Christ) whereon is a lamb (the emblem of Christ) invested with the inscribed nimbus. The four rivers were derived from the Gihon, Tigris, Euphrates, and Pison, the four rivers of Paradise, and symbolism represents S. Matthew by the Gihon, S. Mark by the Tigris, S. Luke by the Euphrates, and S. John by the Pison. These four rivers together with the "four living creatures" are common *motifs* in the mosaics of the early basilical churches of Italy.

More commonly used, however, as emblems of the Evangelists were the "four living creatures" first mentioned in Ezekiel (i. 5, 10), where they are said to have four heads apiece, and in Revelation (iv. 1, 6, 7), where they have only one head each. "The first living creature was like a lion, and the second living creature like a calf, and the third living creature had a face as a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle." These beasts are usually allocated as follows: The winged man to S. Matthew, the winged lion to S. Mark, the winged ox to S. Luke, and the eagle to St. John. The date of their introduction into Christian art is uncertain, for they do not seem to have appeared prior to the 5th century. They were introduced by S. Jerome, who authorised artists to use them when picturing the Evangelists. S. Matthew owes the creature in human likeness to his having commenced his Gospel with the human genealogy of Christ, and perhaps also because he dwells particularly on the human nature of our Lord. The lion was allotted to S. Mark for the reason that he sets forth the royal dignity of Christ, and His power made manifest in His Resurrection. The ox, the beast of sacrifice, falls fittingly to St. Luke, who dwells on the



Atonement and Priesthood of our Saviour ; while the eagle, soaring heavenwards, typifies S. John, who contemplates the blessed and divine nature of Christ. The four creatures as described in Revelation could hardly have referred to the Evangelists, and Dr. March writes: "It is obvious that these four living creatures were not the evangelists, because it is St. John himself who tells us that he was called up into heaven, and that he saw them there, and that they had besides a number of wings, and were full of eyes before and behind ; but, for fanciful reasons, they were soon employed as Christian symbols."

The Apostles have their collective as well as their individual emblems, as twelve sheep, twelve men, with or without sheep, carrying scrolls or books, and the more prominent of the personal emblems and attributes of the apostles and saints are as follows. These personal attributes, however, seem to have been applied during the last five centuries only. S. Andrew's emblem is usually the well-known cross to which he has given his name, as it is supposed to be the form of cross on which he suffered death. The representation of St. Andrew with decussate cross as the instrument of his martyrdom belongs to the Middle Ages, and not earlier. In the earliest examples he appears in the ancient Roman dress, sometimes bearing a crown, at others a roll or book, as in a 9th century mosaic by Ciampini, where he is portrayed with the disciples SS. Peter, James, and John. S. John has for emblem a cup with a serpent issuing from it, in accordance with the legend that states that on one occasion the chalice from which he was about to drink had been poisoned, but that he drank from it, and even administered it without any harm befalling those who partook of the sacrament, the poison issuing from it in the guise of a serpent.



The emblem of S. Paul is a sword, the instrument of his martyrdom when he was beheaded near Rome. He is often shown bearing a sword in one hand and a book in the other, and very rarely he bears two swords.

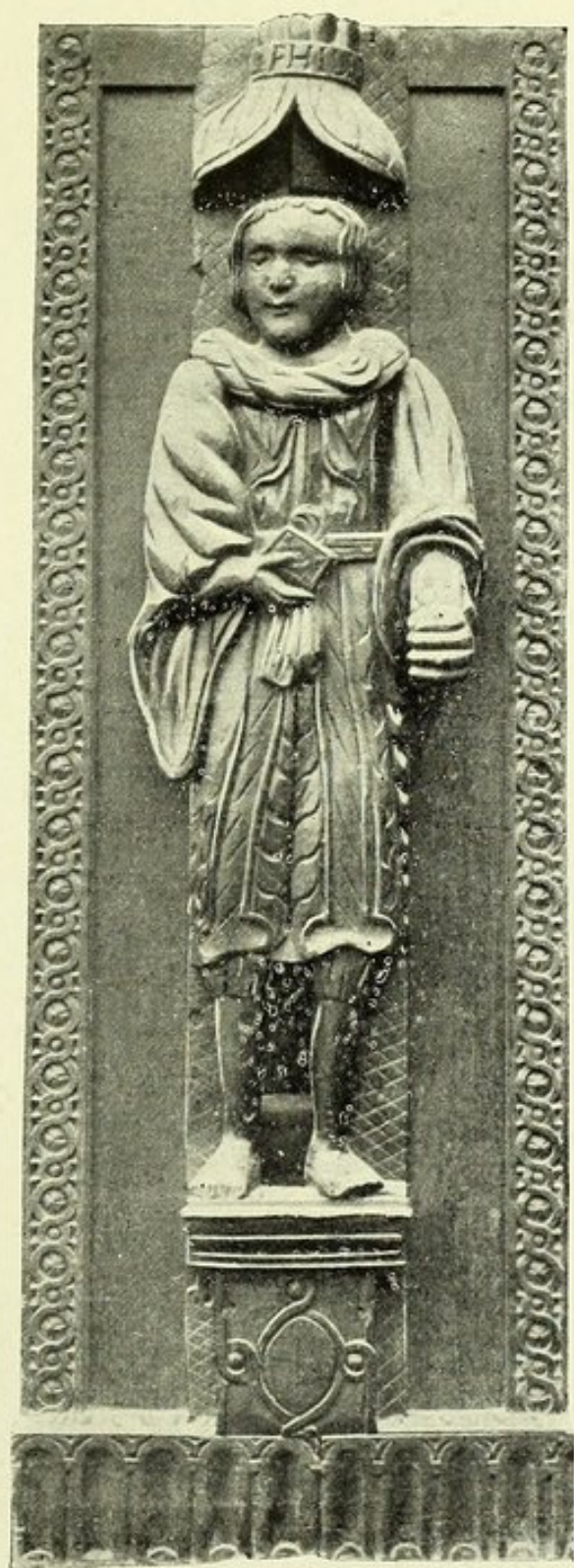
The keys of S. Peter come from, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (S. Matt. xvi. 29). In a few early examples of emblematic art, S. Peter is depicted with one key only, but the more usual number is two, one to symbolise the key of heaven, the other that of hell; very rarely a third key represents the key of this world. In illuminated MSS. one key is usually in gold, the other in silver. It may be stated here that the apostles are generally depicted holding books in addition to their individual attributes, as symbolic of their calling as teachers of the Gospel, having received their commission to "go and teach all nations" from Christ Himself.

S. Philip is usually shown with a Latin Cross (and such was evidently held by the figure here illustrated) fastened at the head of a long staff or reed. Sometimes the cross is held in the hands, and at others the Tau Cross is substituted for the Latin variety. He is stated to have been crucified with his head downwards, or to have been bound to a cross and then stoned to death.

S. Bartholomew bears the instrument of his martyrdom, a large curved knife with which he is supposed to have been flayed alive by order of one of the Armenian kings. In paintings he is sometimes shown bearing a human skin on his arm in addition to the knife.

S. Matthew generally holds a purse or bouget, in allusion to his having been a tax-gatherer. How he died is unknown.





*S. Philip.*

*From a Panel in Upwey Church,  
Dorset.*

*Facing page 182.*







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S. Simon's emblem is a large saw, his instrument of martyrdom ; but the date and place of his death is uncertain. S. Jude, who was with him, was killed by a halberd, and such is his emblem.

S. Matthias is depicted with an axe or spear, with one or other of which he is stated to have been martyred in Judea.

We thus see that the emblems of both apostles and saints are generally based on their instruments of death. The death of *martyrdom* was supposed to cancel *all sins* ; but this gave too much encouragement to fanaticism, and was discontinued as being opposed to Christ's own words. (Matt. x. 23.)

The principal Saints and their emblems are :

21st January.—S. Agnes, V. and M. Said to have been martyred at Rome at the age of 13, A.D. 303. Her feast was honoured by English women in 1240. EMBLEM, *a lamb* ; when represented as a martyr, *a sword and palm branch*.

17th June.—S. Alban. Born at the town which now bears his name, then called Verulam, in the 3rd century. EMBLEM, *a sword, a long staff with a cross, or a palm branch*.

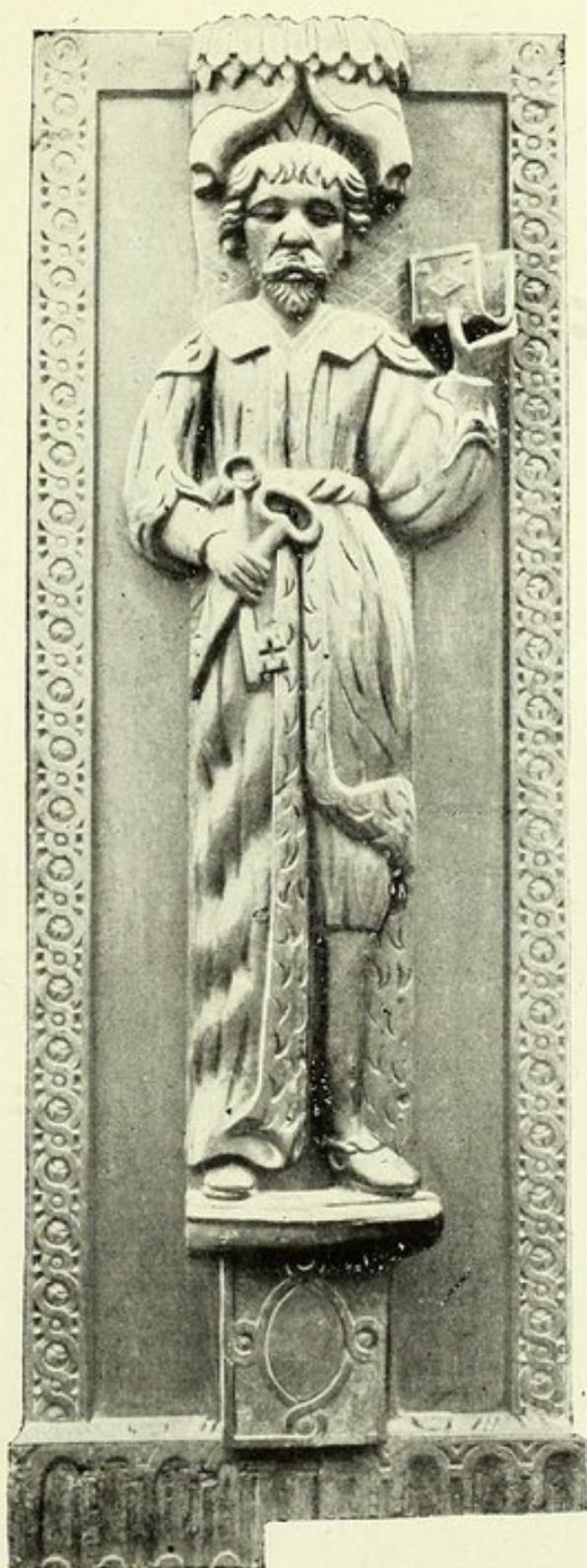
19th April.—S. Alphege. Lived as hermit near Bath, and became Abbot of Bath. In 984 he was made Bishop of Winchester, and in 1006 Archbishop of Canterbury. He was buried at St Paul's, but afterwards translated by Cnut to Canterbury. EMBLEM, *a battle axe*. In portraiture, etc., *a chasuble* full of stones, emblematic of the first part of his martyrdom.

4th April.—S. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan. Born about A.D. 340. He was one of the four great doctors of the Latin Church, S. Jerome, S. Augustine, and S.



- Gregory being the other three. He died A.D. 397. EMBLEM, *a triple scourge or a bee-hive.*
- 26th May.—S. Augustine, first Archbishop of Canterbury. Sent to England by Gregory, and baptised Queen Bertha of Kent, the first English Christian queen. He died A.D. 604. EMBLEM, *a heart pierced with arrows.*
- 21st March.—S. Benedict. Born at Nursia A.D. 480; died 543. EMBLEMS (based on the attempt to poison him), *cup and serpent*, etc.
- 3rd February.—S. Blasius, Bishop of Sebaste in Armenia; martyred 1316. He is represented in pictures, etc., as holding in his hand a comb of iron, possibly the instrument of his martyrdom, but which gave occasion to the wool-combers to take him as their patron, and as late as 1856 the wool-combers of Yorkshire and Norfolk used to keep their festival on his day. The Church of Woollcombe, in Devon, is dedicated in honour of this saint. EMBLEM, *an iron comb.*
- 5th June.—S. Boniface, "the Apostle of Germany." Born at Crediton, in Devon. Bishop of Mentz A.D. 746. He was murdered with fifty-two companions in Friesland. EMBLEM, *a book pierced with a sword*; he being martyred in Friesland while on a mission to evangelise the inhabitants.
- 13th November.—S. Britius. Born at Tours. EMBLEMS, *blazing coals carried in the hand or chasuble.*
- 25th November.—S. Catherine. Born at Alexandria at the beginning of the 4th century. Tortured with an engine having four spiked wheels rolled over her body. EMBLEM, *a wheel.*
- 22nd November.—S. Cecilia. Scalded to death about A.D. 180. The patroness of Church music. EMBLEMS, *an organ, organ pipes, or harp.*





*S. Peter.*

*From a Panel in Upwey Church,  
Dorset.*

*Facing page 184.*







## Emblems and Attributes of the Saints 185

- 23rd November.—S. Clement. Thought to be the Clement mentioned by S. Paul (Phil. iv. 3). EMBLEM, *an anchor*; in allusion to his hope and trust in Christ.
- 25th October.—S. Crispin. Born at Rome. The patron saint of shoemakers. EMBLEMS, *a shoemaker's awl and knife*.
- 26th September.—S. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage. Martyred under Valerian, A.D. 258. EMBLEM, *a sword*.
- 19th May.—S. Dunstan. Born at Glastonbury A.D. 924. Abbot of Glastonbury, Bishop of Worcester, Archbishop of Canterbury; died 988. EMBLEMS, *a harp and pair of tongs*.
- 20th November.—S. Edmund, King of the East Angles. Killed with arrows by the Danes A.D. 870. Buried at S. Edmund's Bury; the Abbey was erected in his honour by Cnut. EMBLEMS, *a bunch of arrows or darts*.
- 18th March.—S. Edward. Murdered at Corfe Castle; translated 20th June. EMBLEMS, *cup and dagger*.
- 20th January.—S. Fabian, Bishop of Rome, A.D. 239-253. Martyred under Decius. EMBLEMS, *sword and palm branch*, on his head a *papal crown*.
- 6th October.—S. Faith. A Virgin of Gaul. Martyred in the reign of Diocletian. EMBLEM, *a grid-iron*.
- 23rd April.—S. George. An eminent saint of the Greek Church, and patron saint of England, on account of his having been said to give victories to Robert of Normandy and Richard I. against the Saracens. He was thus considered the patron saint of military men. EMBLEMS, *a dragon, a shield bearing a cross, and a spear*.

The historian Gibbon asserts that there were two S.



Georges, one good and the other bad, and that it is the latter who is the patron saint of England. The weight of evidence, however, makes it clear that it is the good S. George who is our patron saint. He was beheaded for his faith under the rule of Diocletian in 303. He is mentioned by S. Jerome, and in all probability he was a real person, although the dragon may well be nothing more than an allegorical monster used for the purpose of symbolising the evil spirit, as seen by S. John in the Book of Revelation, and by all the other saints, like S. Michael and S. Margaret, who overcame the power of the dragon.

1st September.—S. Giles. Born at Athens towards the end of the 7th century. Abbot of Nismes. EMBLEM, *a hind seeking protection in his lap.*

12th March.—S. Gregory. Born at Rome A.D. 540, afterwards chief magistrate of that city. Elected Pope in 590. EMBLEMS, *a book and dove.*

13th January.—S. Hilary. Born at Poitiers in Gaul, afterwards Bishop of Poitiers, where he died in A.D. 386. He was the author of the famous works against the Arians. The first law term is called from him, "Hilary Term." The law terms were originally regulated by the canonical constitution of the Church, which, by exempting certain seasons — Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, and Harvest—from forensic litigation, divided the year into four periods or terms, called, from the festivals immediately preceding them, Hilary, Easter, Trinity, and Michaelmas Terms. EMBLEM, *three books*, or sometimes *three serpents*, symbolical of the heresies he exposed.

17th November.—S. Hugh. Born at Grenoble A.D. 1140. Bishop of Lincoln. Died in London 1200. EMBLEM, *a swan*, in allusion to his love of solitude.



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30th September.—S. Jerome. Born about A.D. 329. Died 422. EMBLEM, *himself with a model of a church in his hands, or a lion.*

17th September.—S. Lambert, Bishop of Utrecht about A.D. 670. Said to have been murdered for reproving the licentiousness of Pepin, Duke of Austrasia. EMBLEM, *a javelin.*

13th December.—S. Lucy. Native of Syracuse. Put to death A.D. 303. EMBLEM, *a sword, a pair of eyes on a dish, and a burning lamp.*

20th July.—S. Margaret. Martyred at Antioch, in Pisidia, about A.D. 278. EMBLEM, *a dragon ejecting S. Margaret out of its mouth.*

The legend of S. Margaret is one of the oldest among the mediæval stories, and it is to the effect that she was the daughter of a heathen priest, Theodosius, and that her birthplace was Antioch. Through the influence of her nurse she became a Christian, for which cause her father turned her adrift, when she found employment by tending the sheep of the nurse. The prefect of the district, one Olybrius, fell in love with her, but learning that his offers were refused by reason of his being a heathen, he caused her to be thrown into prison and subjected to dreadful tortures.

While in prison the evil one appeared to her in the form of a dragon, and tempted her to abandon her faith, but she completely subdued him by a cross which she carried in her hand. Another version of the legend states that the dragon swallowed S. Margaret, but the cross sticking in his throat, she was enabled to escape unharmed, but only to be again tortured, and eventually decapitated, when her soul emerged from the headless trunk in the form of a dove. This is stated to have taken place in



A.D. 278. In Christian art S. Margaret is represented as either trampling on a dragon, or piercing him with a cross, and the whole legend is set forth on the tympanum of the south door of Long Marton Church, Cumberland; another curious sculpture, which appears to illustrate the same story, is on the tympanum of the west door of the same church.

22nd July.—S. Mary Magdalene. EMBLEM, *a box of ointment.*

6th December.—S. Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, in Lycia. Said to have died A.D. 342. EMBLEM, *three purses, or three golden balls*, in allusion to his great wealth.

1st June.—S. Nicomede. Said to have been a disciple of S. Peter. Beaten to death with leaden plummets in the reign of Domitian, about A.D. 90. EMBLEM, *a club spiked with iron.*

18th January.—S. Prisca. Converted to Christianity in the reign of Claudius. Beheaded A.D. 47. EMBLEM, *a sword and a lion at her feet.*

1st October.—S. Remigius, Bishop of Rheims. Sometimes called the "Apostle of France." EMBLEM, *a dove with an oil cruse in its beak.*

3rd April.—S. Richard. Born at Wiche, in Worcestershire. Studied at Oxford, Paris, and Bologna. Bishop of Chichester 1245. Died in 1253. EMBLEM, *a chalice at his feet, where the cup lay when he accidentally let it fall without spilling a drop.*

26th December.—S. Stephen. EMBLEM, *a stone or volley of stones*, also a *book*, representing the Old Testament.

22nd January.—S. Vincent, Deacon of the Spanish Church. Martyred A.D. 303. Relics conveyed to France in 855. EMBLEM, *a grid-iron.* In portraitures and MSS. a *palm branch.*



## Emblems and Attributes of the Saints 189

In mediæval and later days a visit to the shrine of a saint, or to some well of water sanctified by some pious hermit or recluse, was regarded as beneficial for all the troubles and nearly all the ills that the mediæval flesh was heir to. When a pilgrimage could not be undertaken the cure was effected by invocation alone. S. Lambert was the chosen friend of the epileptic; S. Odille of the blind; S. Blaise rarely failed to cure sore throats; S. Appollonia was invaluable for the toothache; a prayer to S. Anne recovered lost goods; S. Leonard assisted debtors to escape from prison; S. Sebastian kept away the plague; S. Petronel was all-powerful against fevers; S. Genow cured the gout; S. Anthony never failed to assuage the disease known then as S. Anthony's fire; and S. Catherine was always at hand to oblige spinsters who wished to enter the married state:

“ A husband, St. Catherine,  
A good one, St. Catherine,  
A rich one, St. Catherine,  
*Soon*, St. Catherine.”

In the same way every trade had its patron saint—S. Nicholas for fishermen, S. Crispin for shoemakers; and no rat-catcher could hope for success unless he invoked the aid of S. Gertrude. So strong was the belief in the efficacy of prayers to these saints that some of the obscure shrines enjoyed a popularity but little inferior to those of the great canonised saints.

The custom of visiting shrines, wells, relics, etc., probably arose from that subdivision of the Romish, as of the Classical Calendar, which assigned a tutelary deity for every situation of life, with the result that the country was filled with an endless number of shrines, each of



which possessed some specific virtue. The custom is aptly ridiculed in a passage of Sir Thomas More's "Dyalogue":

"We set every saint in his office, and assign him a craft such as pleaseth us. Saint Loy we make a horse-leech, and because one smith is too few at the forge, we set Saint Ippolitus to help him. Saint Appollonia we make a tooth-drawer, and may speak to her of nothing but sore teeth. Saint Sythe women set to seek their keyes. Saint Roke we appoint to see to the great sickness, and with him we join Saint Sebastian. Some saints serve for the eye only. Saint Germain only for children, and yet will he not once look at them but if their mothers bring with them a white loaf and a pot of good ale. And yet is he wiser than St. Wylgeforte; for she, good soul, is, as they say, content to be served with oats, peradventure to provide a horse for an evil husband to ride to the devil, for that is the thing she is so sought for; insomuch that women have changed her name, and instead of St. Wylgeforte, call her St. Uncumber, because they reckon that, for a peck of oats, she will not fail to uncumber them of their husbands."

There are two other saints, who may be briefly referred to. These are S. Audrey and S. Patrick.

The name of S. Audrey appears to be a corrupt form of S. Etheldreda. She was the daughter of Anna, Queen of the East Angles, and was married first to Toubert, a lord who had a large domain in Lincolnshire, and afterwards at York, about A.D. 660, to King Egfrid. It is said that so great was her sanctity that she remained a virgin with both husbands. Having persisted in this continence for twelve years she was allowed to become a nun in Coldingham Abbey. She founded an Abbey at Ely, of









*S. Patrick.*

*From a Tanel in Upwey Church,  
Dorset.*



which she was abbess, and where she was buried. The shrine of S. Etheldreda is preserved in Ely Cathedral.

There is little doubt that the word *tawdry* is a contraction of, or has some connection with, S. Audrey. At an annual fair at Ely it was the custom to sell lace, and S. Audrey's lace became proverbial. It was of a flimsy and showy character, and the word *tawdry* thus came to be applied to any other portion of feminine costume that was of a glaring or gaudy description. Harpsfield, an old English historian, relates that S. Audrey died of a swelling in her throat, which she considered as a particular judgment for having been too much addicted to wearing fine necklaces in her youthful days.

Many European countries, among them Scotland, England, France, and Wales, claim S. Patrick as a native, just as the Greek cities used to vie with one another for the credit of having given birth to Homer, but however obscure his actual birthplace, all authorities are agreed in stating that, as his name implies, he was of a patrician family, and was born about the year 372.

At the age of sixteen he was carried off by pirates, who sold him into slavery in Ireland, where he was employed in tending swine. During his captivity of seven years he is said to have acquired a knowledge of the Irish language. Escaping to the Continent he was successively ordained deacon, priest, and bishop, after which, with the authority of Pope Celestine, he returned to Ireland to preach the Gospel to the heathens. The wanderings of S. Patrick can be traced throughout his life by the names of places called after him. Thus assuming he was born, as is probable, at Kilpatrick, in Dumbartonshire, he appears to have resided for some time at Dalpatrick, in Lanarkshire. He founded two churches, Kirkpatrick at Irongray, in Kircudbright,



and Kirkpatrick at Fleming, in Dumfries. He eventually left Scotland at Portpatrick. Arriving in England he preached at Patterdale (Patrick's dale), in Westmoreland; and founded the church of Kirkpatrick, in Durham. Undertaking his Irish mission he landed first at Innispatrick, and next at Holmpatrick, in the county of Dublin. Sailing northwards, and touching at the Isle of Man, he founded another church of Kirkpatrick, near Peel. There are many other places where he is said to have stayed or founded churches, but enough have been given to show how extensive were his wanderings, and how indelible the mark his name has left on our national topography.

The burial-place of this remarkable man is involved in as much obscurity as his birthplace, although what evidence is available indicates that he was buried at Downpatrick, and that the remains of S. Columba, and S. Bridget were laid beside him, according to the monkish distich:

"IN BURGO DUNO, TUMULO TUMULANTUR IN UNO,  
BRIGDA, PATRICIUS, ATQUE COLUMBA PIUS."

There is a popular tradition that when S. Patrick was preaching the doctrine of the Trinity to the pagan Irish, he plucked a shamrock growing near which he used as a symbol of the great mystery; but it was used in somewhat a similar connection by the Arabs, for the trefoil in Arabic is called *shamrakh*, and the leaf was held sacred in Iran as symbolical of the Persian triads. It is more than possible that long before the advent of S. Patrick the Irish had ascribed mystical virtues to the shamrock so that it would appeal to them with peculiar fitness as a symbol of the newly revealed and mysterious doctrine, as



## Emblems and Attributes of the Saints 193

taught by S. Patrick. (The letter S. used as the abbreviation for *Saint*, follows the Latin mode of representing a word or name by its initial letter. The use of the abbreviation *St.* is in conformity with the English custom of taking the first and last letters.)



## CHAPTER XV

### MISCELLANEOUS SYMBOLS AND EMBLEMS

ANCHOR.—This is common to many forms of Christian art of an early period, and one that figures frequently in the catacombs. It symbolises hope, firmness, and tranquility. As the anchor is the hope, and often the *last hope* of sailors, it was anciently called *sacred*, and to weigh anchor was “ANCHORAM SACRAM SOLVERE,” S. Paul adopts an obvious symbolism when he says (Heb. vi. 19), that we have hope as “an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast,” so that in its Christian application the anchor would seem to have long been regarded as a symbol of hope. It is found engraved on rings, and depicted on monuments and on the walls of the cemeteries in the catacombs, possibly as a type of the hope by which the Church stood firm amid the storms that assailed it. This is another instance of Christianity adopting a pagan symbol by merely changing its application. The transverse bar gives the upper part of the anchor a certain cross-like appearance, and this also would endear it to the early Christians, by whom it was frequently engraved on the tombs of the martyrs.

THE APE was sometimes used to depict Satan, and it symbolises malice, hatred, and cunning.



**THE APPLE** was generally used in allusion to the Fall of Man, and as the symbol of original sin.

**THE ARROW** is the symbol of martyrdom, pain, and suffering.

**THE ASPERGE** was the vessel used for sprinkling holy water. It is the symbol of purity and holiness.

**THE BANNER** in Christian art signifies the triumph over persecution and death, and it is frequently shown bearing a cross.

**THE CIRCLE** symbolises eternity, being without beginning and without end.

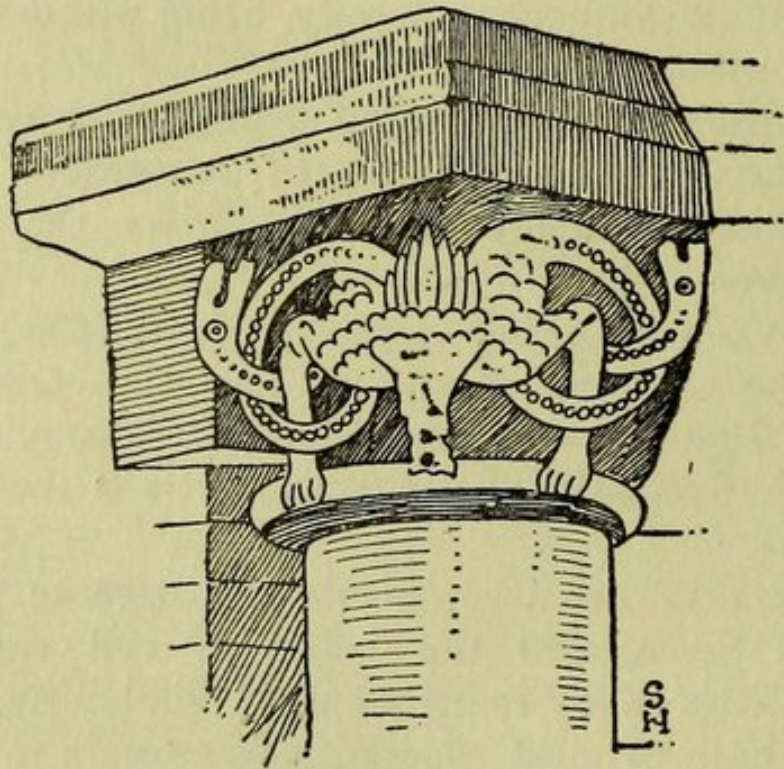
**THE CROWN** is the Christian symbol of sovereignty, of victory, and of the glory of martyrdom. It is the emblem of the Blessed Virgin as the Queen of Heaven.

**THE DOVE** has already been alluded to (Chap. III.). It is the universal symbol of the Holy Ghost, and it also signifies love, innocence, and meekness. When accompanied by an olive branch it is the symbol of peace.

**THE DRAGON** has been universally used to signify the Evil Spirit, and the belief in evil spirits which underlies many expressions of symbolism, and is at the base of most superstitions, appears to have been one of the earliest beliefs of the human mind, as it was one of the most persistent. Long prior to any thought of a beneficent power, earth and air, fire and water, and almost every natural object was peopled with unseen demons, as the Hounds of Gabriel, the Seven Whistlers, etc., who could only be propitiated by gifts and prayers; for before there was a definite religion there was magic until some form of beneficent deity became recognised to whom sacri-



ficial worship was offered, and this in its turn gave place to invocation alone. We have in England many representations of dragonesque or serpentine sculptured stones, such as gargoyles, the bases of columns, fonts, etc., and a few remarkable crosses displaying intertwined dragons. They are frequently shown with knotted tails as indicative, no doubt, of their defeat by the power of the Cross, for

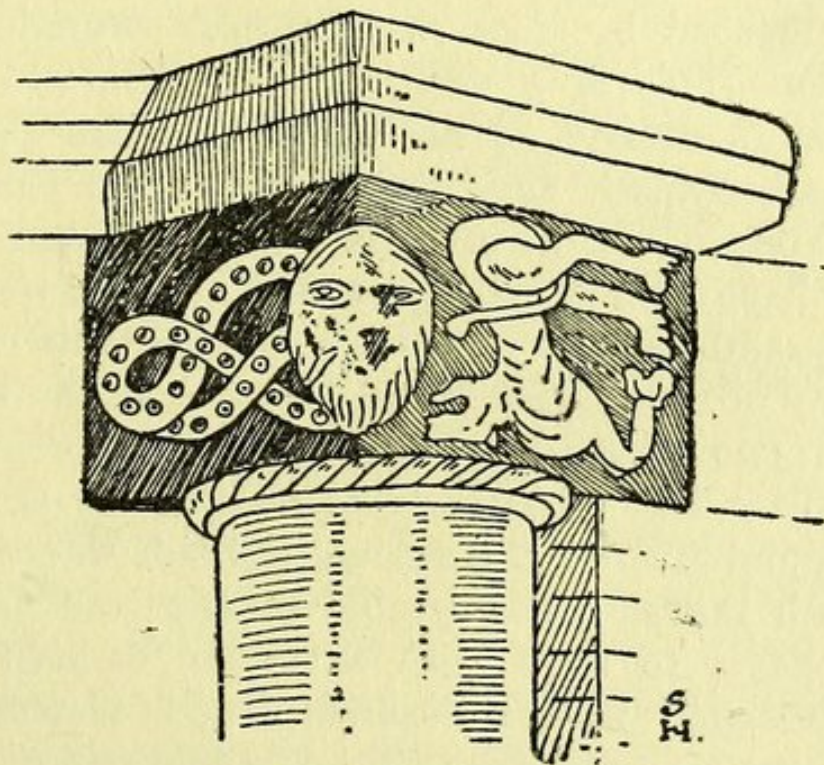


*Capital at Broadwey Church, Dorset.*

the dragon's power was supposed to dwell in the tail. Sometimes they are depicted with porcine heads to indicate their uncleanness. Dragons appear on many pre-Norman sculptured stones, and on a remarkable font at Dolton Church, Devon, which is thought to have been made up of fragments of an old cross. The Bishop of Bristol writes: "The



dragonesque ornament of the shafts of crosses had in early times a certain vogue among the West Saxons. . . . It is worthy of notice that the dragon was the emblem both of Wessex and of the Britons to the west of Wilts. We all of us remember the dragon standard on the Bayeux tapestry." Some authorities claim a purely Lombardic origin for this grotesque ornamentation, and point to the sculptured stones



*Capital at Broadway Church, Dorset.*

in the museum at Brescia in confirmation of their views. Others, however, will have none of this, and derive the dragonesque and serpentine motif from a Scandinavian source, as does Mr. H. I. Dukinfield Astley, who, in a paper on "Scandinavian Motifs in Anglo-Saxon and Norman Ornamentation," writes: "The serpent emblem, so far from being derived by



Gothic artists from broken-down classical forms, is indigenous to Scandinavian mythology, and the partiality for this ornament displayed by Anglo-Saxon and Norman artists is due to Scandinavian influence ; this, together with the interlacing and intertwining so-called rope, or cable work, is a purely Scandinavian motif, modified, after the introduction of Christianity, by the late Celtic influences transmitted through Irish artists, themselves deeply influenced by ideas derived from Scandinavia."

DUPLEX.—This is a very early symbol, and one that plainly belongs to the pagan-Christian period. "It can be traced," says Dr. March, "from Roman times to pagan, and then to Christian Gaul ; and it appears to have been first adopted as a Christian sign by the Byzantines, and may have reached this country by way of Scandinavia and Ireland." It has been found on two Roman mosaic pavements discovered in Dorset, and on either side of the door-jambs of the Round Tower at Roscrea, Ireland, where it figures with the ship, the symbol of the true Church. It appears to have been a symbol or sign primarily associated with sun-worship, and secondarily with Christ, as indicative of his two-fold nature.

ESCALOP-SHELL.—This is the sign of pilgrimage, and the emblem of a pilgrim.

HEART.—When held in the hand of a saint the heart symbolises love and piety. If enveloped in flames it indicates Christian zeal, and if pierced with arrows it is symbolic of contrition, repentance, and devotion.

LAMP.—When shown burning the lamp is the symbol of wisdom and piety.



LILY.—As a Christian emblem or attribute the lily may be said to date from S. Matt. vi. 28. In early days it was but seldom used, and even in Italian art it rarely appears before the Florentine Renaissance. In those times it was considered as the lily of the tribe of Judah, thus forming a symbolic essential to representations of the Annunciation. Thus it is the symbol of virginity and the attribute of the Virgin Mary.

OLIVE.—Various reasons are given for the symbolic use of the olive tree and its branches, but they appear to have more secular than religious significance, such as fruitfulness, etc. It is the symbol of peace.

PALM.—The great beauty of the date-palm appears to have made it, like the vine, or the ears of corn, one of the natural symbols of Divine Blessing.

It is found on early sepulchral monuments and inscriptions, and was used as a symbol of the victory of faith. It is undoubtedly the symbol of martyrdom in the widest sense of the word, but although the palm often accompanies the figure or emblem of the martyr, and although it is of frequent occurrence on early tombs, it does not necessarily imply the martyrdom of the occupant.

POMEGRANATE.—When open and displaying its seeds, the pomegranate was used in allusion to the future life and the hope of immortality.

SCOURGE AND FLAGELLUM.—These are symbols of our Lord's Passion. (*See Chap. X.*)

SQUARE.—The square denotes earthly existence, and was used in Italian art of a late period as a nimbus for living persons.

SWAN.—This symbolises solitude and retirement.



**SWORD.**—This is the symbol of martyrdom, and the emblem and attribute of S. Paul.

**TRIANGLE.**—Symbolises the unapproachable Trinity.

**TRISKELE.**—Is a symbol of the pagan-Christian era, but one that is of somewhat rare occurrence.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE GROTESQUE IN RELIGIOUS ART

#### THE REASON FOR THE GROTESQUE.

THE grotesque element in ecclesiastical ornament and architecture is mostly found on the tympana, gargoyles, and corbels of the exterior, and on the capitals, misereres, bosses, bench-ends, and fonts of the interior of churches ; but it is in gargoyles that the grotesque and ludicrous is most pronounced. Many people must have been puzzled as to why these humourous and coarse carvings should ever have been allowed to figure so prominently in buildings primarily set apart for the contemplation of the sublime and divine. That it was intentionally introduced is quite certain, and it may have been intended as a basis for comparison between the earthly and the heavenly ideals. Dr. March, writing on evolution and psychology in art, says: "It should not be forgotten that, as similarity implies contrast, as contraries are associated with each other, a representation of stormy or angry scenes may please not only by its accuracy but by suggesting its opposite." It is, I think, on these lines that a solution for the appearance of the grotesque is to be found—the exaltation of the pure and noble by contrast with the coarse and vulgar. In any case we must remember that what may appear to us as grotesque



was nothing of the kind to the sculptor of five centuries or so ago, for, as Mr. Romilly Allen says, "It cannot be supposed that the sculptor of the 12th century would purposely throw ridicule on such subjects as the Last Supper, or Christ in Glory; and yet some of the figures in these scenes are as archaic and barbarous to look upon as many a South Sea idol."

#### HUMOUR.

Be this as it may a visit to almost any early church will speedily convince us that the old craftsmen, with a



marvellous grasp of the moods that go to the making of character, considered that in their lesser ornaments the first elements should be to administer to man in all his varying moods, and under all phases of feeling, and not exclusively posing as the handmaid of either religion or morals. Humour is as much an attribute of our nature as love, and, like it, varies in intensity with different

individuals. This feeling for humour is ministered to in ornament by what we call the grotesque, and the grotesque occurs in the work of all ages and peoples. Wherever they are found, and to whatever nation they belong, the true grotesques have certain characteristics in common.

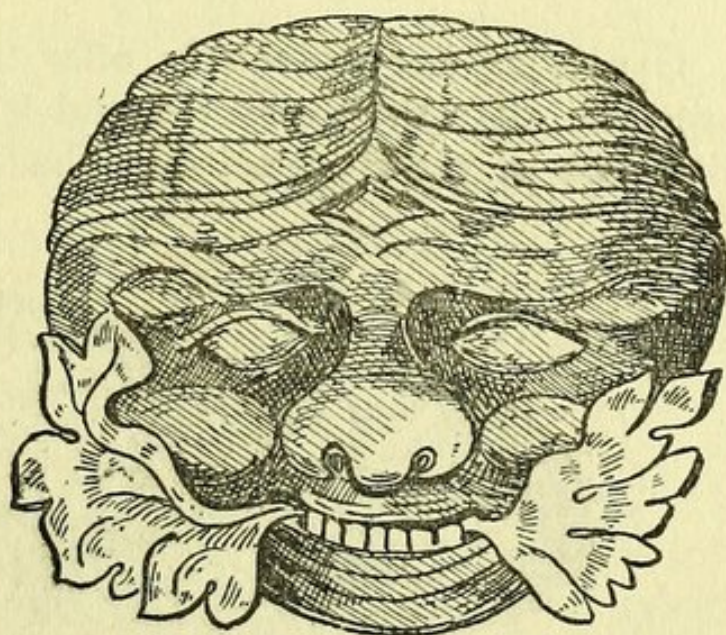


In the first place, it may be taken as a general principle that the further the grotesque is removed from an imitation of a natural object the better it is, provided that it is energetic and vigorous. Nothing is worse than a feeble joke, unless it be a feeble grotesque. The amusing must be convincing, and should always be associated with power, for if the startling or ludicrous is weakly expressed it cannot be corrective, and may indeed be only repulsive and revolting.

### THE TRUE GROTESQUE.

It is not the business of the artist to produce that which may induce the feeling of continued pain, unless there is some exceptional reason for his doing so, and such would be of rare occurrence.

In depicting the grotesque the old carvers appear to have been aware that the human memory is more retentive of the absurd, whether moral or physical, than of the sublime or beautiful, which may be accounted for by the



*Boss. St Stephen's Chapel  
Westminster.*

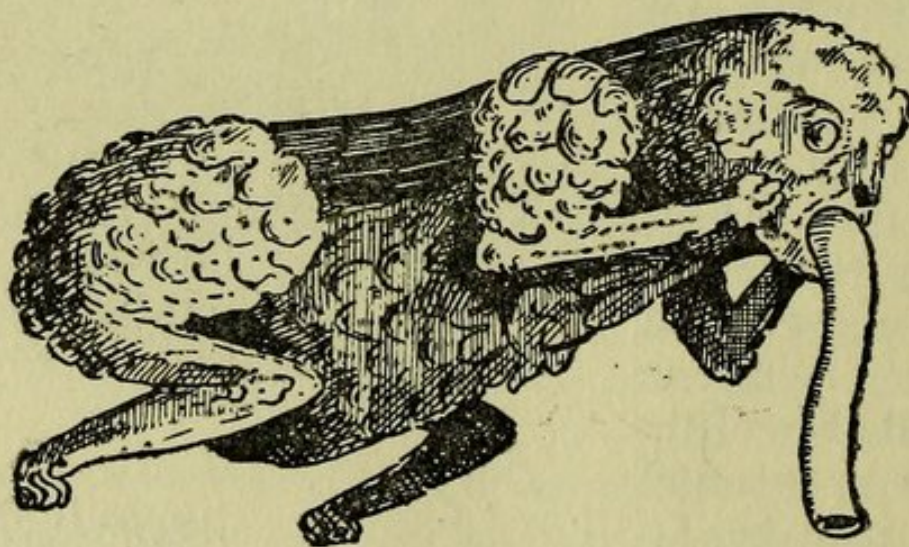
force with which the exception to any given rule, the alienation from any expected course of action, arrests the attention by reason of their rarity; and much of the



mediæval religion was based upon some such recognition of the facility with which the grotesque may be recalled. We have not here to decide how far such a custom was beneficial or injurious, nor to consider to what extent, this burdening of the mind with a host of distorted conceptions went to counterbalance the immediate advantages that were sought. It is quite certain, however, that those nations which have been possessed of the finest and deepest appreciation of the humourous and grotesque have always shown the greatest staying power, intellectually and morally, and the largest possibility of development.

#### GARGOYLES.

Gargoyles unquestionably offer the best field for the searcher after the grotesque, and it is somewhat rare to find one of these appendages that is not fashioned into



some kind of hideous dragon, or terror-inspiring serpent; and it was here that the old builders found a fine opportunity for representing those weird and forbidding



creatures which seem to have formed so strong an article of their faith. The word is generally derived from the French *gargouille*, which in its turn comes from the Latin *gurgulio*, a water-spout. It occurs in French manuscripts of the 14th century as "gargale," the name of a disease peculiar to swine which causes a gurgling sound in their throats, and some writers have derived the word gargoyle from this term. It is more probable, however, that the disease was called after the gargoyle, and not the other way about. The earliest gargoyles are little more than orifices with a tile or lip to shoot the water well away from the building, and we must remember that whatever these curious ornaments may symbolise, their first function was utility, and it was late in their career that they developed a symbolical significance. From the primitive form it was an easy step to the true gargoyle, which consists of two portions, the lower one forming the channel, the upper one being its cover. With the recognition of these ornaments as a decorative and symbolical asset of church architecture, they began to be added to buildings in ever-increasing numbers, and the masons lavished an extraordinary amount of skill and care in fashioning them; so much is this the case that of all our really old gargoyles it would be difficult to find two exactly alike, while a comparison between an old and a modern gargoyle will prove that when science destroyed the belief in evil spirits and dragons, it robbed the sculptor of the only incentive he had to fashion them.

Gargoyles are rarely met with before the early English style, during which they were usually made with a very considerable projection. They are generally found on the cornice, but were not infrequently placed on the fronts of the buttresses. Although they were designed to serve a



utilitarian purpose they were quickly associated with symbolism.

#### DRAGONS AND GRIFFINS.

The scowling and grinning faces, the half-human, half-animal forms, the gorgons, griffins, and winged dragons of legendary folklore were considered to be invested with the power of driving away evil spirits, and as charms against witchcraft, etc. In some instances, as on Melbury Church, Dorset, the dragon, with wide-extending mouth, is shown in the act of swallowing a man, no doubt as a warning to those who remain outside the folds of the Church, or otherwise offend against her laws.

#### MR GLADSTONE.

One of the most curious gargoyles, although not of ancient date, is that which serves as a corbel on the restored south transept of Chester Cathedral. It represents Mr. Gladstone, pen in hand, disestablishing the Church of Ireland, indicated by a triple-crowned mitre. The sculptor's meaning is well carried out in a clever piece of work, but the taste that inspired such an idea is hardly of the same high order. Among our best examples of gargoyles are those adorning the colleges of Oxford, and a lovely set ornamenting the roof of Henry VII's Chapel at Westminster. Some of our finest examples peer down from the tower angles of some secluded country church.

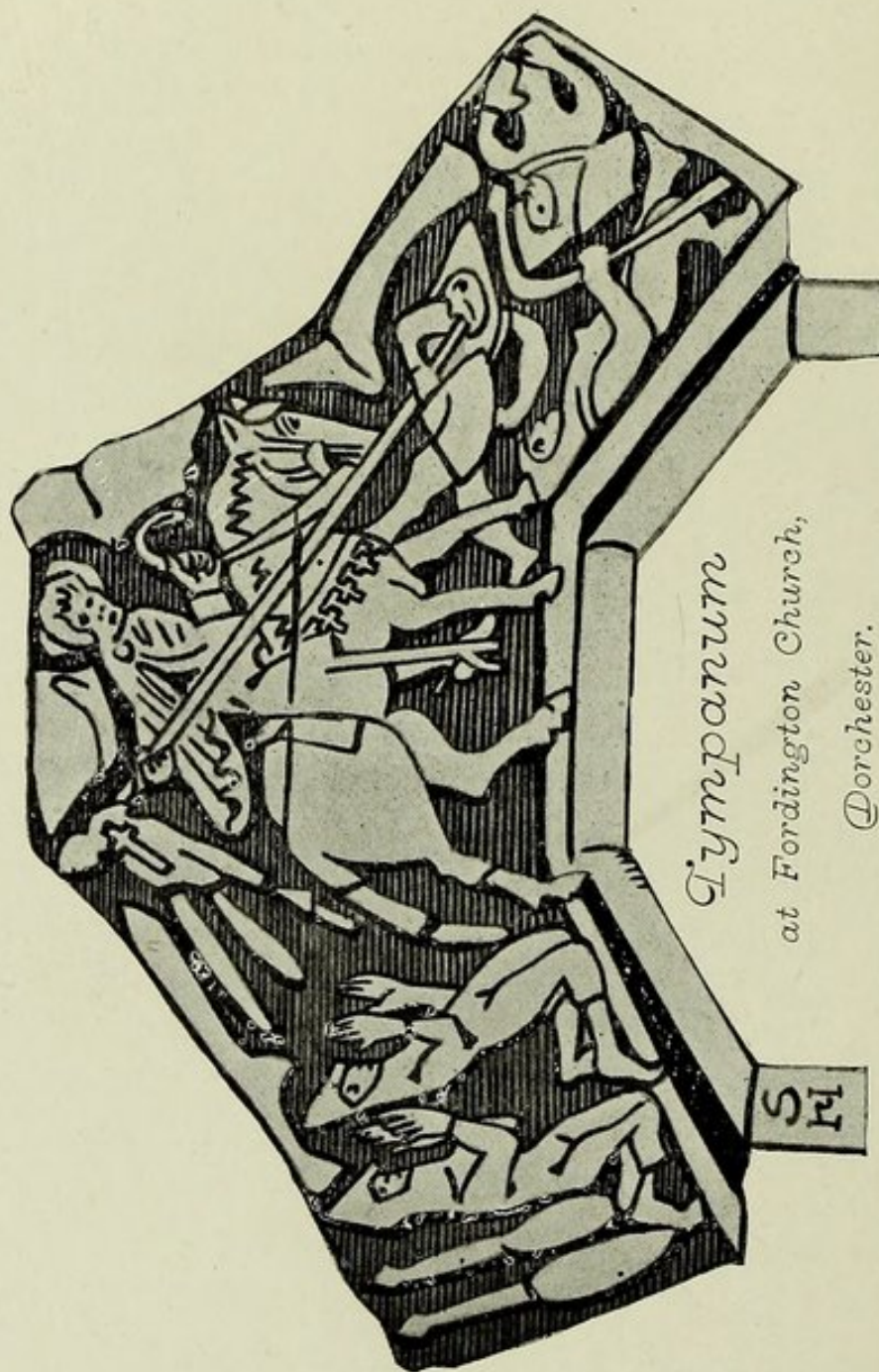
#### ROUEN CATHEDRAL.

It is doubtful if we have in England a piece of building on which there are so many gargoyles as seen on the bas-reliefs on the north door of Rouen Cathedral, where no









*Tympanum*

*at Fordington Church,*

*Dorchester.*

*Facing page 207.*



fewer than two hundred and eighty grotesque animals appear.

#### TYMPANA.

In accordance with our Lord's words, "I am the Door," we frequently find church doors, particularly of Norman date, having the tympana adorned with representations of events from His life. There was, however, another and an equally numerous class of designs which refer to martyrdom, no doubt in allusion to the assertion of the apostle that "we must, through much tribulation, enter into the Kingdom of God." Messrs. Neale and Webb, in their Introductory Essay to the Translation of Durandus, write: "In the early ages of Christianity, it was a matter requiring no small courage to make an open confession of Christianity, and to join oneself to the Church Militant; and this fact has left its impress in the various representations of martyrdom surrounding the nave doors of Norman, and the first stage of early English churches, as well as in the frightful forms which seem to deter those who would enter." The Normans showed as great a freedom in selecting subjects for the tympanum as they did when ornamenting their fonts; and although themes having some allusion to events in the life of our Saviour, or representing the martyrdom of His saints, may predominate, there are large numbers in which secular scenes, hunting, fighting, etc., form the main motif of the tympanum and its accompanying mouldings.

#### LONG MARTON CHURCH.

A very early and curious tympanum is that over the south door of Long Marton Church, Lancashire, whereon is depicted a dragon with a knotted tail and porcine head



tempting S. Margaret in prison. From his back a dove (the emblem of S. Margaret) is issuing, marked with a cross. Near the dove is a curious cross formed into a monogram made by two 12th century letter M's, joined base to base. These are supposed to be the initials of "Margaret Martyr." It may, however, with equal appropriateness apply to the cross with which S. Margaret overcame the dragon. This church possesses another interesting tympanum on its west door, and this, too, is thought to have some allusion to SS. Margaret and James, in the names of whom the church is dedicated; and it appears, by reference to Mr. Parker's "Calendar of the Anglican Church," to be the only English church thus dedicated.

#### ELKSTONE CHURCH.

Elkstone Church, Gloucestershire (*circa* 1150), has a south door rich in Norman work. The tympanum shows the figure of the Saviour seated on a throne, with His right hand extended, and holding a book in His left; over His head is the figure of a Hand (the symbol of God the Father) pointing downwards, and round Him are the holy Lamb and the emblems of the Evangelists, all carved in *basso relievo*.

#### FORDINGTON CHURCH.

One of our earliest tympana is certainly that above the door of the church of Fordington S. George, near Dorchester, Dorset (*see* illustration), whereon is depicted some incident in the life of S. George, possibly the battle of Antioch, as records exist proving that within seven years of this battle Bishop Osmund gave his rectory of St. George's, Dorchester, to his church at Salisbury. Mr.



Bloxam thus refers to this interesting piece of sculpture : "The figures, of which there are several, bear a remarkable resemblance in point of costume to those on the Bayeux tapestry. The principal figure is on horseback, with a discus round his head, a mantle fastened to the right shoulder, and a pryck spur affixed to the right heel ; he (S. George) is represented in the act of spearing with a lance, which bears a pennon at the extremity." The pennon, it will be noticed, bears a Latin cross, and similar but smaller crosses hang from the horse trappings.

#### BARFRETON CHURCH.

The doorway and tympanum at Barfreston Church, here illustrated, form a beautiful example of decorative Norman work. On the tympanum is seen a figure of the Saviour, giving with His right hand the Latin benediction, and holding in His left a book. The panels of the outer and inner mouldings are full of strange carvings, two pigs drinking, dogs chasing rabbits, and various other hunting and forest scenes. There is a tradition that the church owes its erection to a noble who nearly lost his life while hunting in the vicinity, and who built a church as a thank-offering for his escape. This may possibly account for the prominence given to hunting scenes on the sculpture. This doorway is, apart from the wearing effects of time, very much as it was when the accompanying etching was done, but the door, together with the fine pair of hinges and scroll work, have been replaced by more modern ones. Tympana are found very frequently in churches of the Norman period, while possibly the richest example we have is that at Rochester Cathedral, where the sculpture is of a very refined order.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Other examples of Tympana are described under Chap. XII.

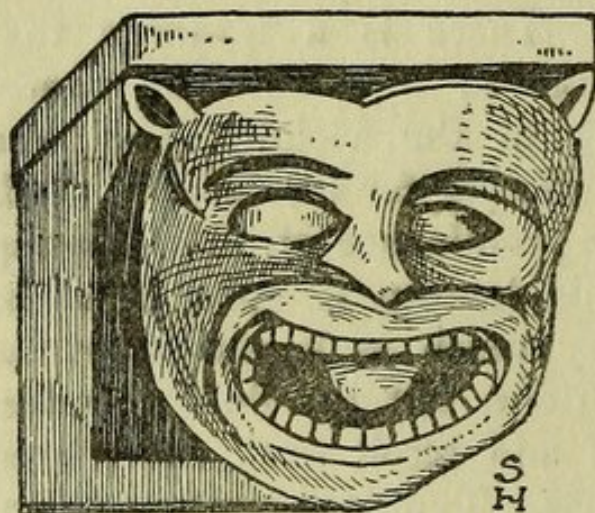


## DOORS AND HANDLES.

The handles and hinges on church doors, although generally devoid of ornament, are sometimes found decorated with serpents, dragons, lions, etc. Hinges are not infrequently found with elaborate and graceful scroll-work, the ends of which terminate in leaves or animals' heads. The illustration here given of an old door at S. Saviour's Church, Dartmouth, is a somewhat late but good example of the artistic treatment of hinges. Escutcheons, when forming doorplates, are of various shapes and ornamentation, as also are the nails with which they are fixed.

## CORBELS.

The corbels found on so many of our early churches need no lengthy description here, for the remarks on the grotesque characteristics of gargoyles may be taken as applying to corbels also.

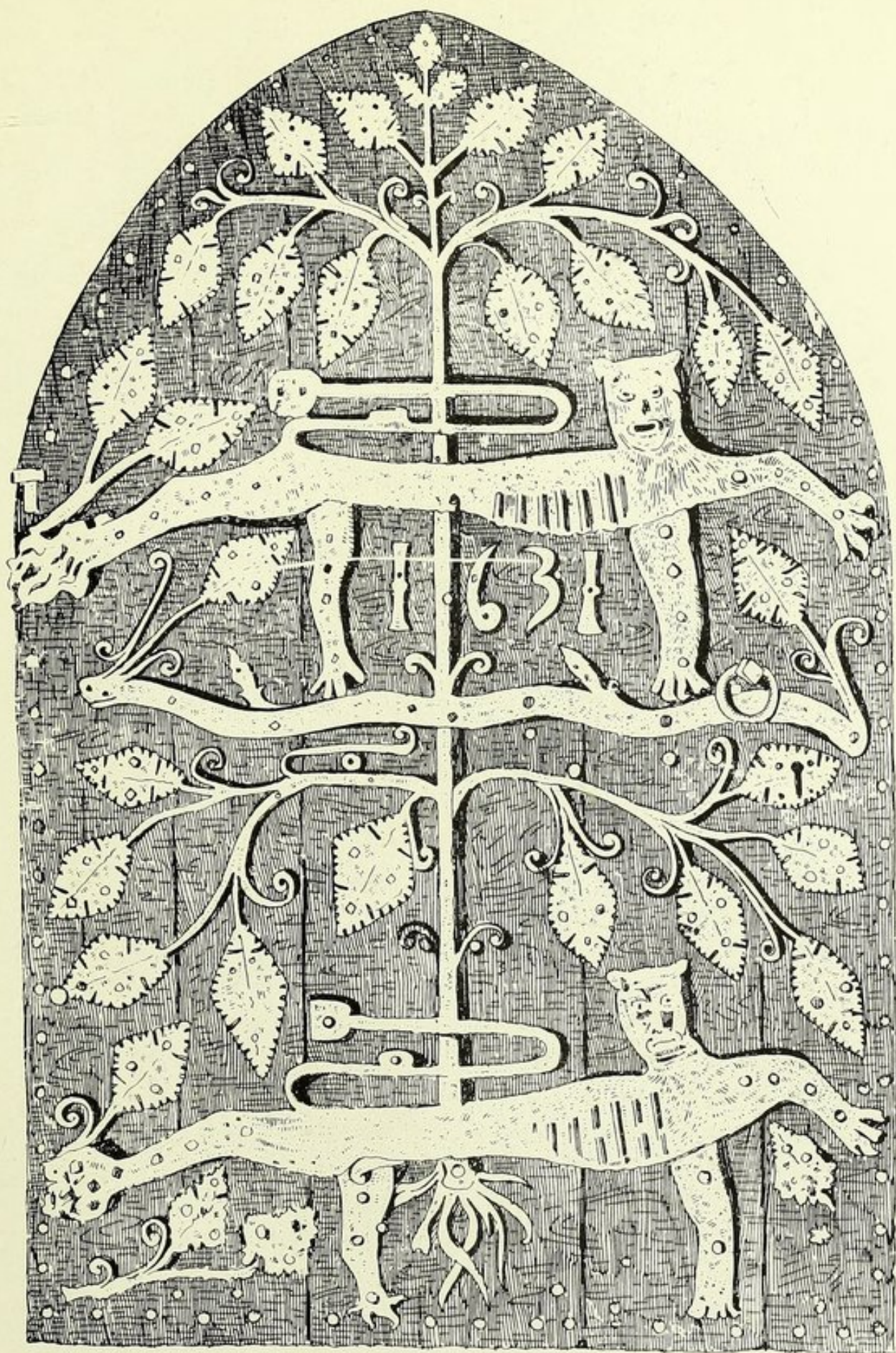


*Corbel, Romsey Abbey*

Turning to the interior of an old church, cathedral, or priory, we find that although the grotesque element occasionally appears on capitals, bosses, brackets, etc., it is on

miserere carvings and bench-ends that it is most in evidence.





St. Saviour's Church, Dartmouth.

Sidney Heath.







THE MISERERE.

Mr. J. H. Parker in his "Glossary of Architecture," gives the following definition of the miserere, patience, or pretella. "The projecting bracket on the underside of the seats of stalls in churches, these, when perfect, are fixed with hinges so that they may be turned up, and when this is done the projection of the miserere is sufficient, without



actually forming a seat, to afford very considerable rest to anyone leaning upon it. They were allowed as a relief to the infirm during the long services that were required to be performed by ecclesiastics in a standing posture."



Nearly all our cathedrals and old abbey and collegiate churches possess some of these carvings *in situ*, while others may frequently be found hidden away in crypts or vaults, where they have been placed so as not to offend the modern idea of decency. Those still in position show a curious mixture of the sacred and the profane, the refined and the vulgar; a combination of sentiments which appears at first sight to baffle any satisfactory explanation. They are usually attributed to the wandering and mendicant monks, and have often been produced as evidence of the licentious immorality of the latter days of the conventual and monastic houses.

#### THE MORALITY OF ART.

This is a superficial point of view, for I think we shall find on consideration that they were primarily intended to *promote morality* rather than its opposite, but this view can only be briefly indicated here, as the "Morality of Art" depends so much on the point of view taken by the spectator, and the aims and ideals of the carver or painter. Just as nothing can be falser than to suppose that morality can be served by representing facts other than they are; so no emasculated picture or carving can be moral.

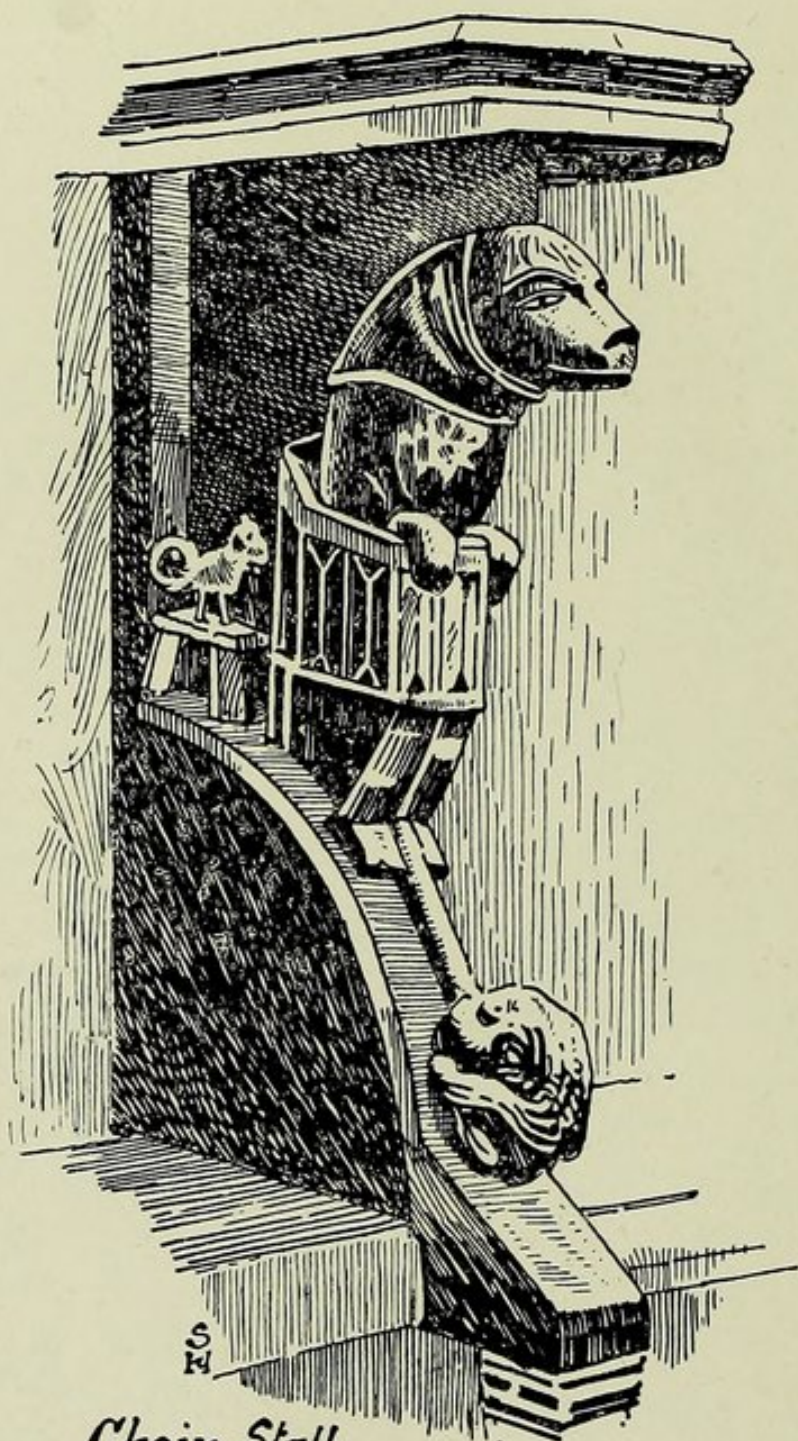
As the Rev. H. R. Haweis says:<sup>1</sup> "The best art is like Shakespeare's art, and Titian's art, always true to the great glad aboriginal instincts of our nature, severely faithful to its foibles, never representing disease in the guise of health, never rejoicing in the exercise of morbid fancy . . . tender without weakness, and forcible without ever losing the fine sense of proportion." And it is when they are considered in a proper sense of proportion to the

<sup>1</sup> "Music and Morals."









*Choir Stall  
Christchurch Priory*

*Facing page 213.*



other parts of the building, that the grotesque and even the obscene carvings will be found to have been designed for a specific purpose, and not as detached representations of the ludicrous or indecent. They are not severed from the building but are details of it.

Taken in conjunction with the whole fabric, as it was originally, its niches filled with hundreds of Saints, Martyrs, Bishops, and Apostles, the coarse element was intended to produce a purely moral impression. The craftsman has represented life as he saw it, and all being in healthy proportion (the evil subordinated by the pure) it cannot fail to be moral. The degradation sets off the divine beauty, human depravity fades by contrast with victorious purity, and thus it is that one is forced to conclude that in these literal presentments of life the monk-craftsmen were animated by the idea that while purity and peace are good, the existence of evil cannot be ignored. They were true artists whose work was intended to ennoble and not degrade.

#### BENCH-ENDS.

Of modern pews nothing need be said here, but the old bench-ends, prominent in our churches before the Reformation, were frequently carved with dragons, serpents, and other grotesque creatures, as well as with the symbols of the Passion. Many, too, are heraldic, and show the arms of prominent persons connected with the church as patrons or worshippers. These bench-ends are still very numerous in the western counties. They are valuable as examples of old carving, but as few of them date from before the Perpendicular era, they are not altogether reliable in regard to symbolism which at this period had lost all its early meaning and significance.



## CHAPTER XVII

### ECCLESIASTICAL COLOURS AND THEIR SYMBOLISM

THE early Christian artists quickly realised the advantage of allotting certain specified colours to particular symbols, with the result that the decoration of their early missals and illuminated MSS. was more frequently controlled by the symbolic than by the purely artistic element, the latter being subordinated to the former.

The Church in early days drew up a strict and rigid set of rules concerning the use of colours by artists when depicting sacred subjects and persons, but with the growth of art as an independent unit in the more cultured capitals of Europe, pictorial representation no longer posed as the exclusive handmaiden of religion, and the fetters having thus become weakened, the old customs and traditions, the hieratic, stereotyped forms, were gradually discarded, and sacred art, free, animated, and vigorous, was able to develop with the social, literary, and other arts of the glorious Gothic period. The Christian Church to-day has but five canonical colours—White, Red, Green, Violet, and Black.

WHITE is used during Easter and Christmas, also on the Circumcision and Epiphany of our Lord, and it is the first as it is the most joyous of all the colours used by the Christian Church. In former days it was used on the Festival of the Blessed Virgin, and on the feasts of those saints who were not martyrs. White



is the symbol of innocence, purity, virginity, faith, joy, life, and light. In art the Virgin Mary is robed in white at her Assumption.

**RED** is used on the Exaltation of the Cross, the Invention of the Cross, and at the Feasts of Pentecost and of the Martyrs. It is symbolical of our Lord's Passion, and of the martyrdom of His Saints. It is also used to symbolise ardent love. Our Lord is sometimes shown in a red tunic or pallium.

Red also symbolises divine love, power, regal dignity, war, and suffering.

**GREEN** is used on common Sundays and ordinary week days. It signifies hope, plenty, mirth, youth, and prosperity. As the colour of living vegetation, green was adopted as a symbol of life. Angels and saints are frequently clad in green, and particularly S. John. The Virgin Mary is often clothed in robes of the same colour.

**VIOLET (or PURPLE)** is used on Septuagesima, Quinquagesima, Ash-Wednesday, and also during Lent, Holy Week, and Advent, except on those feast days that occur in such seasons. It is said to symbolise the union of love and pain in repentance, passion, suffering, humility, and truth. It certainly symbolises sorrow, and Christ when represented as the Man of Sorrows is shown in violet. Angels wear violet when they call men to repentance or share in the sorrows of the Lord. In pictorial art martyrs usually wear purple garments. The Benedictine abbots wore violet up to modern times, when they adopted black. In olden times virgin recluses wore violet veils.

**BLACK** is the fifth canonical colour, but is only used on Good Friday. It symbolises death, despair, sorrow,



humiliation, and mourning. In an old volume, entitled "Legends of the Madonna," is the following curious passage: "Because some of the Greek pictures and carved images had become black through extreme age, it was argued by certain devout writers that the Virgin herself must have been of a very dark complexion, and in favour of this idea they quote the text from the Canticles, 'I am black but comely,' etc.; but others say that her complexion had become black only during her sojourn in Egypt. At all events the blackness of these images was supposed to enhance their sanctity."

**BLUE** was originally a canonical colour, but is now rarely used by the Church. It is the symbol of Heaven, and signifies sincerity, godliness, piety, and divine contemplation.

**YELLOW**, when pure, signifies brightness, goodness, faith, and fruitfulness. When of a dingy or dull tone it is symbolic of faithlessness, deceit, and jealousy. In mediæval art Judas is usually habited in a dingy yellow garment.

It must be mentioned that the significance of these colours varied somewhat in different countries, and at different periods, and ecclesiologists consider that the colours used in depicting the robes of our Lord differed according to the period of His life it was intended should be represented.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### PRECIOUS STONES AND THEIR SYMBOLISM

THE two principal precious stones used as symbols by the early Christian artists were the Amethyst and the Pearl, the former signifying earthly suffering, love, and truth, and the latter purity, innocence, and humility. The other stones have the same symbolical significance as the colours they exhibit, thus the Diamond signifies light, innocence, life, and joy. The Ruby, divine love, power, dignity, and royalty. The Carbuncle, blood, war, and suffering. The Sardius, martyrdom. The Sapphire, all the heavenly virtues. The Topaz, divine goodness and human faithfulness. The Emerald, hopes of immortality. Other precious stones of which frequent mention is made in the Scriptures, are Beryl and Jasper. Beryl, or aquamarine, is a stone of a light sea-green colour. It is a gem of the genus emerald, but not equal in value to the emerald properly so called. The most beautiful specimens of beryl come from the borders of China, and from Brazil and Siberia. The Hebrew name for the stone is *tarshish*, and Gesenius imagines it to be so-called because it was brought from Tarshish, *e.g.* Tartessus,<sup>1</sup> in Spain. Beryl formed one of the gems in the breastplate of the high priest (Exod. xxviii. 20), and the man seen by the prophet Daniel had his "body like the beryl" (Dan. x. 6). Jasper

<sup>1</sup> A Phœnician city in the south of Spain.



was also one of the gems worn by the high priest, and it, together with the beryl are mentioned as among the adornments of the King of Tyrus (Ezek. xxviii. 13). In S. John's description of the holy city, the new Jerusalem, we read that the wall was of jasper, and the first foundation was jasper, and the eighth beryl ; and he also tells us that the jasper was the most precious of all stones, clear as crystal (Rev. xxi. 11, 18, 19). The word jasper comes from the Hebrew *yashpeh*, and the stone is an opaque species of quartz, red, yellow, or green, being frequently found mottled or striped, in which latter case it is called ribbon-jasper. It is found in fairly large quantities in Devon and Cornwall, but the finest quarries are in Spain, although the stone has but little commercial value to-day. The cathedral church of Cologne possesses a splendid shrine of jasper, said to contain the remains of the three Magi who went to Bethlehem to worship the Messiah.

Precious stones and metals were regarded by the medical practitioners of the Middle Ages as containing specific virtues for the curing of almost every ailment to which the mediæval flesh was heir, but it was probably only the very wealthy members of the community who could afford to pay for emeralds to tie on their stomachs in cases of dysentery, as recommended by Avenzoar, or for the "dissolved pearls" which Matthioli assures us is "sovereign against melancholy."

Dioscorides extolled the virtues of powdered sapphires for "goggly" eyes, and S. Jerome prescribed them for many other troubles. Coral, being probably more within reach of the multitude, figures frequently in these old prescriptions. Galen said it never failed to stop spitting of blood. Pliny speaks highly of it as a cure for stone. Made into a cordial, Avicenna found it "singularly pro-



ductive of joy," and Matthioli avers that it has "truly occult virtues against epilepsy," whether "hung about the neck or drunk in powders." The following extract from the Family Dictionary of Dr. Salmon (1696) may interest anyone who should care to test its medicinal virtues.

"Coral, to prepare.—Take such a quantity as ye think convenient. Make it into a fine powder by grinding it upon a porphyry or an iron mortar. Drop on it by degrees a little rose-water, and form it into balls for use. After this manner crabs-eyes, pearls, oyster shells, and precious stones are prepared to make up cordials compounded of them and other suitable materials for the strengthening of the heart in fevers, or such like violent diseases, and to restore the decays of Nature."

Emeralds and rubies gave relief in a variety of ailments, but nothing appears to have possessed such healing qualities as gold, which, although the application differs, may be said to be true to-day. The Aurum Potabile, or "Solar Oyl," when mixed with "Lunar Oyl" of silver, formed, Bolnest assures us, "a great Arcanum, fit to be used in most diseases, especially in *chronick*." By itself dissolved gold was considered to be an elixir of life, and it was idealised as a sort of divine antidote to disease and death.



## APPENDIX I

THE following notes on the derivation of the ecclesiastical words most commonly used may not be without help to the student of either ecclesiastical architecture, history, or symbolism.

The close connection between the Church of England and the Church of Rome, following the mission of S. Augustine, led to the translation into English of Latin books, just as the growing commerce of England with southern Europe introduced into the English language a large number of words of classical origin. The ecclesiastical terms thus introduced of Latin origin are :

altar (altare)	disciple (discipulus)
ark (arca), a chest	feast (festus)
candle (candela)	font (fons)
chalice (calix), a cup	mass (missa)
chapter (caput)	porch (porticus)
cloister (claustrum)	preach (prædicare)
cowl (cucullus)	sacrament (sacramentum)
creed (credo)	saint (sanctus)
cross (crux)	

The following, although they first came to us through the Latin, are of Greek origin :

alms (eleemosyna)	hymn (hymnus)
anchorite (anchorita)	martyr (martyr)
apostle (apostolus)	minister (monasterium)
bishop (episcopus)	priest (presbyterus)
canon (canon)	psalm (psalma)
clerk (clericus)	psalter (psalterium)
deacon (diaconus)	stole (stola)
heretic (hæreticus)	synod (synodus)



The Latin terms which came to us through the Norman-French are :

baptism	homily	relic
Bible	idolatry	religion
ceremony	penance	sacrifice
charity	piety	sermon
devotion	pilgrim	tonsure
friar		

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## APPENDIX II

### THE BYZANTINE GUIDE TO PAINTING

"The Byzantine Guide to Painting" is a work generally attributed to the 12th century, although the date of the original copy is not known. A copy found by Didron at Esphigmenon was said by the monks of Mount Athos to belong to the 10th or 11th centuries, but was probably not older than the 15th century.

The Editors of Didron's *Christian Iconography* write : "It is a copy of an older manuscript compiled by the monk Dionysius from the works of the celebrated and illustrious master, Manuel Pauselinos of Thessalonica, who flourished in the 12th century, during the reign of the emperor Adronicus the First."

Be this as it may the second part of this interesting guide (the first part relates only to the *technique* of the painter's art) gives the most minute instructions as to the proper method for the pictorial representation of almost every incident and of every person, saint, etc., mentioned in the Gospels.



The following extracts are from the translation of Didron's *Iconography*, published by Messrs. Longmans & Co.

HOW THE WONDERS OF THE ANCIENT LAW ARE  
REPRESENTED.

*Baptism of Christ.*

"Christ standing naked in the midst of the Jordan. The harbinger, on the river bank to the right of Christ, looks upward; his right hand rests upon the head of Christ, he raises the left towards heaven. Above, the sky is seen, whence issues the Holy Spirit, descending on a ray which rests upon the head of Christ. In the midst of the ray we read the words: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' On the left angels stand in reverence with arms outspread. Clothes lie on the ground. Below the harbinger, and across the Jordan, a naked man reclines, who looks behind him at Christ, as if in terror. He holds a vase whence he pours water. Fish surround Christ."

*The Salutations.*

Heaven with sun and moon. The Holy Virgin above seated on a throne with the Infant Christ. The following inscription surrounds her: "Rejoice, Queen of Angels, O full of Grace!" Above her a multitude of holy angels to right and left. Four of them hold scrolls; on the first is written: "Rejoice, Glory of Angels, protectress of men." On the second: "Rejoice, Temple Divine, Throne of the Lord." On the third to the left: "Rejoice, Paradise of Delight! rejoice, Tree of Life!" On the fourth: "Rejoice, Palace and Throne of the great King!"



Beneath the angels come all the orders of the saints upon clouds, each band preceded by a leader holding a scroll containing his verse of the litany."

*The character of the faces of the twelve holy apostles.*

- S. Peter: an old man with a round beard; he holds an epistle on which is written: "Peter, apostle of Jesus Christ."
- S. Paul: bald, beard grey and stubbly; he holds his twelve epistles tied together in a roll.
- S. John, Theologos: an old man, bald, large, not very thick beard; he holds the Gospel.
- S. Luke, Evangelist: young, curled hair, small beard; he is painting the Divine Mother.
- S. Mark, Evangelist: grey hair, round beard; he holds the Gospel.
- S. Andrew: an old man, frizzled hair, double-pointed beard; he holds a cross and closed scroll.
- S. Simon Zelotes: an old man, bald, round beard.
- S. James: young, beard beginning.
- S. Bartholomew: young, beard beginning.
- S. Thomas: young, beardless.
- S. Philip: young, beardless.

All these personages hold closed scrolls.

Anyone who is at all familiar with pictorial religious art will realise how literally these instructions were carried out by the old painters and carvers.

In conclusion, we may well record the following words of Mrs. Jameson:—

"If those who consider works of art would be content to regard them—not merely as pretty pictures, nor yet as repudiated idols, but as loving allegories to which the



world listened in its dreamy childhood ; . . . if they would not be afraid of attaching a meaning to them, but consider what we may be permitted unreprieved, to seek and to find in them, both in sense and sentiment—how many pleasures and associations would be revealed in every picture, in every group or figure, which is now passed over either with indifference or repugnance ! ”

FINIS



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