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**A GUIDE TO THE EARLY  
CHRISTIAN AND BYZANTINE  
ANTIQUITIES  
IN THE DEPARTMENT OF  
BRITISH AND MEDIÆVAL ANTIQUITIES**

1







**PLATE I. LEAF OF A BYZANTINE IVORY DIPTYCH: THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL.**

*(See p. 66.)*



**BRITISH MUSEUM-**

**A GUIDE TO THE EARLY  
CHRISTIAN AND BYZANTINE  
ANTIQUITIES**

**IN THE DEPARTMENT OF BRITISH  
AND MEDIÆVAL ANTIQUITIES**

**WITH FIFTEEN PLATES AND EIGHTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS**

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# PREFACE

THE collection of objects exhibited in the Christian Room may be divided into three sections: the first, Early Christian; the second, Byzantine; and the third comprising devotional and ecclesiastical objects from various Christian Churches of the East. The period illustrated by the first section is here placed between the beginning of our era and the seventh century; the Celtic and Teutonic Christian remains in the Museum, most of which are assigned to a subsequent date, being reserved for future treatment in other Guides to be issued by the Department. The second section is concerned with the entire duration of the Byzantine Empire, down to its overthrow by the Turks in 1453. The third is at present illustrated by the later Coptic, Abyssinian, and Russian series, but is still very incomplete. Nearly all the objects falling within the first and third of these sections are either directly connected with church worship or have upon them symbols, figures, or inscriptions connecting them with the Christian religion. But with those which illustrate the second this is not always the case, for although a very large number of Byzantine antiquities are ornamented with religious subjects, this is not an invariable rule, a certain proportion having no evident connexion with Christianity. The inclusion of such objects must be defended on the ground that they are of greater archaeological interest in association with obviously Christian work of the same origin than they would be if separated and placed among the collections illustrating the Middle Ages in the West. It is another question whether the Christian and Mediaeval Rooms should not adjoin each other;



in that case all such difficulties might be readily solved. But the present Guide must necessarily deal with things as they are, rather than with things as they might be if more ample space could be obtained.

A collection brought together in so small a place as the Christian Room cannot of course make any claim to completeness. The different sections which it comprises are unevenly represented; it is weak in sculpture and large objects generally; and an ecclesiastical series from the Eastern Churches has really still to be formed. Nor does the room contain all the antiquities of the Early Christian and Byzantine periods in the Museum. The Department of Manuscripts has the MSS. and seals; the Department of Coins and Medals the Byzantine coins; and the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities a number of Christian antiquities from Egypt. Such a separation of objects which are historically closely connected is unavoidable in an institution with so many departments as the British Museum. Exigencies of space and arrangement have made it impossible even to keep together in one room all the objects with which the Guide has actually to deal. The few Christian remains dating from the time of the Roman occupation of Britain are exhibited in the Romano-British Collection; the ivory carvings remain for purposes of comparison in the large series in the Mediaeval Room; two interesting vases are in the collections illustrating the historical development of glass in the Glass and Ceramic Room; while a number of gold rings and jewels are placed for greater security in the Gold Ornament Room and the corridor leading to it. But the inconvenience thus caused to visitors has to some extent been obviated by the exhibition in the Christian Room of reproductions and casts which will aid in the recognition of the originals in the other rooms. Yet with all its deficiencies the collection remains one of extreme interest; and the silver treasures and series of engraved gems and gilded glasses are among the most notable of their kind.

A word must be said in conclusion on the length of the introduction compared with the actual description of the objects. It was felt that some general account of Early



Christian and Byzantine antiquities, and of the historical conditions which produced them, was indispensable if the collection was to arouse the interest it deserved; and for this reason a few remarks upon architecture and upon the ritual of existing Eastern Churches could not be omitted. The introduction is intended to bring a few fundamental facts of Early Christian and Byzantine archaeology to the notice of those approaching the subject for the first time, and thus enable them to proceed to the study of more comprehensive handbooks. This Guide has been written by Mr. O. M. Dalton, the senior assistant in the Department, who also prepared the Catalogue of the collection. Much useful help in the preparation of the introduction has been rendered by Mr. E. A. Wallis Budge in relation to the Copts and Abyssinians, and by Mr. Henry Jenner upon points of ecclesiastical history and ceremony. The Trustees of the British Museum have to thank Mrs. Theodore Bent for permission to reproduce figs. 65 and 68, and the Society of Antiquaries of London for the loan of the blocks of figs. 22 and 47.

The numbers in brackets throughout refer to the *Catalogue of Early Christian Antiquities and Objects from the Christian East*, published by order of the Trustees in 1901.

CHARLES H. READ.

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# INTRODUCTION

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## GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHRISTIANITY

BEFORE any attempt is made to summarize the principal phases of Early Christian and Byzantine art, it will be well to describe in the briefest possible manner the geographical area from which Christian antiquities are derived. By the second century Christians were to be found in almost every part of the Roman Empire, so that long before the adoption of Christianity as the State religion by the Emperor Constantine, communities existed in all the larger cities. In the West the new faith rapidly spread beyond Italy. Christian inscriptions and remains of the fourth and succeeding centuries are found in the Rhine valley, in Gaul and Spain, in the British Isles and in North Africa. In the East from its birthplace in Palestine, the new religion passed to Asia Minor, Syria, Armenia, Persia, and Egypt. It thus surrounded the whole basin of the Mediterranean, and the antiquities which testify to its early presence in different localities are naturally influenced by the varying taste and artistic capacity of these widely-distant countries. From the Rhine district we have, for example, besides the sepulchral inscriptions, glass vessels of great interest from Cologne, which was a principal centre of the glass-making industry in late Roman times. Gaul and Spain have been prolific in fine sculptured sarcophagi (figs. 5 and 6). North Africa, with its great Christian city of Carthage, the influence of which was felt through the provinces of Africa and Numidia (now Tunis and part of Algeria), has proved rich not only in architectural and sepulchral remains but also in minor objects, represented in the present collection by a small silver treasure, several tombstones, and a number of pottery lamps from Carthage and its neighbourhood. The Christian antiquities of Egypt and Syria are exceptionally numerous and important.

Christianity had already made considerable progress in our own country before Constantine; and the persecution



under Diocletian extended to Britain, the martyrdom of St. Alban being placed in the year 305 A. D. In all probability the new faith was introduced by the Gaulish Church, with which that of Britain continued to maintain close relations. It may be recalled that three British bishops were present at the Council of Arles in the year 314; and it was from Gaul that the bishops Lupus and Germanus came in A. D. 429 to repress the heresy of the Briton Pelagius.

Before the middle of the fifth century progress had been made with the conversion of Ireland and the remoter parts of Britain through the efforts of missionaries like St. Patrick and St. Ninian. Traces of the spread of Christianity in these early times may be seen in the rudely-inscribed sepulchral monuments in south west Ireland, Devon, Cornwall, Wales and Scotland, the inscriptions being either in Latin with debased Roman capitals beginning with the familiar formula *Hic jacet*, or in Celtic with the early Western-Celtic characters called Oghams, examples of which may be seen in the Central Saloon and in the Roman Gallery on the ground floor; on a certain number of these early stones Latin and Ogham inscriptions are found together. In Ireland Christianity found most enthusiastic adherents, and the progress of the Irish Church was so rapid that her missionaries were soon able to carry the faith across the seas. In the year 563 St. Columba passed from Ireland to Iona, an island off the west coast of Scotland, where he founded a monastery; from this centre went forth missionaries who converted a large area in northern Britain. In the middle of the seventh century the country was still unequally divided between the Celtic or Scotie bishops and the successors of St. Augustine representing the Papal See. The Synod of Whitby in A. D. 664 did much to reconcile the differences of usage which separated the two communities; and Christianity, which in central and southern England had been almost overwhelmed by the irruption of the Anglo-Saxon tribes, was organized upon a broader basis by Archbishop Theodore (A. D. 690). By the end of the eighth century most of the local centres of Celtic Christianity had given their adhesion to the Roman usage, and though the primacy of Canterbury was not universally admitted until later, the union of the Church of England may be said to have become an accomplished fact.

Of the Christian Church in Britain prior to the Teutonic invasions of the fifth and sixth centuries there are but few existing monuments. Though several churches have been





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found upon a few small objects such as two finger-rings from Fifehead Neville, Dorsetshire, terra-cotta lamps (one in the Museum at Newcastle-on-Tyne), and a lead seal or stamp from Silchester in the Museum at Reading. The British Museum possesses in its Romano-British collections examples of the monogram stamped upon cakes of pewter found in the Thames at Battersea (fig. 1), and rudely scratched upon

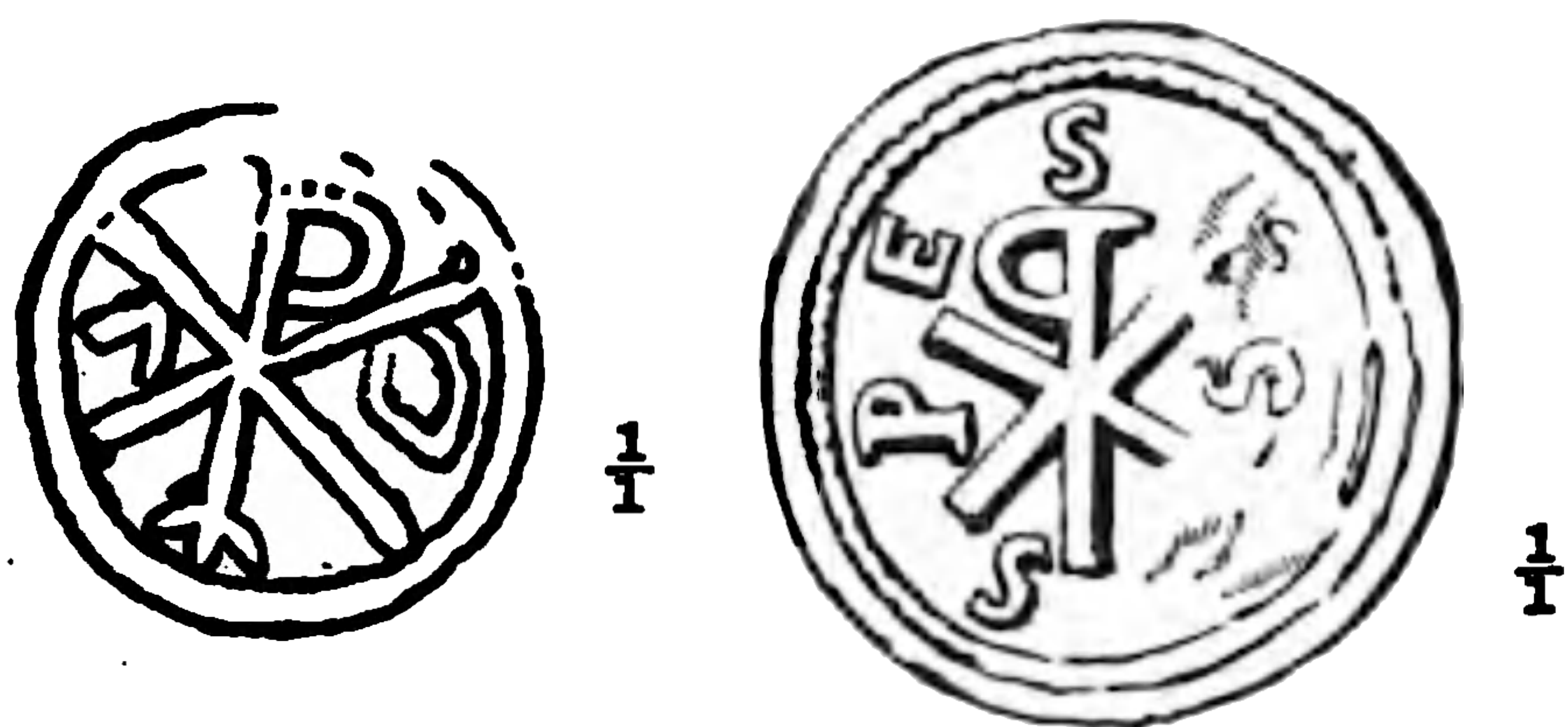


FIG. 1.—Stamps on pewter from the Thames.

a small dish forming part of a pewter service found on the site of a Roman villa at Appleshaw, Hants (see p. 77). It will be observed that in all these instances the emblem is the monogram and not the cross. The reason for this is that the latter

sign was not used as a general symbol of Christianity as early as the monogram (see p. 20), and it is doubtful whether it was introduced into Britain before the Roman officials evacuated the country at a date which is commonly placed in 410 A.D. Certain examples of the cross upon Samian ware and in mosaics, which have been claimed as Christian, would appear to be purely ornamental, while the cross upon the lid of the sarcophagus of the Roman Valerius Amandinus at the entrance of the Chapter-house at Westminster Abbey is almost certainly mediaeval. If we may judge from the evidence of antiquities found on the Continent, the probabilities are against the occurrence of the cross as a sign of Christianity on objects of Roman date in Britain; and the earliest instances in which its religious significance is obvious will usually be found to belong to Anglo-Saxon or later times. There may be exceptions to this rule, and at first sight the terracotta lamp in the Canterbury Museum, of which a cast is exhibited in Wall-Case 11, may appear to be one of them; but unfortunately little is known of the circumstances under which this lamp was discovered and it certainly belongs to a type which was commonest in the sixth century. Crosses, as well as the monogram, are of course found upon the earliest Celtic sepulchral monuments (pillar stones), but as these are assigned to the period between 402–700 A.D., they do not as a class date from the time of the Roman occupation. Among other objects connected with the Christianity of the



Romano-British period may be mentioned a gold ring from Brancaster in Norfolk, with the Christian acclamation *vivas in Deo* ('live in God'), another with the same inscription from Silchester, and a Gnostic gem from the same place, showing that the influence of Gnosticism was felt as far west as Britain (see p. 29).

In the period between the fifth and seventh centuries, which witnessed the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the settlement in this country of northern barbaric tribes, Early Christian Art still flourished in Italy, and the influence of local schools has been traced in the ivory carvings of the time. Milan and Ravenna were successively raised to the position of capital, and the latter city became the principal artistic centre of the peninsula. It was famous for its sculptured sarcophagi (see p. 13), in some of which the representation of the human figure is abandoned in favour of flatter reliefs combining Early Christian symbols, such as the sacred monogram and peacock, with a rich conventional decoration suggestive of Oriental influences. Among the mosaics in the churches of Ravenna some were undoubtedly Byzantine in character, but the question to what extent the art of Ravenna as a whole should be so classed has given rise to much dispute, for while some archaeologists are inclined to ascribe it to a more or less independent development on Italian soil, others find numerous traces of Byzantine, more especially Syrian, inspiration. The Goths made no original contribution to Christian art in Italy, but the Lombards who succeeded them at the close of the sixth century have left numerous examples of sculptures in low relief which, though of a far ruder character, show certain analogies with the sarcophagi of Ravenna, and combine Christian symbols with conventional ornament of a more barbaric style. This mixture of Early Christian elements with Teutonic motives lingered on in Northern Italy till after the close of the first millennium, when it was obliterated by the growth of a more purely Italian artistic movement.

Of the history of Christianity in Egypt and Ethiopia, something will be said below when the Coptic and Abyssinian antiquities are discussed (p. 81). Its development in Western Asia must be dismissed in a few words. In Asia Minor the Christian population soon became very large. Up to the time of the Mahomedan conquest in the seventh century, Syria had a great Christian community with its chief centres at Antioch and Edessa, where literature and the arts were



sedulously cultivated, and the ruined Syrian churches dating from this period are among the most remarkable remains of Early Christian architecture (see p. 36). Christianity passed early into Armenia and Persia, thus travelling beyond the territory of the Roman and Byzantine Empires, and extended its influence under the Parthian kings; we shall see below that the old religious philosophy of Iran contributed its share to the speculative beliefs of the Gnostics. The Sassanian dynasty, which followed the Parthian and was more purely national in character, was often hostile to Christianity, but the later kings did not encourage persecution, and in their time Persian Christians were most active in missionary work.

Of the various heresies which distracted the Church during the first three centuries many originated in the East, where some still count adherents. Most of them, however, soon died out, and, with the exception of the different sects of the doubtfully Christian Gnostics (see p. 29), left little or no archaeological evidence of their existence. It was not until the Œcumenical Councils of the fourth century began to legislate for the Church at large, that important separated religious bodies, consisting of those who refused to accept the creeds and definitions of those councils, were formed.

The principal of these bodies were:—

1. The *Arians*, who denied that the Son is consubstantial with the Father. These were condemned by the First General Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325. Though this heresy at one time seemed likely to prevail, and though it attracted to itself most of the newly formed Teutonic nations, it eventually died out, leaving very few traces behind it.

2. The *Nestorians*, who, affirming that the Divinity and Humanity of Christ are not only two Natures (*φύσεις*), but also two Persons (*ὑποστάσεις*), refused the title of Theotokos (Mother of God) to the Virgin Mary. These were condemned by the Third General Council at Ephesus in the year 431. Their tenets were adopted by the East Syrian and Persian part of the Church; but after a long and successful missionary career in Central Asia, China, and India, they were overwhelmed by the conquests of Timour in the fourteenth century, and are now only represented by a small community in the neighbourhood of Urumiah, where Persia and Turkey in Asia meet, and also by the Chaldaean and Malabar Uniats (see p. 100), who have abjured their heresy and joined themselves to Rome.

3. The *Eutychians* or *Monophysites*, who hold the exact



opposite to Nestorianism, affirming that the Divinity and Humanity of Christ are not two Natures but one. These were condemned by the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451. A great part of the West Syrian Church, the Copts of Egypt, the Abyssinians, and to some extent the Armenians, adopted this heresy in its various forms; and so at a later period, after the Portuguese conquests, did the so-called Christians of St. Thomas in India, who were originally Nestorians. From an important leader, Jacobus Baradaeus, the Monophysites were called *Jacobites*, and at the same period the name *Melchites* or Royalists was applied to the Orthodox Syrians as adherents of the party of the Emperor of the East. The rites of the West Syrians, Copts, Abyssinians and Armenians, corrected in a Catholic direction, are also used by communities in Syria, Egypt, Abyssinia, Armenia, and in various other countries who have united themselves to Rome.

4. The *Monothelites*, who held the orthodox doctrine as to the one Person and two Natures of Christ, but affirmed that the Divinity and Humanity had but one Will, the Divine. They were supported by the Emperor Heraclius, but were finally condemned by the Sixth General Council, the third of Constantinople, in A.D. 681. Most of the Monothelites were eventually absorbed by the Monophysites, but one community, the Maronites of the Lebanon, continued to exist as a separate body until a little before the year 1200 they were united with the Roman Church, though to this day they retain their own rites and customs.

From the above rapid review of the geographical distribution of Christianity in early times, we realize how different have been the fortunes of the Church in Europe and in the East; for whereas the Western Church succeeded in converting the barbarian invaders of the North, and has thus preserved its integrity from its foundation till the present day, the Churches of Asia and Africa were either annihilated or held in servitude by the Arabs and the Turks. Some of its branches after centuries of subordination have regained their independence or have once more come under the protection of Christian powers; but the day is far distant when Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, or Carthage rivalled Rome as centres of Christian activity.



## THE CATACOMBS.

The earliest traditions of Christian art are associated with the subterranean burial-places called catacombs. Different origins have been suggested for this curious name. One view is that it is derived from two Greek words *κατά* and *κύμβη* meaning 'at or near the hollow or valley,' and that it was first applied to a district near the Appian Way, probably owing to the configuration of the ground. Others derive it from the same Greek word *κατά* and the late Latin *accubitorium*, a tomb. It originally referred to the Christian cemeteries excavated on a certain section of the Appian Way; then it was restricted to one of these, that of St. Sebastian; and finally it came to be used as a general term for all similar places of burial wherever situated. The word used by the Early Christians themselves was not catacomb, but cemetery (*coemeterium*), the Latin version of the Greek *κοιμητήριον*. or sleeping-place.

The Roman catacombs were not beneath the city, but, like the pagan tombs, beyond it, along the great highways running from the capital to various parts of Italy; for Roman law forbade interment within the city walls. The *tufa*, forming the subsoil near Rome, is peculiarly adapted to the excavation of underground galleries, and this circumstance proved very favourable to the early Christians, who naturally followed the Jewish and Oriental custom of burial in subterranean chambers instead of burning their dead. The need for concealment, and the desire to protect the graves of the departed from profanation, were, therefore, not the reasons which led to the formation of underground cemeteries, although in times of persecution their dark recesses were naturally adopted as places of refuge.

It was not until the second half of the first century that the Christians adopted the system of collective burial on a large scale. They had previously either shared the Jewish catacombs already existing near the capital, or had been buried in small *hypogea* or crypts united by short passages. But when once the practice had begun it spread with great rapidity, and no less than fifty catacombs are now known to exist, the earliest of which dates from the period named. The first large cemeteries were probably extensions of the tombs of wealthy Christian families, such as that of the Flavii, which had a legal title to certain plots of land for sepulchral purposes. These families, which lent their houses



for the services of the Church, in like manner opened their places of burial to other members of the congregation, and from these the greater catacombs were developed. At first all cemeteries were thus held by private tenure; but by the time of the persecutions, the Church, as represented by her bishops, had entered into collective possession, and was recognized as owner by the imperial authorities. Whether her rights were secured through a legal fiction by which Christian communities registered themselves as burial societies after



FIG. 2.—*Loculi* in the Catacombs (after Perret).

the fashion of similar pagan institutions, or whether they were enjoyed simply by toleration, is a point upon which differences of opinion exist. Every burial site included a certain superficial space (*area*) often enclosed by a hedge or wall and planted with cypresses, in which were built small *cellae* or memorial chapels, and sarcophagi were placed. Here too the dead were from quite an early period interred in graves dug from the surface of the ground, as many as ten bodies being sometimes laid one above the other but each separated



from the next by a slab of stone. Surface interment was practised concurrently with catacomb burial, and by the fifth century had quite superseded it.

The catacombs were systems of corridors and small chambers partially lighted by shafts (*luminaria*) which opened on the surface of the soil, and were sometimes cut in several tiers or storeys, one below the other. As they were frequently excavated in rising ground, the entrances were often in the



FIG. 3.—A chamber in the Roman Catacombs (after De Rossi).

sides of the hills and were approached through a kind of antechamber or vestibule. Except in the neighbourhood of the shafts, or near the entrances, artificial light was always necessary, and this was provided by lamps similar in general character to those seen in the collection (Wall-Cases 1-3 and 12-13; figs. 39 and 52). Along the sides of the vaulted corridors, which were from two to four feet wide and little more than the height of a man, were cut horizontal rectangular



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of his death and the relationship borne to him by the persons who caused the inscription to be set up. The age is often given with great precision in years months and days, though after the third century there is often a greater vagueness, and we meet with such statements as 'who lived about twenty-five years'; the simplest early Christian symbols often accompany the inscriptions (fig. 4), but sometimes symbolical scriptural scenes such as the Raising of Lazarus occur. It may be noted here that the custom of dating by the year of Our Lord did not exist at the earliest period of Christianity; it first arose in the sixth century, but examples are rare before the eighth. Tombs were generally dated by mention of the consuls' names, which are found down to the abolition of the consulate in the time of Justinian; but, after the peace of the Church, the names of popes are occasionally given. Other means of dating were by eras, such as that of the foundation of Rome, or that of Diocletian, beginning A. D. 284; or again, at a later period, by *indictions*, which were periods of fifteen years at the end of which taxation was revised. In very early times Christians had three names, like the ancient Romans, but this custom was soon dropped, and by the end of the fourth century only one name was usual. About the same time eulogistic epithets and phrases directly indicating the belief of the deceased were introduced, and details were added with regard to his station in life. With the fourth century, too, mistakes in orthography became common, and we perceive the first signs of the transition between the old Latin, and mediaeval and modern Italian. The word most generally used for burial by the early Christians was *depositio*, and the familiar formula *hic jacet* begins with the fifth century. Common formulae were very frequently abbreviated, IN P or I. P. standing for *in pace*, and S. T. T. L. for *sit tibi terra levis*, 'may the earth rest lightly upon thee!' Many tombs in the catacombs had no name inscribed upon them, but were simply identified by small objects impressed in the mortar which fixed the slabs of the *loculi* at the time of the interment (see below, p. 61). The finest inscriptions of the catacombs are those made by order of Pope Damasus at the close of the fourth century to mark the tombs of the martyrs; they are generally metrical panegyrics engraved on marble slabs in very beautiful characters.

Nearly all of the catacombs were decorated with frescoes, for which the stucco walls and roofs of the chambers afforded



an ample field. Their style, which is thought to have been influenced in the first instance from Alexandria, is that of contemporary pagan Rome adapted to new conditions and modified in accordance with Christian ideas. It participated in the gradual decay of Roman Art; and although in the second century, when the finest work was done, designs were produced worthy to be compared with the graceful frescoes of Pompeii, after this period the work rapidly degenerates, and in the fourth century is often careless and unattractive.

When the conversion of the Emperor Constantine the Great had made Christianity the official religion of the cosmopolitan Roman Empire, the practice of burying in catacombs began

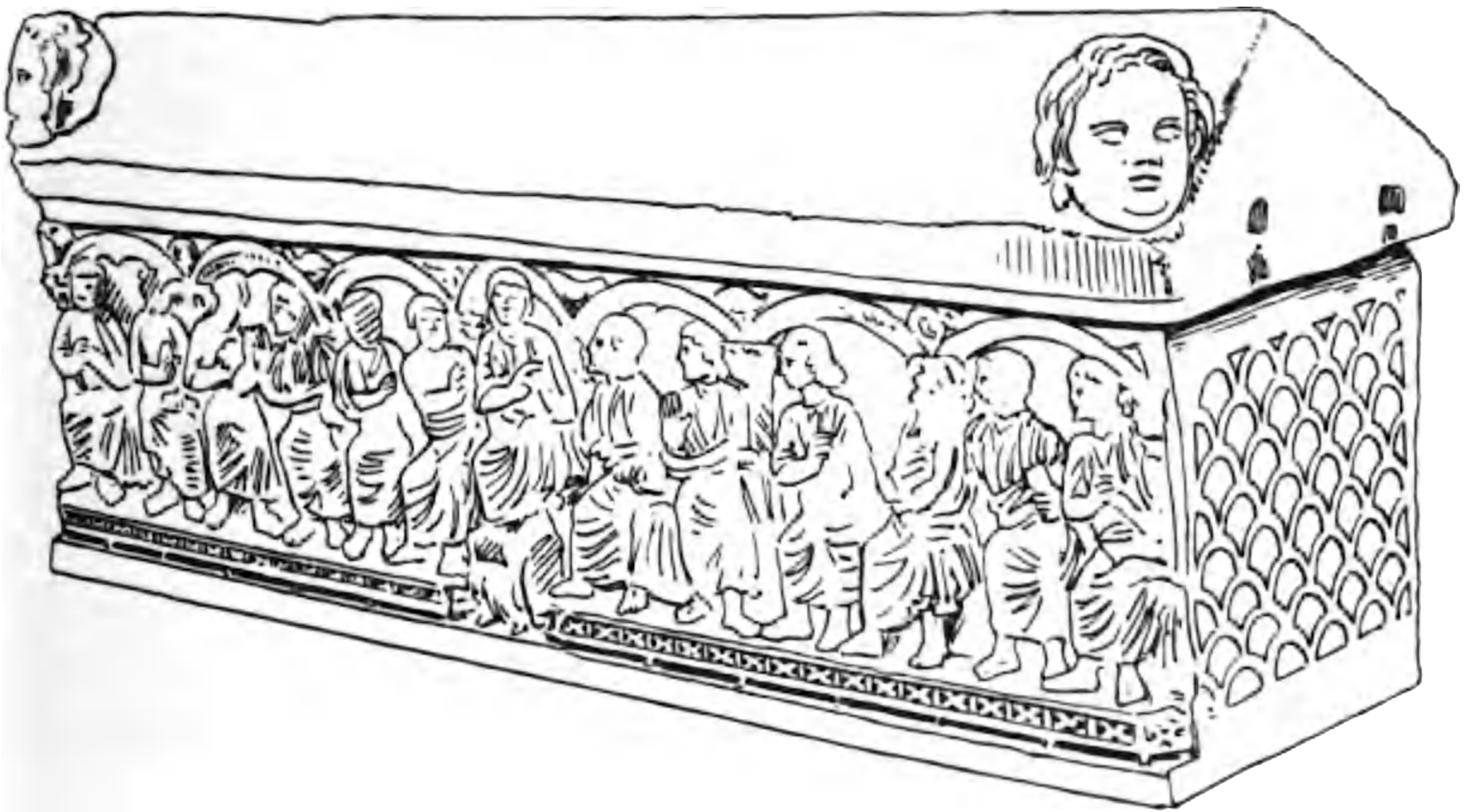


FIG. 5.—Stone sarcophagus from France (*after Le Blant*).

to decline, and interments now generally took place in superficial cemeteries, where large churches were now built. It was at this time that sculptured stone sarcophagi (figs. 5 and 6) were produced in large numbers, for wealthy Christians had become numerous, and distinctively Christian subjects could be openly executed in sculptors' workshops without the risk of interference. The multiplication of these sarcophagi, which have been found not only in Italy but also in France, Spain, and other countries, was of great importance to the development of Christian Art down to the time of the barbarian invasions. Inscribed tombstones like those seen at the bottom of Wall-Cases 4-9, which have been found in large numbers in



provincial cemeteries, especially on the Rhine, in France, Spain, and N. Africa also became common in this period. The earlier inscriptions are simple in character and resemble those of the catacombs, but the formulæ used vary with different localities; the majority date from the fourth to the seventh century, but in Spain examples in this style are known as late as the close of the eighth. In spite of the change which Constantine's conversion made in the position of Christianity, catacomb burial still remained fairly general until about A.D. 350, and did not fall into disuse until the first quarter of the fifth century. At that time the incursions of the Goths and Vandals began to make the outside country unsafe, and during the siege of Rome by the Gothic king Alaric (A.D. 410) the first



FIG. 6.—Front of a stone sarcophagus from France (after *Le Blant*).

cemetery within the walls was laid out near the baths of Diocletian. About a century and a half later intra-mural interment became the rule, for owing to the great depopulation of the city the enforcement of the old law was no longer necessary. Up to the time of the Lombard invasions the bodies of the martyrs mostly remained in the catacombs, and their tombs were the objects of frequent pilgrimages, especially in the seventh century; but in the eighth and ninth centuries their remains were removed for security to the churches within the city. During the Middle Ages the knowledge of the catacombs was gradually lost, and by the fifteenth century that beneath the Church of Saint Sebastian was almost the only one still accessible to the



pilgrims who came to Rome from the various countries of Europe. So matters continued until the end of the sixteenth century, when the accidental falling in of a vault in a vineyard, by laying bare the frescoes with which the walls were decorated, excited public curiosity in these long forgotten places of burial. Antonio Bosio (d. A. D. 1629), often called the Columbus of the Catacombs, made the first extensive and systematic explorations, and after his death each century has witnessed the publication of important works on underground Rome. The best of these is the 'Roma Sotterranea' of G. B. de Rossi (d. 1894) the founder of Early Christian Archaeology, who first established the study upon a scientific basis.

### EARLY SYMBOLISM.

The key-note of the earliest Christian art is to be found in its indirect and symbolical nature. It does not attempt to render individuality or to depict persons as they actually lived; it seeks beauty not for itself, but only for the ideas which it conveys; and it avoids the direct representation of historical events, caring little for exactitude of detail or wealth of incident. Instead of this it works upon minds specially prepared to comprehend its teaching, by symbols, types, and allegorical scenes. There are several reasons why this should have been so, and among the most important was the desire to avoid, at a time when persecution was often imminent, the representation of sad or terrible scenes of death and judgement which might discourage the faithful in days of trial. But another and more general cause of the prevalent use of symbolism lay in the intellectual tendencies of the age. At the time when Christianity first became a force, symbolism was, so to speak, in the air. Rome had extended her frontiers far into the East, and gradually saw many beliefs and superstitions of the new provinces established in the heart of the Empire. The old official religion had proved itself inadequate to the spiritual needs of a time of expansion, and there had arisen a state of intellectual and moral unrest which philosophy was equally unable to appease. The Romans had now awakened to a profounder sense of mystery in the universe, and sought a fresh light to penetrate its depths. The better minds among them were tired of the obvious and material side of life and repelled by its emptiness, until, in the general ruin of old beliefs, the sole hope of regeneration seemed to lie



in the mysticism of the newly-conquered East. As the Greek world under somewhat similar conditions borrowed much from Oriental thought and attempted to explain the problem of existence by the speculations which culminated in Gnosticism (see p. 29), so the Romans opened their gates wide to the cults and superstitions of Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, and Persia, countries which were rich in symbolical representations of the unknown. The Oriental love of allegory had become general in the West; and when Christianity, which itself came from the East, began to extend its borders at the expense of other creeds, it made its appeal with all the force of its superior merit through the very symbolism to which all minds were now accustomed. With the lapse of time, the conditions which had promoted the exclusive use of symbols were gradually modified, and a more realistic method became general. The moving events of the first years of Christianity were now further away; and with the growing numerical strength of the community, perhaps also with the diminution of primitive religious fervour, it became desirable to bring the history and the life of Christ more vividly before the eyes of the multitude. But the most efficient cause of the change was the conversion of Constantine, which brought Christianity out of its places of concealment into the upper air, and removed the old restrictions upon its art. With the growth of churches architecture (see p. 31) now rapidly improved, and the new art of decorating walls with glass-mosaic encouraged the production of larger scenes and groups of subjects arranged in historical sequence. Sculpture, too, was developed by the increasing use of the elaborately carved stone sarcophagi, to which allusion has already been made, and on which whole series of scriptural subjects could be represented.

Attention may now be drawn to the more prominent symbols and scenes adopted by Early Christian art.

*The Fish.* This type, perhaps first introduced from Alexandria, was among the earliest symbols of the Saviour, for the Greek name *Ἰχθύς* gave rise to an acrostic which was known as early as the second century, the five component letters standing for the initials of the five words *Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, Θεοῦ Υἱός. Σωτήρ, Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour.* As the dolphin is frequently used with this meaning, it has been suggested that the fish was first adopted on account of the old classical traditions of the dolphin as the friend of man and the rescuer of shipwrecked mariners, but the



earliest representations show us another kind of fish more like that seen in figs. 7 and 9. In rarer and later examples fish stand for the faithful, and the fisherman for Christ. The symbolic fish is found upon early Celtic and Teutonic monuments in Britain and France.

*The Ship* (fig. 8) is the symbol of the Church in which the faithful are borne safely over the sea of life to the haven of

L. 0.45 in.



FIG. 7.—Engraved gem : fish, crook, and palm-branch. (No. 35.)

L. 0.36 in.



FIG. 8.—Engraved gem : a ship. (No. 40.)

L. 0.56 in.



FIG. 9.—Engraved gem : anchor, fish, and dove. (No. 3.)

L. 0.7 in.



FIG. 10.—Engraved gem : anchor, doves, palm-branch, and fishes. (No. 39.)

L. 0.56 in.



FIG. 11.—Engraved gem : the Good Shepherd. (No. 2.)

eternity (fig. 4); sometimes rowers and steersman are visible, but at others only the oars are seen. Occasionally it is accompanied by other symbols such as the dolphin or the sacred monogram.

*The Anchor* (figs. 9 and 10) symbolizes hope, and sometimes rests upon a fish, to indicate that the Christian's hope is based on Christ.

*The Good Shepherd* (fig. 11). The figure of a shepherd carrying a lamb over his shoulders and a crook in his hand



was of obvious application to Christianity. It recalled the passages in the Gospels (John x. 1-27; Matt. xv. 24; Luke xv. 4-5; John xxi. 15-17), and was perhaps also considered to symbolize Christ as the leader of souls in their passage to the other world. Some have conjectured that the motive of the Good Shepherd was borrowed from the common pagan type of Hermes (Mercury) carrying a ram, but this view has not found universal acceptance. The Good Shepherd usually holds a staff or crook (*pedum*) in his hand, and this is sometimes used as a symbol by itself, as also are the lambs representing his flock, one or two of which are usually seen at his feet. In the fourth century first occur representations of the *Agnus Dei* or lamb as symbol of the Redeemer, while on the Roman mosaics sheep are often used to represent the disciples.


 $\frac{1}{1}$ 

FIG. 12.—Engraved gem: dove on fish, with olive-branch and sacred monogram. (No. 6.)

*The Dove* usually stands for the soul of the departed, and often bears in its beak the olive branch, itself the symbol of peace, in allusion to the history of the ark (fig. 12).

*The Palm* is the emblem of Victory, as in the pagan world.

The above are the oldest and most authentic symbols found on the monuments. Those which follow were of less universal acceptance and held to be rather later in date. Such of them as represent animals, either real or fabulous, had probably long been known to popular tradition in the East, where the attribution of moral and mystical qualities to beasts was very general. Not long after the beginning of our era, and probably at Alexandria, these traditions were embodied in a work called the *Physiologus* or book of Natural History, from which similar books called Bestiaries, so popular in the Middle Ages, were in later times derived. From the large number of these symbols, the following may be selected: the *serpent*, generally typifying Satan; the *peacock*, immortality, either from the fact that it sheds and renews its tail-feathers every year, or on account of an old tradition that its flesh was incorruptible; the fabulous *phoenix*, reborn from its own ashes, the Resurrection; and the *stag*, the soul thirsting for the water of baptism. Among other popular symbols, the *tree*, especially the palm-tree when used as an accessory, indicated that the scene represents Paradise; the *vine*, though often purely decorative, has occasionally a







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the fourth century, at the close of which it is often flanked by  $\alpha$  and  $\omega$  (*alpha* and *omega*), the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, in allusion to Rev. i. 8, 11; xxi. 6; xxii. 13. About the middle of that century, however, a new form was introduced by the addition of a horizontal line (cf. the ring, fig. 14), and this formed a transition to the so-called monogrammatic cross ( $\text{†}$ ) which first became common after A. D. 355, and continues through part of the following century (cf. the lamp, fig. 15). The general use of the simple cross upon monuments is later than that of the various forms of the sacred monogram. In early times it is represented in a veiled manner; for instance it is held by some to be suggested by the cross-bar of the anchor, or by the yard of the

L. 10.9 in.



FIG. 15.—Bronze lamp with sacred monogram. (No. 501.)

ship; and on an early sarcophagus in the Vatican the *Chi-Rho*, representing Christ, is supported by a cross; but its open use as an independent symbol did not become common until the fifth century. These facts should be borne in mind when Roman objects ornamented with crosses found in this country are claimed as Christian, for the Roman occupation of the remote island of Britain had ceased before the cross as a sign of Christianity was generally adopted even in the central parts of the Empire. The Swastika ( $\text{卐}$ ), a very ancient symbol common to Early Greek and Buddhist art, and found upon prehistoric objects in Europe, occurs in the Roman catacombs, as well as on a few Early Celtic pillar-stones in Scotland and Ireland, but was never very widely adopted.



The use of the old Egyptian hieroglyph *ankh* (☩) to represent the cross was confined to the Copts of Egypt. The sacred monogram did not entirely die out on the introduction of the cross, and it is found, for example, on rude stone monuments in Scotland and Wales (see above, p. 4), on the seventh century sarcophagi from Ravenna, and on Byzantine coins and larger monuments of even later date. The representation of the four Evangelists by means of a winged man, a winged lion, a winged ox, and an eagle, is based on the vision of Rev. iv. 6, read in connexion with that of the first chapter of Ezekiel. It is found upon monuments which are claimed for the fourth century, but does not become general until the fifth and sixth. The application of the symbols to the particular Evangelists was not at first as uniform as it afterwards became. The last individual symbol to which allusion can here be made is that of a male or female figure standing full-face with both arms extended and the palms of the hands raised. This type of figure is known as the *orans*, a Latin word meaning 'one who prays'; and this attitude of prayer, which may be remarked upon several objects in the collection (e.g. fig. 54), is one of the earliest adopted by the Church. The *orans* generally represents the soul of the departed, but is thought to have occasionally symbolized the Church itself.

*Symbolical Scenes.* In addition to individual objects used as symbols, the Early Christians frequently employed scenes from the Old and New Testaments, and sometimes even from pagan mythology, for a like purpose. Of the latter we may specially mention Cupid and Psyche, typifying the purification of the Soul; and Orpheus charming the wild beasts, used as a type of Christ. The Old Testament being prophetic of the New, scenes from the one were treated as complementary to those of the other. Thus Noah in the Ark, Daniel in the lions' den, Isaac laid upon the Altar, Jonah miraculously preserved from death, the Three Children of Babylon in the fiery furnace, and Moses striking the rock, all symbolizing deliverance and redemption by the power of God, are often associated with the raising of Lazarus, the multiplication of the loaves, and the Eucharistic feast. These were among the earliest of the scenes depicted by Christian artists, and were followed in the third century by others of a like nature, among which may be mentioned Moses receiving the tables of the Law, the Ascension of Elijah, Susannah between the Elders, and the miracles of Christ, notably the marriage at



Cana, and the healing of the Paralytic and the Blind Man. Throughout the early years of Christianity it was the object of the Church to strengthen and encourage the community in the face of persecution or discouragement, and this was perhaps one of the reasons why subjects calculated to inspire melancholy or terror were carefully avoided; thus, pictures of the Last Judgement and the Crucifixion were not placed before the eyes of the faithful until the Church was no longer in the position of a struggling and a persecuted sect. As we have already noticed, the conversion of the Roman Empire witnessed a great expansion of the range of subjects. A greater wealth of circumstantial detail was introduced, and representations of the actual history of Our Lord became general. We now see the Nativity, the Presentation in the Temple, the Baptism, the earlier scenes of the Passion, and episodes from the history of the Apostles; while to the Old Testament cycle are added Daniel destroying the Dragon of Bel (see plate VIII), the Vision of Ezekiel, and the history of Tobit. It was in this period that Christian art began to be generally influenced by the Apocryphal Gospels, books inspired by the fancy of the Christian East, and supplementing the canonical accounts of the history of Our Lord and of the Virgin by a number of new events and accessory details very welcome to the artist in search of variety. Not till the second half of the fourth century were martyrdoms represented, and not till the succeeding century does the Crucifixion appear in a realistic form; of the last subject the ivory carving in the British Museum (plate II) is one of the very earliest examples. Among liturgical scenes, baptism is directly represented in the catacombs, though the Baptism of Our Lord is only met with after the time of Constantine; marriage is represented upon gilded glasses; and some of the frescoes depicting feasts are held to be symbolic of the Eucharist. It has already been remarked that with the erection of churches and the employment of mural mosaic, great cycles of biblical scenes could be represented, and a larger scope was given for skill in grouping and composition. In the section (p. 31) dealing with Early Christian architecture, it will be shown in what parts of the churches mosaic decorations was applied.

#### **EARLY REPRESENTATIONS OF SACRED PERSONS.**

It will have been gathered from the nature of some of the scenes already enumerated, that representations of Our



Lord must have been familiar to the Early Christians; but in the earliest examples there is no attempt at portraiture. The Saviour is regarded from an ideal point of view, not as the Man of Sorrows, but as an almost boyish figure usually with long hair, the type of divine and unaging youth. This ideal conception, which perhaps originated in the Greek



FIG. 16.—Interior of pottery bowl of the fourth century (No. 916), with portrait of Our Lord and inscription relating to Constantine the Great. (See also fig. 35.)

provinces of the Empire, predominated on the early sarcophagi and gilded glasses (fig. 5 and plate VII). It was gradually superseded by a bearded type first introduced about the beginning of the fourth century, but was revived in the early Middle Ages being found, for example, in Carlovingian imitations of Early Christian models and even in Byzantine



work such as the embroidered dalmatic now in the treasury of St. Peter's at Rome. Between the fourth and the seventh centuries the two manners of representing Our Lord existed side by side, and are sometimes actually associated on the same monument, as for instance, on certain sarcophagi, and in mosaics at Ravenna. It was probably in the time of Constantine that the transition to the bearded type began; and the collection possesses perhaps the earliest example of this change in the remarkable pottery bowl (fig. 16) containing an inscription relating to that Emperor and his wife Fausta, which cannot be later than the year 327. It has been suggested that this type was disseminated from Palestine after the zeal of Constantine in building churches on the sites of the holy places had increased the number of pilgrims and quickened the sentiment of veneration for the birthplace of Christ. Through the agency of these pilgrims and of the active Syrian commerce it would naturally be transmitted to all parts of the Empire and would soon take its place by the side of the more ideal representation with which Early Christian art was already familiar. It may be regarded as an embodiment of the Eastern idea of manly beauty, but, like the Veronica portrait and that said to have been sent by Our Lord to Abgarus of Edessa, it doubtless claimed to reproduce with fidelity the traditional appearance of the Saviour. The Virgin Mary is generally represented in the catacombs and on the gilded glasses as an *orans*, but, as in the case of Our Lord, there is no attempt at portraiture. The Annunciation scene is thought to occur in a third-century fresco in the Catacomb of St. Priscilla, and in the same catacomb is a group held by some to represent the Virgin and Child with the prophet Isaiah; while the Adoration of the Magi also belongs to the art of the catacombs. But though this and the Annunciation are common on the sarcophagi, the wide popularity of portraits of the Virgin did not begin until after the Council of Ephesus in A. D. 431 at which her title as Mother of God was established against the Nestorians. It may be added that the Almighty was usually represented in Early Christian art by a hand issuing from a cloud (the so-called *Dextera Dei* or *Dextera Domini*); and this is the manner in which the divine intervention is indicated in such scenes as the Sacrifice of Isaac, the giving of the tables of the law, and the Baptism of Our Lord (plate III). God appears in human form in a few scenes from the Old Testament, for instance when receiving the offerings of Cain and Abel, and



giving to Adam and Eve the ears of corn and the lamb which denote the future toil of their fallen state. The Third Person of the Trinity is usually seen in the form of a dove (plate III), while the Trinity itself is indicated by the symbol of a triangle (see p. 19) or by the three angels who appeared to Abraham (Gen. xviii).

Of Saints, the most frequently represented in early times were the Apostles Peter and Paul, usually found in conjunction. But in their case we find that portraits evidently fixed by tradition were in existence even before the fourth century; St. Peter almost always having thick hair and a short beard, St. Paul a long beard and bald head. It may be added as a point of interest that the earliest attribute of St. Peter is a scroll or a staff with a cross at the end, the key or keys not appearing until the fifth century; while that of St. Paul is also a scroll, the sword not being assigned him until the tenth. The rest of the Apostles were not characterized by special traits until the sixth century. Among the Saints most frequently represented in the fourth and fifth centuries are St. Agnes and St. Lawrence, who are often found upon the gilded glasses.

### COSTUME.

It will be convenient in the present place to say a word on the *costume* of sacred persons in Christian art. Our Lord and the Apostles and Saints are almost always clothed in an ungirded, long-sleeved tunic reaching to the feet, and in a long mantle called a *pallium*, one end of which was thrown forward over the left shoulder so as to reach to the ankle, while the rest was drawn round the back, under the right shoulder and across the body, the second end being draped over the left fore-arm (plate II). The right arm was thus left free, but the left was encumbered, and the dress was therefore unsuited for active exertion. This mantle was a Greek garment, once characteristic of philosophers, and was contrasted with the national Roman toga, which was draped in a different way. In process of time it was superseded by other outer garments of a more practical kind such as the *paenula* or *planeta*, a poncho with a hole in the middle for the head, or the *lacerna*, a kind of cloak fastened by a brooch over the breast; but it survived as a ceremonial or official garb in the form of a narrow folded band, which, according to a very plausible theory, in time



became the Archbishop's pallium of the Roman Catholic Church. In plate 2, Our Lord is seen wearing the tunic and pallium as above described, with the sandals which usually accompany this costume. The tunic and pallium likewise form the costume of Angels, who appear as beautiful youths, and are at first usually represented as wingless, though with the lapse of time the addition of wings became the rule. The small nude winged figures which are occasionally found on objects used by Christians are simply the *genii* of Roman art, and used with a decorative purpose; the child-angel is the invention of comparatively modern art. Another outer garment is a long mantle fastened with a brooch upon the right shoulder so as to leave both arms free though the left was concealed. This mantle, the usual garb of military and official persons, is called the *chlamys*, and may be seen on plates II, XI and XII.

Persons of inferior rank wore shorter girded tunics which, in the case of orientals, were often drawn up at the waist so as to form a deep hanging fold concealing the girdle. Orientals also wore, in addition to a short *chlamys*, tightly fitting breeches reaching to the ankles, and the so-called Phrygian cap. Examples of this are seen in the figures of Daniel, and of the soldier decapitating St. Menas, both on plate IV. In the earliest representations of the Adoration, the Magi wear this costume; they do not appear as Kings until mediæval times. Jews, in Early Christian art, are sometimes depicted in round caps with flat tops (plate II). Another garment to which attention may be drawn is the *dalmatica*, a long outer tunic of wool or linen with vertical stripes (*clavi*), usually purple, down the front, and other ornamental patches (*segmenta, calliculae*), near the lower border and on the shoulders; it was sometimes worn out of doors without a mantle, and the popularity of this custom probably encouraged the growth of elaborate embroidered ornamentation. Female costume consisted of a long tunic reaching to the ankles, and a mantle similar to the pallium, called a *palla*, the end of which, when a veil was not used, was often drawn over the head like a hood, instead of passing under the right arm.

A description of these garments has more than a passing interest, for out of them developed ecclesiastical vestments, some of which have been in continuous use from Early Christian times. Thus, the long undertunic has become the *alb*, the *planeta* the chasuble, and the *lacerna* the cope.



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East, a sarcophagus at Berlin, and the Constantine Bowl in the present collection (fig. 16), prove that it was known at the beginning of the fourth and possibly even in the third century; in this matter as in many others in the sphere of Early Christian art, the initiative would seem to have come from the East. The aureole or 'glory' enveloping the whole body, commonly of a pointed-oval shape, and known in the early Middle Ages as the *mandorla* or *vesica piscis* from its supposed resemblance to an almond or to a fish-bladder, is first seen on later mosaics.

### SYNCRETISM.

It has already been remarked that the Early Christians necessarily inherited many pagan designs and even symbols, using the former in a purely decorative manner, and adapting the latter to their own ideas. They employed and even manufactured objects and utensils for daily use on which mythological scenes were represented, on the understanding that such scenes were to be regarded as ornamental accessories and not objects of worship. But about the close of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century, we find evidence of a somewhat lax feeling with regard to the use of pagan motives, often called Syncretism, from the blending of Christian and pagan ideas which it tolerated; and this doubtless became more prevalent on the conversion of numerous pagan families after Christianity had become the religion of the State. One of the most frequently cited instances of this is the silver marriage casket of Projecta in the Museum Collection (plate v, Wall-Cases 7-8), the lid of which is covered with pagan mythological scenes, and is at the same time engraved with an inscription beginning with the sacred monogram and ending with the name of Christ. The purely secular character of many subjects on the gilded glasses, e.g. a gladiator (plate VIII), cock-fighting, and boxers with their trainers, shows that Christians did not adopt a rigidly exclusive attitude with regard to pagan usages. The presence of glasses, lamps, &c., with Jewish subjects, such as the seven-branched candlestick, in collections of Christian antiquities may perhaps be explained in much the same manner as that of pagan designs. Some of these things may have been derived from the Jewish catacombs, but there seems reason to think that the seven-branched candlestick at any rate was sometimes used by Christians. It has been found in Christian burial-places, and in one case in conjunction with the figure of Our Lord.



## GNOSTICISM.

This recrudescence of the decaying Roman mythology had less influence on the course of contemporary Christian thought than the intrusion of the various Gnostic beliefs a couple of centuries earlier; a few words must therefore be said on the subject of Gnosticism, though the Museum Collection of Gnostic Gems and Amulets is in Table-case N of the neighbouring Fourth Egyptian Room in the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities. Gnostic, an adjective derived from the Greek substantive *gnosis* (knowledge), signified one who assumed a superior knowledge, by which the scheme of the universe and the destiny of man might be revealed. It has been said of the Gnostics that they considered the revelation as preached by the Church a bare minimum of truth, just sufficient for an ordinary intelligence, but too rudimentary for those who claimed to know the hidden mysteries of existence. They held that salvation was to be won not so much by faith or by works as by mystic knowledge (*gnosis*), and if their contention had prevailed, Christianity would have lost its moral force and become little more than a system of cosmogony. Gnosticism was older than Christianity, and was a product of the taste for abstract speculation, common alike to the Greek and Oriental genius. After the Asiatic campaigns of Alexander the Great, the Greek world became better acquainted with the principal religions of the East, and thoughtful men began to hope that by a union of Greek philosophy, especially Platonism, with the best elements of Oriental beliefs, the problem of man's place in the universe might be solved. The intellectual movements inaugurated by this hope were based on a sincere desire to widen and deepen the foundations of religion, and were already in full activity in Egypt and Syria when the advent of Christianity opened a new field to pagan seekers after truth. To the manifold elements of the Gnostic system originating in Egypt, Syria, Judaea, Mesopotamia, and Persia were now added others derived from the new faith, and in proportion as these assumed a predominant place, the Gnostics were assimilated to the Christian community. This approximation was at some times far closer than others, for they were divided into various sects following the doctrines of different teachers; and while some of these lay beyond the pale of the Church, others incorporated into their scheme of the universe so many Christian beliefs that they actually



formed sects within the Christian organization. It is impossible in this place to do more than indicate some of the more prominent theories of Gnosticism, but about the beginning of the Christian era most of them were ultimately based on a dualism similar in some respects to that of the ancient Persian religion. On the one hand there was a Supreme Being or infinite spiritual existence; on the other, matter, the source of all evil. From the Supreme Being issued a number of emanations called *aeons*, conceived as divine qualities—Reason, Truth, Power, and the like—which together constituted a World of Light and Divine Fullness known as the *Pleroma*. One of these aeons fell under the influence of matter, and there thus arose a series of intermediate beings, and finally the human race, in which the higher and lower elements of spirit and matter are blended. All men are thus in need of redemption from the grosser element, and their hope of liberation is greater or less in proportion as the spiritual element predominates over the material. It is easy to see how the Christian doctrine of the redemption of the world would appeal to men holding a theory of this kind, and to imagine how those Gnostics who were most in sympathy with Christianity might bring their views into accord with Christian belief.

While the inner or esoteric doctrines of Gnosticism were due to deep philosophic and religious aspirations, it also had a more popular aspect which betrays the magical superstitions of earlier times. The personifications and ideas, which to the adept needed no visible form, were represented for the benefit of less subtle minds by symbolic figures of a fantastic description, and were accompanied by mystical words and formulae to which, especially when engraved on particular kinds of stone, a magical power was ascribed. To produce their full effect these words of power had to be pronounced by men ceremonially pure, dressed in a certain manner, and speaking in a certain tone of voice; while for the invocation of the greatest names particular ceremonies were necessary. Most of these names were formed out of the initial letters of a number of magical words, and have no intrinsic meaning. The most widely known is Abraxas or Abrasax, a manifestation of the Supreme Deity, who is constantly seen upon Gnostic gems and amulets. He is usually represented with a cock's head, emblematic of the sun, a human body, two serpents instead of legs, and with a shield and whip in his hands (fig. 17). In the field are frequently engraved the names Iao and Abraxas in Greek



characters. The former word has been identified with the great name of the Hebrew God Jah, and is often accompanied on Gnostic gems by two other Hebrew words, *Adonai* and *Sabaoth* (Lord of Hosts), which also denote the Supreme Deity. The origin of the word Abraxas is obscure, but it is generally explained by the fact that the Greek letters of which it is composed are also numerals, which, added together, make 365—the number of heavens of which Abraxas was lord; the first part of it is probably related to another magical word, *Abracadabra*, which was very popular in the declining years of the Roman Empire and in the Middle Ages in Western Europe. Another popular Gnostic symbol was the serpent *Khnoubis*, derived from Egyptian mythology, and representing the creative principle personified by the Egyptians under the name of *Khnemu*; while among the names which were considered to have magical power, those of archangels and angels were conspicuous, especially those of Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Salathiel, and Raphael.

Gnosticism, which chiefly flourished in Egypt, reached its height in the third century, and was sinking into insignificance in the fourth, partly owing to the advance of Christian theology. But in a degenerate form it lingered on into the Middle Ages, and some of the nondescript objects in Wall-cases 24-5 are supposed to illustrate the latest survivals of the cruder Gnostic beliefs.

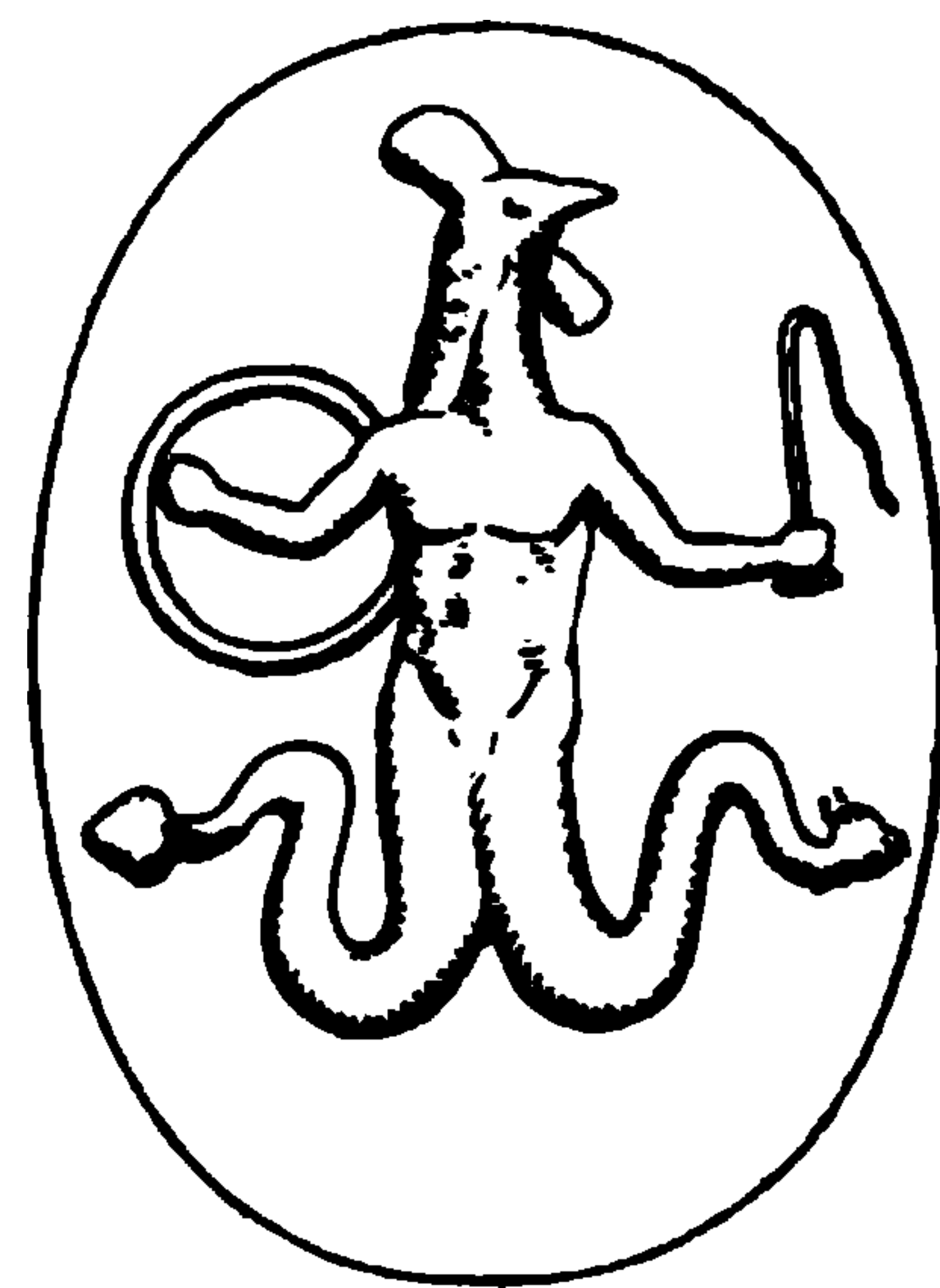


FIG. 17.—Abraxas, from a Gnostic gem.

### THE EARLIEST CHURCHES.

The structure and arrangement of the earliest Christian Churches is a matter of so much importance to the general study of Christian antiquities, that even in a guide chiefly devoted to the explanation of small objects the subject cannot be avoided.

It has already been remarked that the assemblies of the Christians were at first held in large rooms in the houses of the wealthier members of the Church, and that the chambers or small chapels in the catacombs, though certainly used for memorial services, can hardly have served for general meetings of the community. It has been argued by some authorities



that regular buildings entirely reserved for Christian services were built in Rome before the time of Constantine, but the theory is contested by others on the ground that such mention as we have of Christian meeting-places at this time refers to private dwellings or cemetery chapels and not to specially constructed churches. Be this as it may, the early type of Christian church, known as the *Basilica*, was not fixed until about the time of Constantine, after which it remained fairly constant for many centuries and even in the East was still found side by side with domed churches in the sixth century. The word *Basilica*, first used for a Christian church in the early fourth century, is derived from the Greek, and means 'the royal hall'; it was applied in contemporary Rome to any large covered hall, but more especially to the *basilica iudiciaria* or law-court, which was a development of the old open forum or market-place. But although the forensic basilica was the most conspicuous member of the class, it is now generally held that it was not the immediate prototype of the Christian building, for it did not regularly combine all the characteristics by which the earliest Christian churches are marked. Archaeologists still differ as to the origin of the Christian basilica, and the number of theories which have been put forward is too great for discussion in this place. It must suffice to say that a very popular hypothesis regards the basilica as a development of the central court (*atrium*) of the ordinary Roman dwelling house; while others seek its origin in the large halls attached to the houses of great nobles and officials, in the small catacomb chapels, or in an extension of the little apsed oratories, *cellae cimiteriales*, erected for commemorative services in the area of the cemeteries. It is thought by some that these *cellae*, which on one side had nothing but columns, were also used for regular services in early times, the clergy standing beneath them, and the people before them in the open air; and that after the peace of the Church a long nave with aisles, the idea of which was borrowed from secular buildings, was added for the convenience of the congregation. Yet another view seeks the origin of the basilica not in Italy at all, but in the Christian East.

The typical Christian basilica was a rectangular brick building, consisting of a high nave divided on each side by a row of columns from two low lateral aisles. Each of these was itself sometimes subdivided by an additional row of columns, the upper walls being pierced by rows of clerestory



windows. At one end of the building was an apse with raised floor (*bema* or *tribunal*); at the other was the main entrance leading into the nave, usually flanked by smaller doors through which access was obtained to the aisles. Sometimes the doors were approached through a colonnaded court (*atrium*) with an arched gateway. In the centre of this court stood a fountain (*cantharus*) for washing the hands, and possibly a tower in one corner; but the *atrium* was usually for want of space reduced to a narrow portico across the end of the church, called in the East a *narthex*.

The space within the apse, known as the *presbyterium*, was reserved for the clergy, who sat on stone benches (*subsellia*) following its contour, the bishop's chair (*cathedra*) being in the middle at the back, directly facing the table-shaped altar which stood in the open near the chord of the apse, and was covered by a permanent canopy (*ciborium*) supported on columns usually of marble (fig. 18). In the front of the altar were low marble screens (*cancelli*), with a central opening and sometimes with columns at intervals, railing off the apse from the nave; from the word *cancelli* our term chancel is derived. When there was a transept, as was often the case in large churches, it was separated from the nave by a massive arch, and the *cancelli* were brought forward to the line dividing the transept from aisles and nave. Where there was no transept, the increased demand for room for the clergy in some cases necessitated the extension of the *bema* beyond the apsidal arch, and often also the railing in of the ends of the aisles. In Eastern churches room was gained by adding at the ends of the aisles two small chambers on either side of the *presbyterium*, one of which, called the *prothesis*, was used for preparing the bread and wine for consecration; the other, called the *diakonikon*,

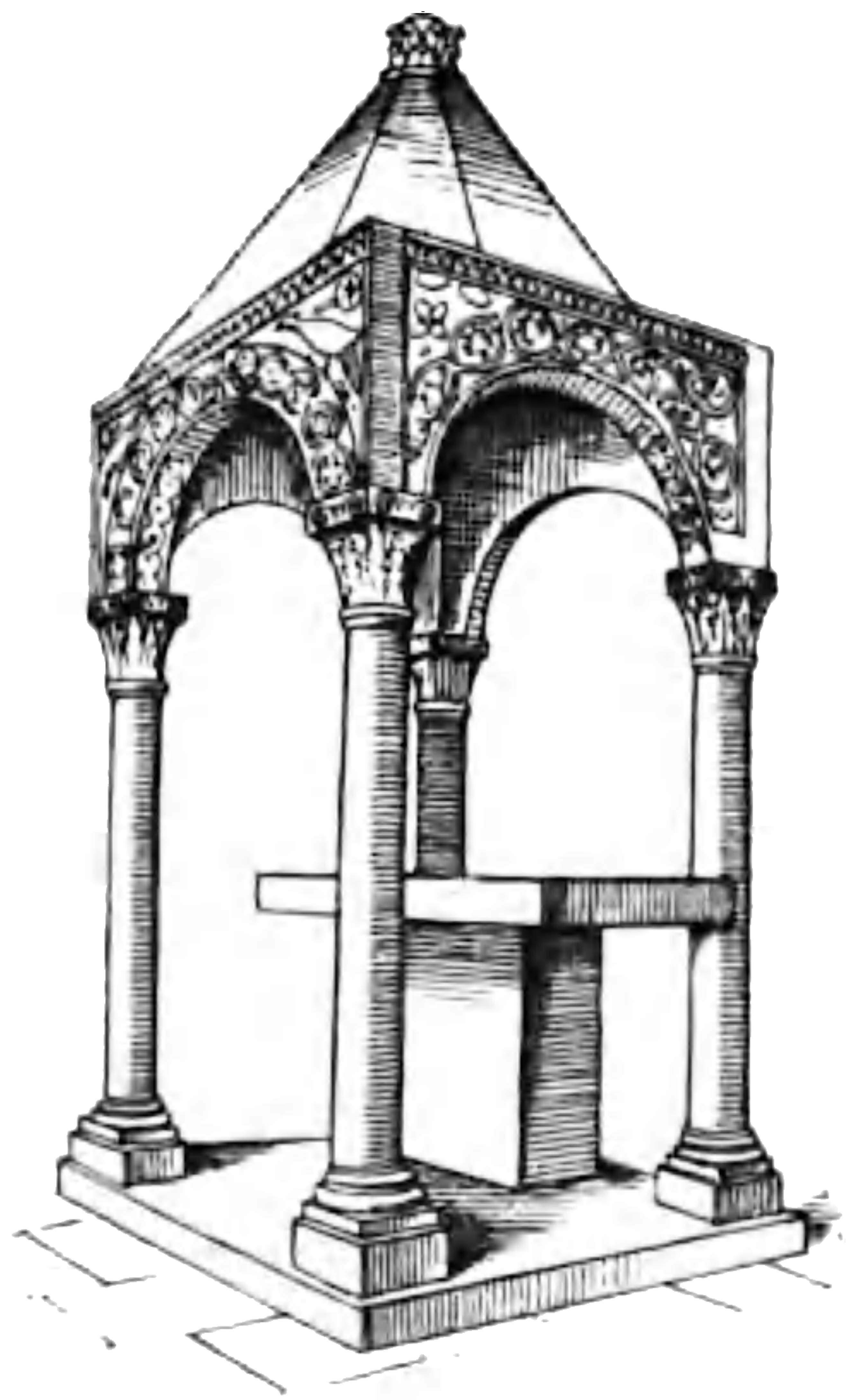


FIG. 18.—Altar with ciborium, North Italian, ninth century (after Rohault de Fleury).



served principally for a vestry (see below, p. 102). Doors between these rooms and the presbyterium were not always provided, the entrance to them being from the aisles, but if either of them had a second or lateral door, it was more frequently the *diakonikon*. At the end of the nave nearest the altar was a central space reserved for the choir, which was itself railed in by *cancelli*; and within the nave on one side of this screen, sometimes on both, was an *ambon* or *ambo*, a high stone pulpit used for reading the lections, as well as for sermons when these were no longer delivered from the apse. The congregation was accommodated in the aisles, the men and women on different sides, the latter overflowing into the back of the nave if occasion required; but where the aisles had an upper gallery or *triforium*, this was usually reserved for women. Catechumens were placed at the back of the nave and penitents in the *narthex* (see plan, fig. 19). The Roman basilicas were chiefly lighted by the clerestory windows, which were usually filled with pierced stone slabs: windows were also frequently placed in the apse and over the door at the opposite end of the building. The walls of the aisles were blind, but at Ravenna, and in Eastern churches of the basilican type, there were windows in the aisles also. The larger surfaces of the walls were covered with brilliant mosaics; the

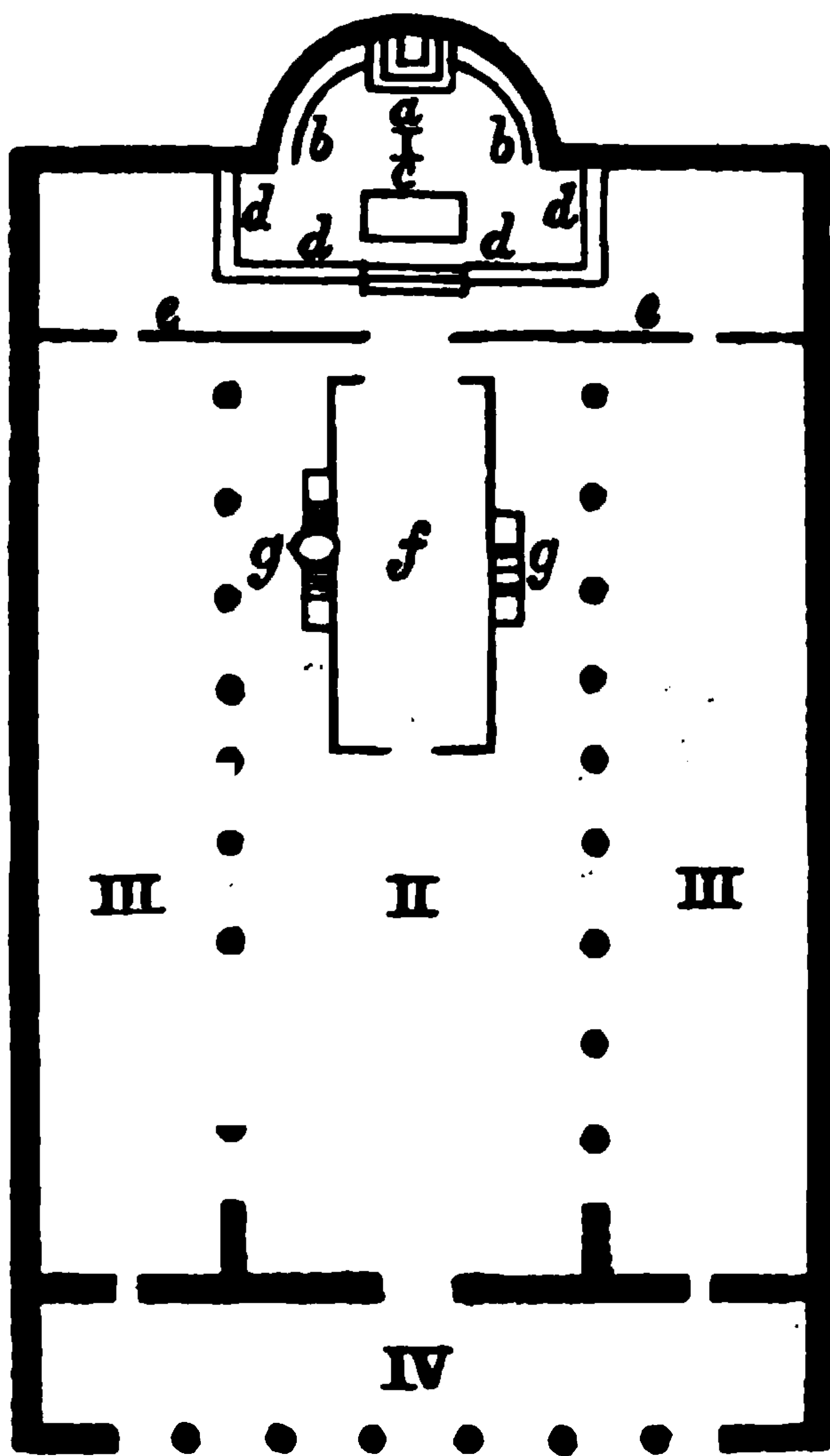


FIG. 19.—Plan of a basilica. I. Presbyterium. II. Nave. III. Aisles. IV. Narthex. a. Bishop's chair. bb. Seats for clergy. c. Altar. dd, ee. Cancelli f. Choir. gg. Ambons.

columns and *cancelli* were of marble, with which stone the walls of the aisles were also faced; and the floor was usually covered with marble slabs. The gable roof was hidden by a carved and gilded wooden ceiling placed just above the clerestory which, owing to the nature of its windows, admitted a soft diffused light admirably calculated to heighten the effect of the mosaics and gilding. It was upon the interior of the basilica that all the decoration was lavished; the exterior was of plain brickwork, and the





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the Christian East which in many respects differed from the Roman type. Those of Syria were especially remarkable, as, owing to the absence of timber and the exceptional abundance of suitable stone, they were constructed entirely of the latter material, and as far as the exterior is concerned were of far greater architectural merit than those of the West.

What is called the *central style* of architecture, the principal feature of which is a central dome, began its development concurrently with the basilican type. The dome, the origin of which is probably to be sought in Asia, occurs in buildings of the Early Roman Empire, such as the Pantheon and the

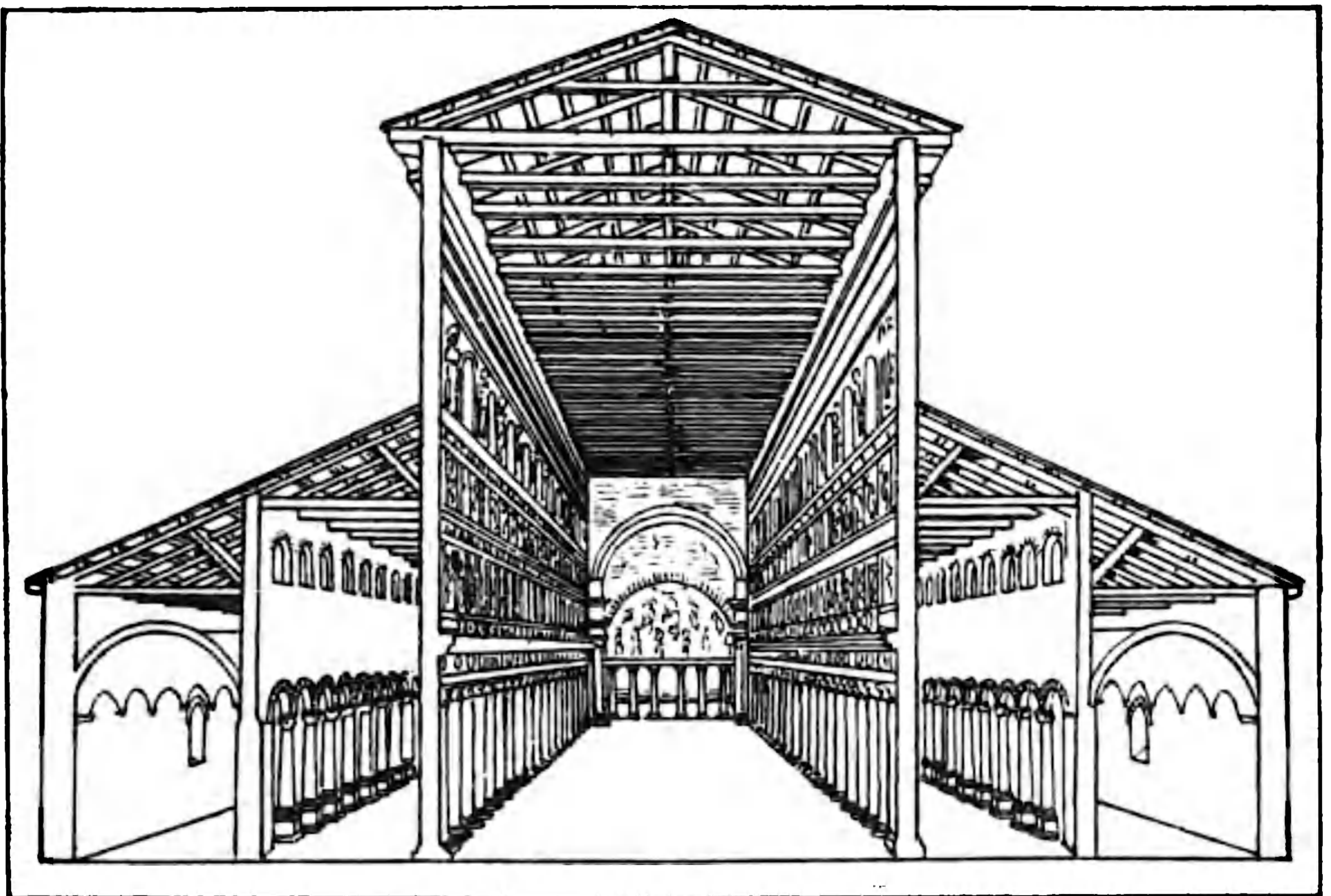


FIG. 21.—Interior of old St. Peter's, Rome.

baths of Caracalla. It was specially employed for baths and mausoleums, and the Christians first adopted it for similar purposes, that is for baptisteries and tombs: examples of such early domed tombs erected for the family of the Emperor Theodosius may be seen adjoining the aisle of the old basilica of St. Peter's (fig. 20). From the fourth to the sixth centuries many circular and polygonal-domed churches were erected, and in the time of Justinian the problem of combining a dome with a nave had already been solved. On the development of the central style under the Byzantine Empire a few brief remarks will be made below (p. 52).



It has been noted that the walls of the churches provided ample space for mosaics made with cubes of glass, which first came into general use in the fourth century, and, from the variety of their colours and their rich blue or gold backgrounds, produced a very splendid effect; the old Roman mosaic of marble and other stone was still sometimes retained for the floor, the glass being reserved exclusively for the walls. The extended use of mosaics and frescoes was very favourable to the development of historical scenes and cycles. The epistyles or long expanses above the columns of the nave (see fig. 21) were well adapted to the representation of the longer Bible stories from the Old or New Testament, the several episodes being often enclosed in separate compartments; while the apse and its arch were more commonly reserved for scenes derived from the Apocalypse, representing Our Lord in glory surrounded by saints and martyrs, the divine Lamb, and other figures suggesting the glories of the life to come. Many churches indeed resembled illustrated Bibles, and the decoration of their walls must have produced a deep impression on the minds of those who visited them. Sculpture, as represented by the sarcophagi, mosaics, frescoes and manuscripts, all reacted upon each other, and this mutual influence was especially strong in the case of the mosaics and the earliest illuminated books, which rivalled each other in the representation of historical events. Sumptuous manuscripts written with golden letters on purple parchment had long been known, but illuminated miniatures first appear about the middle of the fourth century, the substitution of the leaved book (*codex*) for the scroll (*volumen*) being very favourable to the illuminator's art; the continuous illustration of the Bible was further stimulated by the appointment of a regular order of lessons from the Old and New Testaments to be read in the churches. One of the most famous manuscripts now existing is an illustrated copy of Genesis, at Vienna, which perhaps goes back to the fourth century, while the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum possesses a few fragments of an illuminated Bible of very great antiquity, perhaps dating from the sixth. It is known as the Cotton Genesis, from the Cotton family, to which it once belonged; but it was unfortunately damaged by fire in the year 1731, when the greater number of the miniatures were ruined. These early illustrated manuscripts, some of the most remarkable of which came from Syria, were the precursors of the long series of Byzantine and mediaeval



illuminated books which were produced without intermission until printing came into general use.

## BYZANTINE ANTIQUITIES

### INTRODUCTORY

Few words employed in the history of art have been more abused than the term 'Byzantine.' It is frequently used in the disparaging sense made popular by famous men of letters like Voltaire and Gibbon, the latter of whom condemned the history of the Eastern Empire as 'a tedious and uniform tale of weakness and misery.' In art it still suggests an invariable monotony of style or a deliberate distortion of the laws of natural beauty in the interest of a gloomy monastic ideal. These notions are even now so widely disseminated, and involve so much exaggeration, that the attempt must be made to explain very briefly in what respect they are erroneous. The word 'Byzantine' is an adjective derived from Byzantium, the name of a Greek colony founded in the seventh century B. C. on the site afterwards occupied by Constantinople. As a term descriptive of the art of an Empire, it has thus too narrow a geographical significance; but although a paraphrase such as 'the art of the Christian East' is in some ways an improvement, the older term has been in use so long that it would be now difficult to replace.

Byzantine Art is essentially complex. It is a compromise between Oriental and Western influences, and its merit depends upon its success in maintaining an even balance between them. An art subjected to such limitations can never rank among the greater achievements of human genius, but at the same time it can attain a level sufficiently high to command respect. It is this relative excellence which may be fairly claimed for the work of the Later Empire.

The geographical position of that Empire between the civilizations of the East and West, made it certain that sooner or later it must fall under Oriental influences; and the most powerful of these—the Persian—was from the first in a position to make itself felt in the new capital. About a hundred years before Constantine removed the seat of government to the Bosphorus, a native Persian dynasty with purely Oriental interests had replaced the Parthian kings,



whose sympathies were largely Greek; and Iranian Art, quickly responsive to the change, had entered upon a new and more national phase. Other influences from Egypt and Syria were almost equally active, with the result that the Eastern Provinces of the Empire were overrun by an art which set splendour above simplicity, preferred flat surfaces and low reliefs to sculptures in the round, subordinated form to colour, and covered all available space with luxuriant conventional ornament; an art admirable in its decorative skill, but almost without idealism, and with no power to stir the deeper emotions of human nature.

The earliest art of Constantinople, which had to resist the first influx of Oriental fashions, was that of the contemporary Roman world modified by Christian ideas, and by the late Greek (Hellenistic) influences which were still especially strong in the great cities on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. This Hellenistic Art, though but a pale reflection of the greater Greek Art from which it descended, still preserved something of the old sense of grandeur and harmony; its interest still centred in the reproduction of the human form; and it was still able to produce sculpture in which dignity and simplicity were not altogether lacking. From the beginning, the artists of Constantinople endeavoured to continue the better traditions of the past, and to infuse the spirit of antiquity into the subjects introduced by Christian belief. The field which lay open to them was not unworthy of their labour, for everywhere the symbolism of the earliest Christian period was being abandoned in favour of a direct historical treatment; and the wide range of subjects which Christianity could now provide was sufficient to inspire alike the painter, the sculptor, and the worker in mosaic. But the Eastern Empire was unable to develop its art unhindered on the lines of classical antiquity. In all its great cities the Greek element was soon placed on the defensive, and in some of them had to yield its supremacy even before the time of the first Mahomedan invasions. But it was the peculiar merit of Constantinople that through centuries it clung fast to Greek traditions; and though it was unable to preserve them in their purity, it almost to the last prevented them being crushed out of existence. At the time when the power of the Empire was at its greatest, the equilibrium between East and West was not unsuccessfully preserved, and it is precisely this quality of successful compromise which is the most conspicuous characteristic of the



real Byzantine Art. From the very nature of the case it could not hope to rival Greek Art in dignity, or surpass that of Persia in perfection of decorative skill; but at its best it produced work that rises well above mediocrity, and in its architecture it may be said to have been truly great. It fell into mannerism and decay only under the stress of accumulated disasters which even a more original art could hardly have withstood; and it was not until every expedient had been exhausted that the creative spirit was altogether destroyed.

The history and art of the Eastern Empire stand in so close a relation to each other that even the most cursory description must be prefaced by a brief review of the main historical periods. For the sake of simplicity these may be reduced to three: the first occupying the five centuries from the Foundation of Constantinople to the suppression of iconoclasm (see below) in the year 842; the second beginning with the political and artistic revival at the close of the ninth century, and ending with the sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders in A. D. 1204; the third comprising the 200 years of decay preceding the final overthrow of the Empire by the Turks in the year 1453. It now becomes necessary to pass in rapid review the principal artistic and archaeological features of these three periods.

#### FIRST PERIOD.

The first of these periods includes the great reigns of Theodosius (A. D. 375–395) and Justinian (A. D. 527–565), and witnessed the political separation of the Eastern and Western halves of the old Roman Empire. But in spite of the independence of Byzantium after the year 395, Latin influence was by no means dead. The Latin language maintained its place by the side of the Greek, and was still used in Justinian's great codification of the laws; on the coins Greek inscriptions do not altogether displace the Latin till considerably later; while the new Empire is further held to have had no literature deserving the distinctive name Byzantine before the seventh century. The period is a time of development, in which the links connecting Constantinople with the traditions of the West were loosening but not yet finally severed. Sculpture had not yet degenerated, as it was soon to do, into a mere accessory of architecture; and in its minor branches, like ivory-carving, produced work of admirable quality, such as



the half of a diptych with a figure of the Archangel Michael in the Museum Collection (Mediaeval Room, Table-case F and Frontispiece). The large class of Consular Diptychs, which were given by new Consuls to friends and important officials as presents on accession to office, also belong to this time, but are for the most part feeble in execution. Of jewellery and silversmith's work we hear much from literary sources, and a considerable number of examples have been preserved in the treasures of Europe; the silver plate from Lampsacus and Cyprus (Cases 9, 10, plates VI and XII) is of this date; and among the rings and jewels are several smaller objects (Nos. 210, 264, &c.) which deserve especial notice. Contemporary writers dilate upon the splendid ornaments of the Byzantine churches, and the art of *cloisonné* enamelling was probably now introduced. Bronze was cast both on a great and small scale, and the Museum possesses numerous small objects of the period in this metal, among which may be mentioned the series of *exagia* (standard money-weights) and other weights, and some of the lamps in Cases 1-3. It was in the reign of Justinian that the culture of the silkworm was introduced, so that the Empire no longer wholly depended upon foreign countries for its raw material, one of the principal hindrances to the development of the silk industry being thus removed. The silk had hitherto been imported from the Far East either by land through Central Asia, or by sea, being brought first to Ceylon and thence to the Persian Gulf. Both routes were controlled by the Persians, with whom the relations of the Greek Empire were not always friendly; and the introduction of the silkworm, by preparing the way for the complete emancipation of the industry was an event of no little importance to Byzantine commerce.

The trade of the Empire had already assumed great proportions, and all the products of the East which entered Europe passed through its ports. By the same routes along which silk was imported came also spices, precious stones, pearls, ivory, and valuable wood; and there was an extensive trade in the Red Sea, in which not only the Arabian ports, but also those of the Ethiopian kingdom of Aksum (see p. 93) took an active part. This Red Sea route was naturally of the highest value to Egypt, just as the caravan route from Persia, with its great terminus at Antioch, contributed in no small degree to the prosperity of Syria.

The latter country was at this time extremely populous, as its ruined cities testify. Its capital was the seat of



a patriarch ranking next to the patriarch of Constantinople, and it was richly endowed with churches and monasteries. The sack of Antioch by the Persians in 540 A.D. and the Arab invasion of the succeeding century were destined to deal a fatal blow to this flourishing Greek civilization, but up to the first half of the sixth century the prosperity of Syria was at its height. Its literature had then reached its greatest development, and it exercised a powerful influence even beyond the frontiers of the Empire, affecting the nascent art of the barbarous kingdoms of the West. Not only in architecture, which passed through some of its most interesting developments in this part of the world, but also in decorative sculpture and the minor arts, Syria was a most important centre of activity, and in close relation not only to Egypt and Asia Minor, but also to Armenia, Mesopotamia and Persia. So intimate is thought to have been the artistic association between Syria and Egypt, as evidenced for example by the ivory carvings of this period, that the term Syro-Egyptian or Syro-Alexandrine has been employed to describe the style common to both countries. Some of the most important early illuminated manuscripts are assigned to this artistic province, and the style of the miniatures is in some cases akin to that of contemporary monumental mosaics. The study of manuscripts illuminated in Frankish monasteries under Charlemagne and his successors proves that the illuminators were acquainted with Syrian models from which they adopted decorative details characteristic of the Syrian style. In a word, the influence of the Greek countries on the Eastern shores of the Mediterranean would appear to have been predominant at this period, and it has been traced far afield in the West, notably at Ravenna. Byzantine architecture owed much to the ingenuity with which the Asiatic Greek assimilated and developed Oriental ideas; and the great cathedral of the Divine Wisdom (S<sup>ta</sup> Sophia) at Constantinople, the supreme effort of the central style (see p. 52), was completed in the year 537 from the designs of two Greek architects of Asia Minor. Mosaics of great splendour covered the walls of the important churches at this period, and of these many are still in existence; especially noteworthy are those representing Justinian and Theodora in the Church of San Vitale at Ravenna in Italy, which country had been reconquered from the Goths by the famous generals of Justinian, Belisarius and Narses.

The irruption of Oriental ideas at this time was especially



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may attribute the great revival of the illuminator's art which culminated under the succeeding Macedonian dynasty. Other artists were led to develop the purely conventional decorative art of floral and animal designs, in which the Persians and their Arab pupils were past masters. A further result of iconoclasm is seen in a tendency, in the absence of suitable religious models, to revert to the antique, and is very noticeable in the ivory caskets attributed to this period. On these we constantly find episodes of a purely secular kind, or derived from pagan classical mythology, the subjects being copied from designs in manuscripts or upon antique plate preserved in the treasures of the capital. These secular caskets have been preserved in considerable numbers, and one of the best is to be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum; but the British Museum only possesses part of an example carved in bone and exhibited in the Mediaeval Room. A cameo (No. 104, fig. 22) seems to show in certain details a distant classical influence, and was probably executed at the end of the period. The iconoclastic movement embittered the feeling between the Eastern and Western Churches, the latter regarding the campaign against images as impious and unjustifiable. But it had an indirect effect upon the contemporary art of Italy, and the Roman mosaics of the time were influenced by the work of Greek emigrants who fled their country to escape persecution. On the whole it may be said that although iconoclasm exerted an unsettling and disorganizing influence, it was not an unmitigated evil. It forced Greek artists to adopt new ideas, and revived the Hellenic element in Byzantine art. It thus formed a fitting prelude to the great central period which succeeded it.

#### SECOND AND THIRD PERIODS.

The second period, lasting from the end of the ninth century to the sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders in A.D. 1204, includes the second golden age of Byzantine Art. During its first two centuries the civil and military organization of the Empire had no parallel in the West; Constantinople controlled the commerce of the civilized world, and industry, art, and literature all participated in its prosperity. In the princes of the Macedonian Dynasty, founded by the Emperor Basil in the year 867, it had a series of energetic rulers who



extended its borders in successful wars and encouraged all the liberal arts. It is to this time that the majority of the finest Byzantine remains preserved in the museums and churches of Europe belong, many of them having formed part of the Crusaders' spoils, others having been sent as gifts to the princes of Europe, or exported in the ordinary course of trade. The best quality of work was produced in the tenth and early eleventh centuries, before the fatal defeat of Romanus Diogenes by the Seljuk Turks at Manzikert undermined the foundations of the Empire; but even before the disaster of A.D. 1204 signs were not wanting of the decadence which was to reach so low a point during the short interval when the victorious Crusaders imposed a Latin dynasty on the East. The ivories of this central period are very numerous, and many of them are excellent in style, clearly showing the effect of the revived classical feeling. One or two of them are inscribed with the names and carved with the figures of Emperors, and thus afford a clue to the date of others of their class; thus at Paris there is an inscribed ivory representing Our Lord crowning Romanus IV (A.D. 1068–1071) and his wife Eudocia, and at Cortona a reliquary with the name of Nicephorus Phocas (A.D. 963–969). These ivory carvings, which are usually religious, include devotional diptychs and triptychs, and single panels which were applied to book-covers and caskets; in view of the considerable number which have survived, it is unfortunate that they are almost unrepresented in the Museum Collection. Jewellery naturally flourished at a time of such prosperity, and several small objects representative of the period may be seen in the corridor of the Gold-Ornament Room (see p. 108): the inlaying of gold with niello (a black substance fusing at a low temperature, of which the principal ingredients are silver, lead, and sulphur) seems to have been characteristic of this as well as of the earlier epoch. The art of cutting hard stones in cameo was now practised with success, and cups are preserved which testify to the prevailing skill in this kind of work; cameo busts and figures of Our Lord, the Virgin, and the Saints, in heliotrope and other stones, dating from about the eleventh century, are comparatively common, and are fairly well represented in the collection (fig. 23, and Nos. 106, &c.). It was now also that the already-known art of *cloisonné* enamelling on gold reached its highest perfection; and European churches, museums, and private collections contain numerous examples, some of which, like the ivory carvings, can be dated from



their relation to historical persons or events. Thus the time at which the different enamels on the *pala d'oro* or altar-frontal of St. Mark's at Venice were made is approximately known, while a reliquary in the Cathedral of Limburg on the Lahn, with enamelled figures of Saints in a characteristic style and inscribed with the names of the Emperors Romanus and Constantine, must have been made between the years 948 and 959 A.D. The Victoria and Albert Museum has two pieces of Byzantine cloisonné enamel; one, the so-called Beresford-Hope cross, being a very early example, the other belonging to the later and more characteristic phase; the British Museum is still unfortunately without a good specimen.



FIG. 22.—Byzantine Cameo: the Annunciation. (No. 104.)



FIG. 23.—Byzantine Cameo: Our Lord. (No. 106.)

The general revival of the arts under the Macedonian Dynasty was also favourable to the illumination of manuscripts, an art which, as we have already seen, had perhaps benefited by the iconoclastic movement. The miniatures of the beginning of this period are evidently strongly influenced by the late-classical style, especially some copies of the Psalter, a book which was now a favourite with illuminators. The Homilies of the Fathers of the Church, *Menologia* (lections of the lives of the saints arranged according to the calendar), and richly illuminated books of the Gospels, were also produced in great numbers, and one or two of these are exhibited in the Department of Manuscripts upon the Ground Floor. The books of this time are especially rich in con-



ventional ornament of flowers, leaves, animals, and birds, perhaps a result of the active and incessant influence of Oriental art; but by the twelfth century the style has already begun to deteriorate.

The tenth and eleventh centuries were also the great age of bronze-founding upon a large scale; and several church doors in Italy were imported from Constantinople, encouraging the production of similar work by European craftsmen. Numbers of small objects in bronze date from about this time, and an example of a typical kind of gilt bronze plaque may be seen in fig. 24.

The art of weaving in silk, which had now had time to develop, reached its highest point in the eleventh century, and the figured textiles of Constantinople and the cities of Greece were as famous as the contemporary work of the Persians and the Saracens, from which, except where the subjects are religious, they are not easily distinguished.

The Norman princes of Sicily encouraged Greek weavers to settle in Palermo; Sicily had already been occupied by the Arabs; and silk textiles of the finest quality were now produced in the island. Byzantine textiles were sent as presents to Western princes, or traded and smuggled into Europe, and a considerable number of examples have fortu-



FIG. 24.—Byzantine gilt bronze plaque: St. Theodore. (No. 544.)



nately been preserved. Among the finer pieces of Greek workmanship still in existence are a magnificent dalmatic, inwoven with sacred subjects, in the Treasury of St. Peter's at Rome, and another piece representing an emperor on horseback, found in the tomb of Günther, Bishop of Bamberg (1057-1065 A. D.), and now preserved in that city. Another dated piece, of which there is a reproduction at South Kensington, bears an inscription with the names of the Emperors Basil II and Constantine VIII (975-1028). The Greek silk textile industry was not destined to survive the troubles caused by the Crusades and the Turkish Invasion, and had died out by the thirteenth century.

Of the pottery and glass of the Byzantine Empire remarkably little is known. Work of fine quality must have been produced, and glass is mentioned in literary records, but the material at present available is not sufficient to enable us to form a good idea of the successive states of the industry. The early Venetian and Arab glass-makers were assuredly not without Greek rivals whose work may be made better known to us by future excavation and research. The Constantine Bowl (No. 916 and figs. 16 and 35) shows us that the Greeks could produce fine pottery in the fourth century, but such work of later date as is known is chiefly confined to a rude incised ware found on sites round the Black Sea.

During this great period the rendering of sacred scenes was probably fixed in something like the forms which have since become traditional. Some of these subjects are peculiar to the Greek Church; in others the iconographical treatment alone diverges from that of western mediaeval art. Among these the Annunciation, the Harrowing of Hell, the Pentecost, and the *Etimasia* or Preparation of the Throne, may be especially mentioned.

The third and last phase of Byzantine history is of less artistic importance. The dislocation caused by the sack of the capital and the sixty years of the Latin ascendancy was itself sufficient to hasten decay; but its evil effects were intensified by other causes. The Empire was impoverished by the loss of the productive Levantine trade usurped by the Italian maritime cities, Pisa, Genoa, and Venice, and by the steadily flowing tide of Turkish invasion. The restored Greek emperors of the family of Palaeologi did their best to encourage art, and here and there a manuscript or a piece of mosaic seems to revive the better traditions of the past; but, speaking generally, the period is one of material



and intellectual indigence, productive of an art to which the epithet Byzantine in its more derogatory sense may fairly be applied. In the angular elongated forms and stereotyped expressions of this period we may mark the paralysing influence of routine and the total absence of creative power.

### BYZANTINE ART AND THE WEST.

Having thus very briefly resumed the main periods of Byzantine history, we must now say a few words on the influence exerted by the Greek Empire on its neighbours. Neither the conquering Arabs nor the Ottoman Turks disdained to borrow from Greek sources. The Caliph Walid employed Byzantine artists to decorate a mosque at Damascus, and the architect of the first Turkish ruler at Constantinople was a Greek named Christodulos. In Georgia and Armenia, which between the eighth and eleventh centuries enjoyed an independence recognized both by the caliphs and the emperors, Christian art had developed from the fourth century, when the earliest influences came in from Syria. While strongly modified by Oriental, chiefly Persian, influences, and possessed of a marked local character, it owed its subjects and their treatment to Byzantine tradition; and in the monasteries and churches of the country sufficient material is still preserved to illustrate its peculiarities. Constantinople was also the mother of Russian ecclesiastical art (see p. 100). On Italy the Eastern Empire exercised a very unequal influence, strong in those parts which, like Calabria, had long been politically incorporated in it, or which like Venice had for centuries been linked to it by close commercial relations; weak in those cities with which it came least directly into contact. Rome was less continuously affected, but the mosaics of the Western capital during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were influenced by the Greeks. Mention has already been made of the encouragement given by Norman princes of Palermo to Greek silk-weavers; the same princes also imported workers in mosaic, who taught local artists to work in the same style. All through the earlier Middle Ages there was doubtless a frequent if imperceptible action of Greek upon Western ideas, but the great Florentine Renaissance owes little or nothing to the Greeks; one of its greatest merits indeed consists in the independent spirit which enabled it to cast off the trammels under which the earliest Italian



art had laboured. In Central and Western Europe, with which the Empire was in frequent political intercourse, Byzantine influence has been traced by some in the early architecture of Aquitaine and of the Rhine district.

Minor works of art, such as illuminated manuscripts and silken fabrics, had been carried westward by Carlovingian times, and in ivory carvings of the ninth to eleventh centuries, for example, as well as in contemporary illuminations, the imitation of models from the Christian East is frequently apparent. The marriage in the year 972 of the future Emperor Otho II with the Byzantine princess Theophano doubtless gave an additional stimulus to such influences, though its effects have been sometimes exaggerated. But one of the most important lessons probably taught by the East was the art of cloisonné enamelling, which was introduced into the Rhine valley at this period. Among the treasures of the old Rhenish churches, notably at Trier (Trèves), are fine examples of work in this style which were probably for the most part produced in the West under Byzantine influence, but were shortly afterwards superseded by a revival of the simpler champlevé enamels known in Europe at a far earlier date. Although Western mediaeval art owed its development mainly to the genius of young and vigorous nationalities, we may admit on the ground of general probability that between the ninth and the twelfth centuries the comparatively barbarous West must have had much to learn from an Empire justly proud of the ordered continuity of its existence, and enjoying all the prestige of a superior civilization.

The art of the Eastern Empire had probably but a faint effect upon that of Northern Europe. The early Scandinavian style is based upon conventionalized animal motives the origin of which is far more ancient than the foundation of Constantinople. Early Byzantine coins have been discovered in the North, and some of these served as models for barbaric gold pendants, but such traces of direct artistic influence as have been claimed are few and far between. In our own country the case is much the same. Coins of the sixth and seventh centuries have been found in Kent and elsewhere, and early enamelled jewellery of the later Saxon period suggests a Byzantine influence possibly transmitted at second hand from the Rhine. But such objects are of exceptional nature and had little permanent influence upon the industrial art of these islands.





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in the schools of Europe, especially at Venice. Many will recall the name of Domenico Theotocopoulo, commonly called Il Greco, who practised his art in Spain and died in Toledo in A.D. 1625. In later times another Greek artist Panagiotis Doxaras, born in the Morea in A.D. 1662, was a great admirer of Italian masters and translated Leonardo da Vinci's *Treatise on Painting* into Greek. These facts are mentioned in order to warn the reader against the erroneous belief that Greek ecclesiastical art has remained entirely unsusceptible to Western influences. As in Russia, where Western woodcuts have been freely introduced since the seventeenth century, modern Greek religious art has adopted much that is foreign to the old Byzantine tradition, a tendency which has not diminished in recent years. Mount Athos is celebrated for its minute sculptures in wood, especially crosses, an example of which may be seen in Cases 14 and 15.

### BYZANTINE CHURCHES.

Byzantine architecture is too wide a subject to be adequately discussed in a guide of this nature, and it is impossible to do more than touch upon one or two of the more salient points in its development. It has already been remarked (p. 36) that small circular and polygonal domed buildings, chiefly

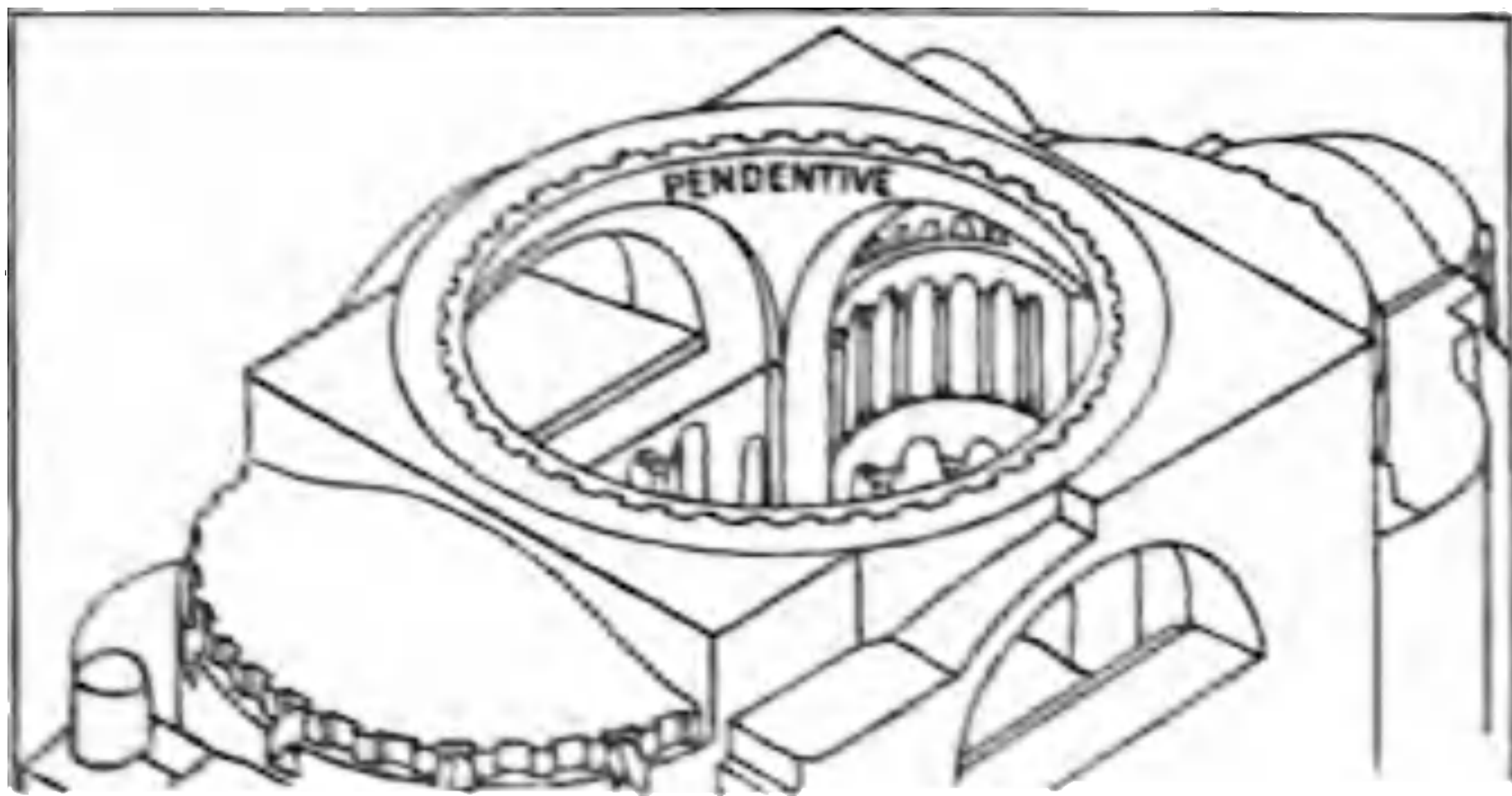


FIG. 25.—View of Sta. Sophia Constantinople, without the dome, to illustrate the pendentive (after Choisy).

baptisteries and mausoleums, had been erected concurrently with basilicas at the beginning of Christian architecture. From small tombs and baptisteries progress was made in the Eastern Empire to circular and octagonal churches, but the circular form was found to be ill

adapted to the liturgical needs of a Christian church. The problem was to combine a central dome with a rectangular building in which the interior arrangements of the basilica might be adopted, and this problem was solved by the sixth century through the invention of *pendentives*, spherical triangular curved constructions between the arches of the dome,



concentrating its weight upon a few points and enabling it to be supported upon a minimum of four piers (see fig. 25). This provided an open rectangular hall in the centre of the church with free access on all sides, making the interior an organic whole. The idea of a cruciform ground-plan with the dome in the centre was generally in the architect's mind, but the outline of the Byzantine churches is usually almost square; for the angles within the arms of the cross were filled by rectangular additions giving increased support to the dome.

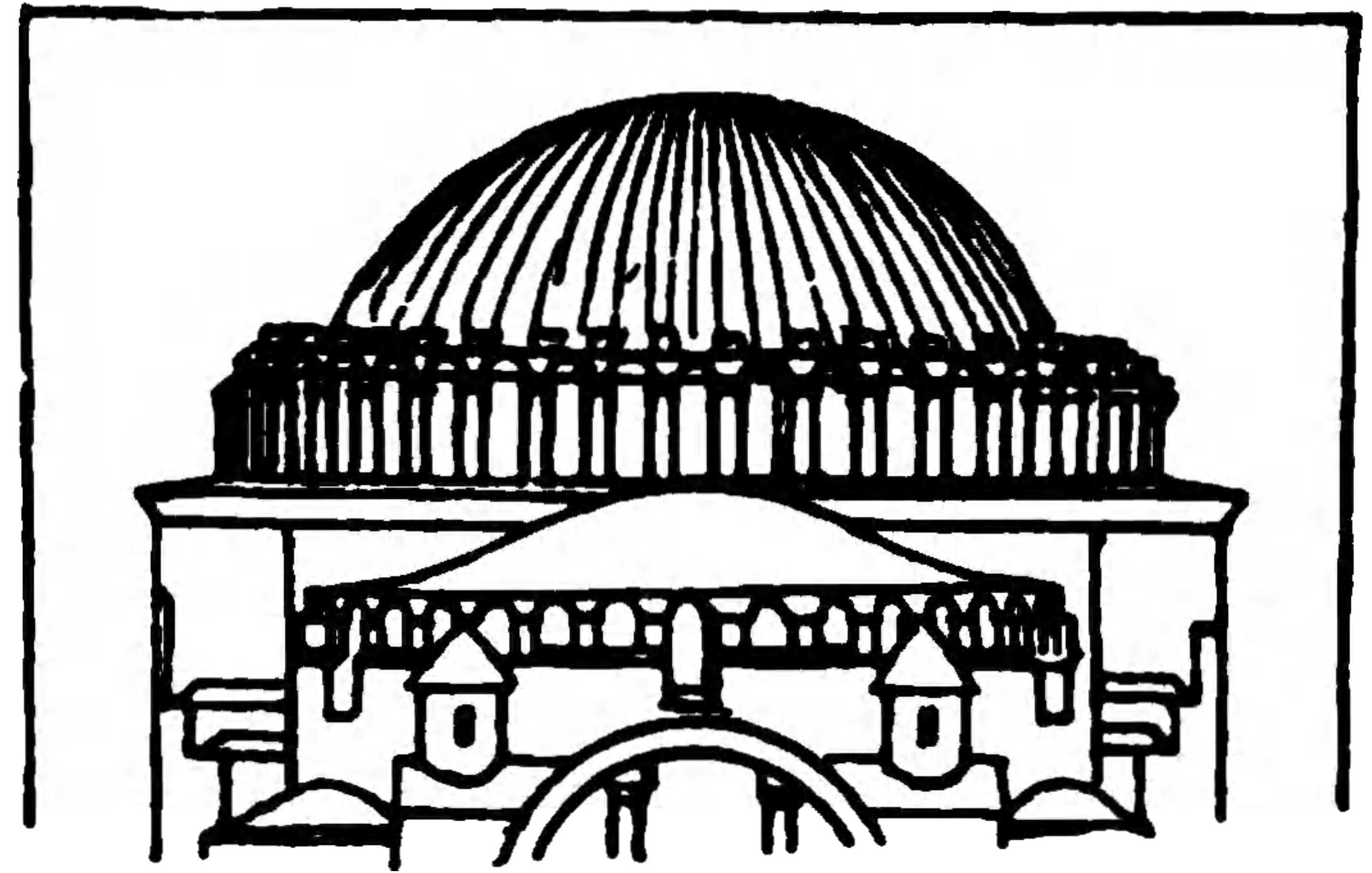


FIG. 26.—Dome of Sta. Sophia, Constantinople.



FIG. 27.—Exterior of the Church of the Apostles, Salonica (after Texier and Pullan).



Byzantine architecture reached its perfection under Justinian (A.D. 527–565), in whose reign the cathedral of the Divine Wisdom was erected at Constantinople. This building stands in a class by itself, and no attempt can be made to describe it here, more than to say that though its exterior is not very impressive, its interior is more harmonious and perfect than that of any other church of the Central Style. It will be more useful to describe a typical church of the later or Neo-Byzantine style which commences in the eighth century, after the troubled times of the Persian and Saracenic

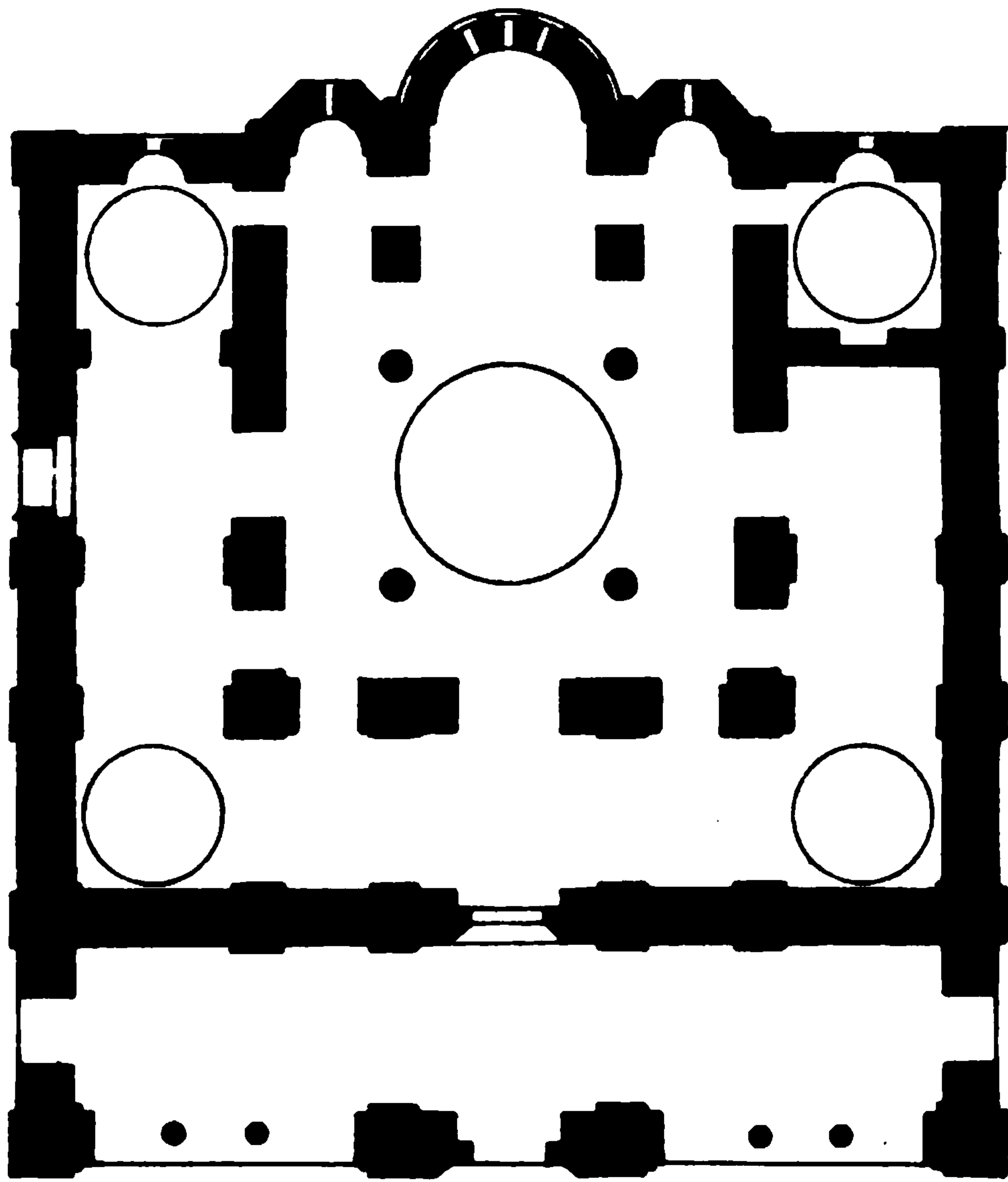


FIG. 28.—Plan of the Church of the Apostles, Salonica (after Texier and Pullan).

wars. In its essential features the old scheme was still retained during this period, but a great change was effected by raising the dome on a high cylindrical drum instead of allowing it to rest directly upon its pendentives. The result was to improve the exterior of the building, which no longer had the squat appearance of earlier times. But the effect on the interior was less satisfactory, for the high windows placed in the drums were not so impressive as those which, as in Sta. Sophia, were actually pierced in the lower course of the dome, while the dome itself seemed isolated by the drum from



its primary supports and from the body of the building. The accompanying outline views of Sta. Sophia and the eleventh-century Church of the Apostles at Salonica (figs. 26 and 27) will give some idea of the difference in external appearance between domes of the old and more recent styles. The later Byzantine churches are very small compared with Western cathedrals, and the central style is also distinguished from the Gothic by having all the supports which it needs contained within its walls, so that there is no need of external buttresses; the number of cupolas surrounding the central dome was sometimes increased to as many as twelve. The Byzantine church retained many of the features of the basilica, having a sanctuary with apse, *prothesis* and *diaconicon*, narthex, and often upper galleries in which the women sat (fig. 28). The arrangement for ritual purposes was similar to that of the Russian churches, which will be shortly described below (p. 102).

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## DESCRIPTION OF CASES.

### TABLE-CASE A.

#### Engraved Gems and Gilded Glasses.

In the side of this case fronting the door leading from the top of the staircase, is the collection of engraved gems and rings. The use of rings as signets or ornaments was as widely spread among the early Christians as among their pagan contemporaries. St. James (Ep. ii. 2) speaks of the man who wears a gold ring and goodly apparel, and the fathers of the Church were obliged to reprimand the community for extravagance in this respect. Tertullian rebukes the prodigal use of rings, and Clement of Alexandria also condemns extravagance, adding a few interesting details as to the manner in which Christians should wear their rings, and the subjects which they ought to choose. The ring, he says, should be placed on the little finger as low down as possible, and the devices should be taken from the primitive symbolic subjects, such as the dove, fish, ship, or anchor. As might be expected, the engraved stones mounted in the



rings have come down to us in greater numbers than the metal rings themselves, and the visitor should notice that a large number of the examples in the case have been remounted in comparatively modern times. The earliest Christian gems are all engraved in *intaglio*, which means that the device is hollowed below the surface of the stone; cameo stones, with subjects cut in relief, are rarer, and usually later than the first two or three centuries. The stones most frequently employed are carnelian, sard, garnet, varieties of onyx (including the combination of blue and black layers usually known as *nicolo*), jasper, and chalcedony; more valuable stones such as emerald and sapphire occur less frequently. The quality of the engraved work compared with that of the classical period is generally poor, and some of it is exceedingly rough.

Designs were also engraved upon the metal of which the ring was composed, and this procedure, which was far easier for the workman, became very common in the later centuries. A ring was a favourite form of gift, and the inscriptions upon Early Christian rings frequently take the form of acclamations, or expressions of good will, praying for the piety and prosperity of the recipient, whose name is sometimes but not always mentioned. The commonest acclamation is '*Vivas in Deo*,' may'st thou live in God.

Rings played a prominent part in connexion with marriage from the earliest Christian times, and had been similarly used both among the Romans and the Jews. The ring was placed on the bride's finger, not as among ourselves in the course of the marriage ceremony, but during the previous betrothal in her father's house. The outward signs of the entry into the married state were rather the veil which, after the first two centuries, was actually assumed during the ceremony; and the crowns of gold, silver, green leaves, or flowers, which both bride and bridegroom wore, and which were returned to the church after the lapse of seven days. Marriage crowns, which were used both by Jews and pagans in pre-Christian times, are still in use in many countries; and in the Eastern Church they are kept upon the altar (see p. 86), being placed on the heads of the bride and bridegroom after the benediction. One of the gilded glasses (No. 613) should be noticed in connexion with the custom of crowning, for here Our Lord is himself seen holding the wreaths. On two fine Byzantine rings (Nos. 130 and 132) exhibited in the corridor leading to the Gold Ornament Room



(see p. 108), and on another (No. 131) in the Gold Room itself, Our Lord extends his hands over the heads of the bride and bridegroom, or places them on their shoulders, the attitude evidently signifying an act of benediction. In No. 129 (fig. 29, in the Corridor) Our Lord blesses only the bridegroom, while the Virgin lays her hand upon the bride. No. 49 (fig. 30) may have been a betrothal ring, and in examples like No. 207 (fig. 31), where a male and female bust are seen together, such a destination may certainly be assumed. Both these rings are also in the Corridor of the Gold Ornament Room.

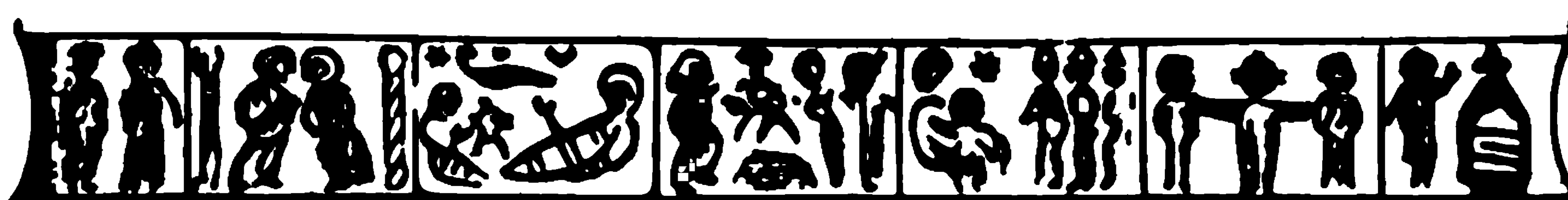
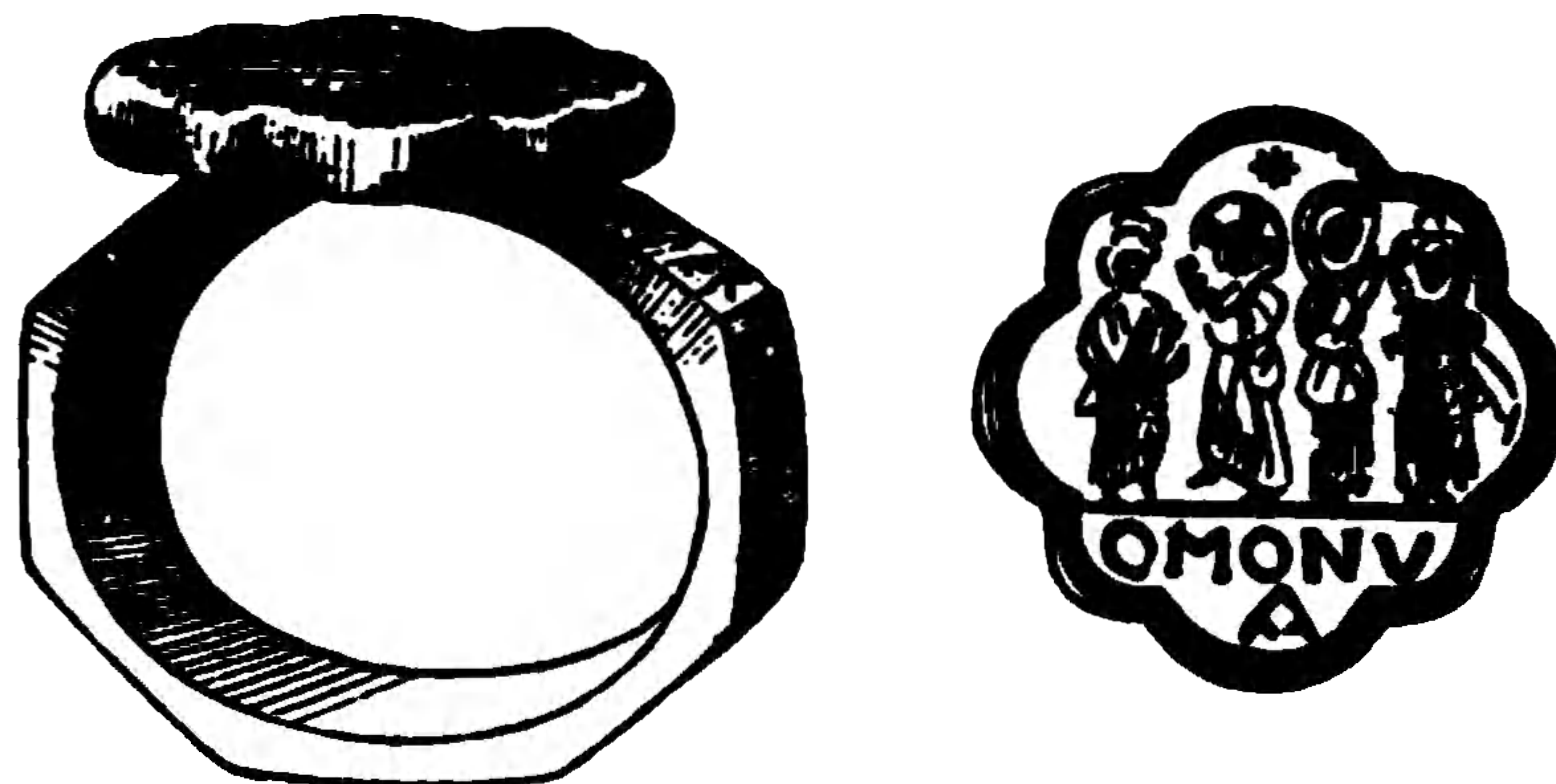


FIG. 29.—Byzantine gold marriage-ring with ornament in niello. About 10th century. (No. 129.)

The earlier gems with symbolic subjects in the style of the period of the Catacombs, are in the upper rows of the Case, and comprise examples of the Good Shepherd, the anchor with doves and dolphins, the palm-branch, the dove, the ship or galley, and the sacred monogram. Nos. 25 (fig. 32) and 26 deserve especial attention on account of their size, and because they are engraved with composite subjects, each combining the Good Shepherd with the History of Jonah. Attention may be also drawn to Nos. 11–15 which are engraved with acclamations, Nos. 12 and 14 bearing also the names of the recipients, *Deusdedit* (God-given) and *Rogatus*; to No. 10 which represents a triangle, perhaps symbolic of the Trinity; and to No. 43 (fig. 33), which is a very early example of the Crucifixion.



FIG. 30.—Gold ring with openwork inscription. (No. 49.)



Below the gems of earlier type are arranged others of rather later date, including three (Nos. 93–95) with early Byzantine

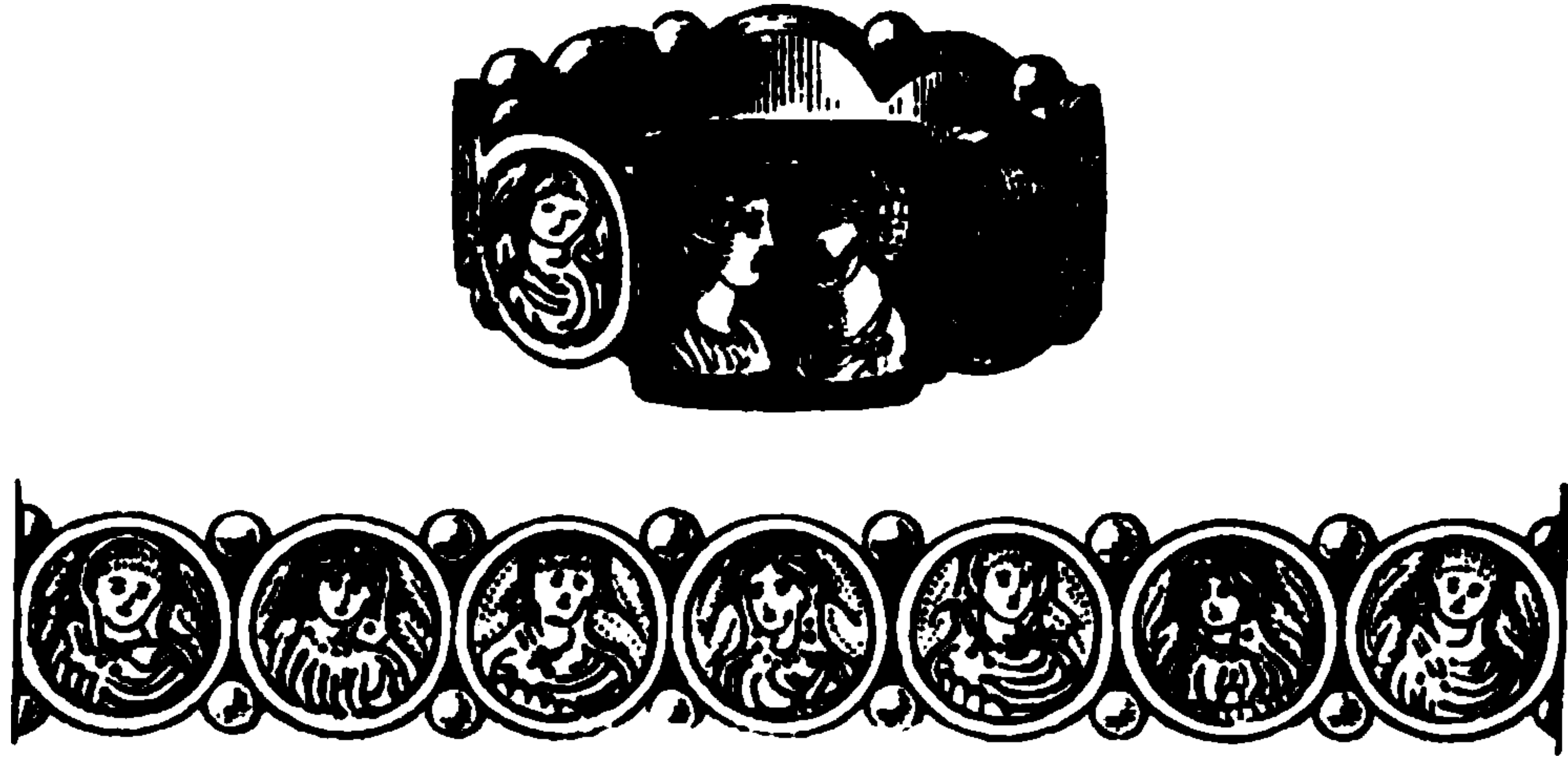


FIG. 31.—Gold marriage-ring. 5th century. (No. 207.)

monograms of about the sixth century, and a sapphire (No. 96) with a cruciform Byzantine monogram of similar date, perhaps representing the name Thomas. In the next row are a few cameos of Byzantine workmanship; one (No. 105) is of about the



FIG. 32.—Engraved gem of 4th century: the Good Shepherd and Story of Jonah. (No. 25.)

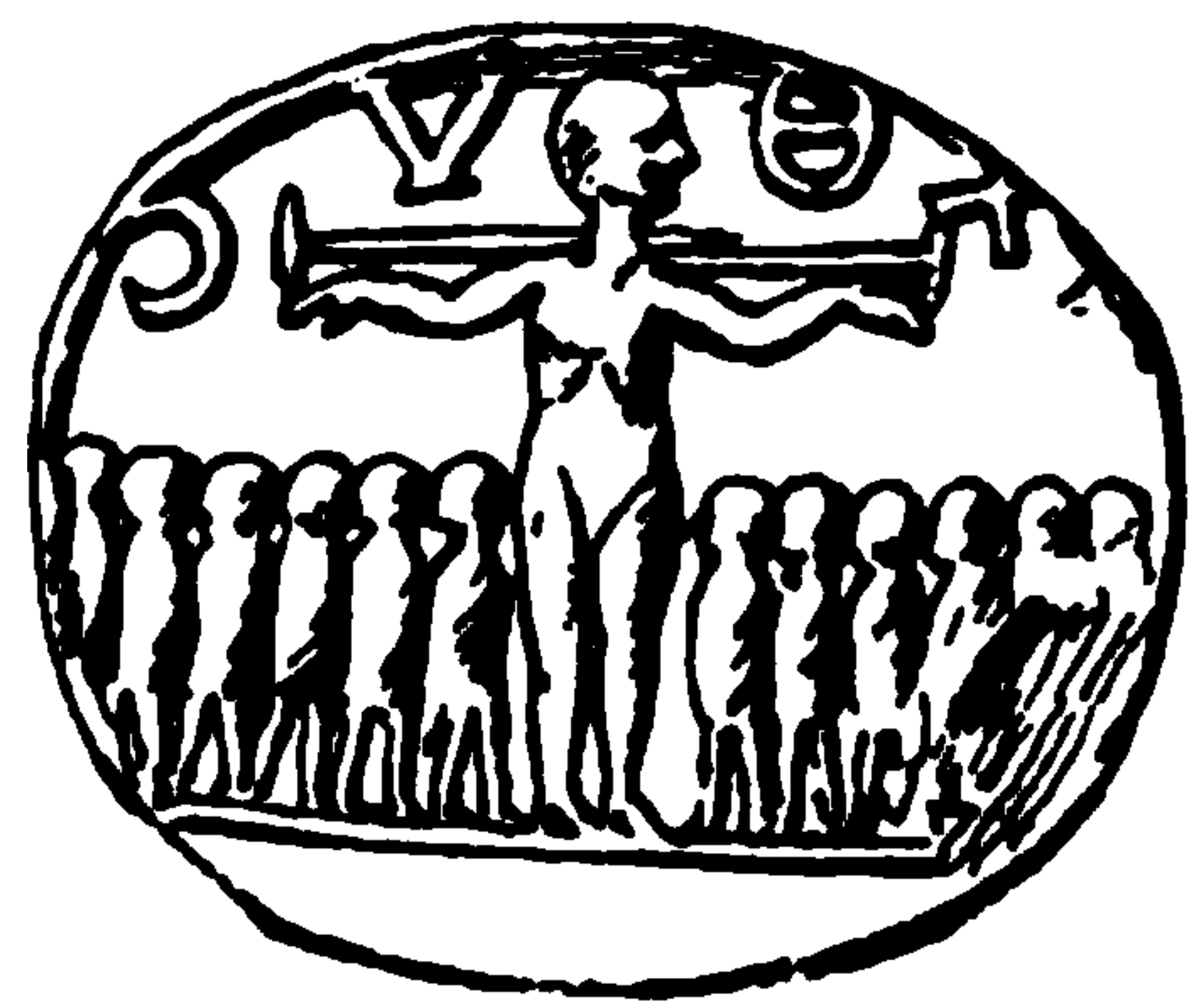


FIG. 33.— Engraved gem: the Crucifixion. (No. 43.)

eleventh century, and represents the Baptism; another (No. 104, fig. 22) has a very exceptional treatment of the Annunciation, the Archangel Gabriel being represented in the form of a winged genius in the classical style. Such a manner of representing an angel, much more an archangel, in a scene from the Gospel narrative is foreign alike to Early Christian and Byzantine usage, and the small winged figure is perhaps a copy of a classical Cupid or genius executed during the iconoclastic disturbances (see p. 43). Next to these are several larger cameos, or rather carvings, in heliotrope, jasper, and steatite, some of them, such as the bust of Our Lord (No. 106, fig. 23), considered to date from the eleventh or twelfth century, others being probably later. Lower down in the case are a few Byzantine bronze rings, some (Nos. 177, 178,



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the majority are actually the bottoms of drinking vessels from which the upper parts have been broken away. Some of these vessels were shallow saucer-shaped bowls, others more nearly resembled tumblers; the great majority were made



FIG. 35.—Bottom of pottery bowl of the time of Constantine. (No. 916.)  
(See also Fig. 16)

for domestic use, and, as the inscriptions show, given away as presents, probably on the occasion of weddings, birthdays, and other anniversaries. It is possible that here and there an exceptional specimen may have been used in the celebration of the Eucharist; such a use has in fact been proposed for the



bowl No. 629, which has been held by some to be a paten. But there is no absolutely conclusive evidence that any of the specimens now preserved were made for a liturgical purpose, and the earliest known form of chalice, that of Nos. 658 and 659 (in the Glass Room, Case C; fig. 84), differs from that of any of the gilded glasses. Nor is it now considered likely that these glasses as a class were made for the *Agape* or love-feasts of the primitive Christians, because very many of them date from a period when the love-feast in its primitive form had been discontinued. The most generally accepted theory is that the greater part are purely domestic, but that some, especially those with figures of particular saints, may have been used at the commemorative feasts held at the tombs of the apostles and martyrs during the fourth and early fifth centuries. In favour of this view, it may be mentioned that the treatment of many specimens is secular and sometimes pagan, so that the glasses cannot have been collectively designed for a religious use. De Rossi has shown that it was a custom among the Early Christians to impress in the mortar of the freshly-closed *loculi* (see p. 9) in the Catacombs all kinds of small objects, such as ivory plaques, combs, toys, beads, coins, cubes of mosaic, and even twigs. The idea was apparently to facilitate the identification of individual graves, for the name of the deceased was not always engraved upon the front of his tomb, and even if it was, the objects adhering to the plaster made recognition easier. Some of them may have been possessions of the deceased during life; but many would appear to have been left behind by friends and relatives who had been present at the interment. Gilded glasses have been found with these objects, and were evidently placed in position under the same conditions; it is therefore legitimate to infer that they served the same purpose. They have hardly ever been discovered in a perfect state, and their upper parts may either have been destroyed by accident, or else deliberately broken off in order that they might not project into the narrow space of the subterranean corridors. Their disappearance is of less moment, as the designs and inscriptions were almost always in the bottoms of the vessels. Some of the discs with smoothly ground edges probably never formed part of vessels at all, but are thought to have been made simply as medallions. In addition to the pagan subjects already alluded to, which form a distinct minority, the favourite designs are portraits of husbands and wives, with or without their children, and figures of saints, usually with



their names appended. Especially popular were representations of St. Peter and St. Paul, who are seen, for example, on No. 636 in the collection. The most usual inscription, in addition to the ordinary acclamation *vivas* (may'st thou live) and its amplifications, is *pie zeses*, a Latin form of the Greek words *πίε ζήσαις*, 'drink and live,' i. e. drink and good health to thee.

The *fondi d'oro* usually consist of two layers of glass. To one of these is gummed a sheet of gold leaf on which the design is etched with a needle, and a protecting layer of glass is then welded on by subjecting the whole to the action of heat. The old Roman glass, which was produced by wood fires, probably cohered at a low temperature, and the use of powdered glass (flux) between the layers may not have been as necessary as it would be in the case of ordinary modern glass. If the design was applied to a completed bowl it was perhaps etched directly on foil already applied to the bottom; when the etching was finished, the protecting glass was laid over it, and the bowl was placed in the oven face downwards until cohesion took place. Some have suggested, however, that the protecting layer was formed by blowing a film of molten glass over the surface. Whatever the exact method may have been, the style of ornamentation by means of gold foil between two layers of glass is probably of Egyptian origin, as examples of similar work connected with that country are in existence which are older than any of the Catacomb glasses; among these may be mentioned two glass bowls found at Canosa in South Italy, but probably made in Alexandria, exhibited in Table-Case E, in the Glass Room. The process was still known, by tradition at least, in the Early Middle Ages, and was again practised for small pictures or panels in Italy in the fourteenth century. Pictures etched in gold foil on glass, though without a second protecting layer, were made in still later times, and in Bohemia tumblers with designs enclosed between two layers were produced in the eighteenth century. More recently reproductions in the old style of the Catacomb glasses have been attempted, though the effect is seldom equal to that of the originals.

Among the specimens in the Case are several examples of domestic subjects. Nos. 608–610, 612, and 613 show portraits of husbands and wives with names and acclamations, No. 608 being pagan in character with a figure of Hercules in the centre, No. 613



having in the same position a small figure of Our Lord holding a wreath over the two heads (see above, p. 56); No. 610 (plate VII) includes a little girl named Lea who stands between her parents, the field being occupied by the sacred monogram, a wreath, and the inscription. No. 615 is an example of a Jewish subject, showing the seven-branched candlestick, the ram's horn (*shofar*), the citron (*ethrog*), and bundle of branches (*lulab*), all objects used at Jewish feasts; and No. 619 (plate VIII) represents Daniel destroying the dragon of Bel with the cake, as related in the Apocryphal History of Bel and the Dragon, verse 27. Nos. 630 (plate VII) and 631 are examples of the youthful and ideal portraits of Christ characteristic of the first centuries of Christian Art (see p. 23); No. 636 represents St. Peter and St. Paul, in this case both alike, and not showing the usual differences mentioned on p. 25; No. 605 is a portrait of an official or scribe holding a scroll, and with a case of *styli* for writing near his head; and No. 603 (plate VIII) shows us a gladiator (*retiarius*) named Stratonicus, with his trident in his hand, and an inflated skin for practising boxing in the background. The box with a glass top contains the remarkable flat glass disc covered with designs etched in gold foil, and heightened by colour, found in 1866 in Cologne in a cist containing the burned bones of a woman. It never had a protecting glass, and the designs have suffered much from exposure and attrition. The surface is divided into eight compartments with Biblical scenes, some of which have not been identified with certainty. Among the subjects as to which there is no doubt are two scenes from the Story of Jonah, Daniel in the lions' den, and the Three Children of Babylon in the fiery furnace. On the right side of this Case are the fragments of a bowl of transparent glass, (No. 629), also found at Cologne, studded with small blue and green medallions with Scriptural subjects. Among these may be mentioned Adam and Eve, the Sacrifice of Isaac, the Three Children in the fiery furnace, the Story of Jonah, and Daniel with the lions. Beneath, are a number of medallions once forming part of a similar bowl. Of the subjects which they represent may be mentioned: Jonah and the Monster, Daniel, Lazarus in his tomb, and Our Lord carrying the rod or wand which is assigned to him in Early Christian Art as the emblem of miraculous power. The Case also contains a number of fragments, one or two modern attempts at the reproduction of gilded glass in the old style, and two medallions, one representing a boy, which may have been made in the eighteenth century.



## TABLE-CASE B.

Casts of Ivory Carvings, small Bronze Objects,  
and Money Weights.

The original carvings from which the casts are taken are exhibited in the Mediaeval Room in the series illustrating the historical development of ivory carving (see p. 108).

*Ivory Carvings.* Ivory had been employed by all the civilized peoples of the ancient world both for useful and ornamental purposes, and with the Romans it was also a favourite material. It was largely used for writing tablets with two covers (*diptychs*), lined inside with wax, and serving the purpose of a modern notebook; for oval boxes chiefly made for keeping jewels or precious objects; and for plaques to cover wooden caskets or to decorate furniture. When these objects were made for the wealthy, or for presentation, they were ornamented with figures carved in relief, and a number of ivories of the first six centuries have come down to us, among the more important being the large Consular Diptychs, which were sent as gifts to important dignitaries and friends by Consuls and high magistrates on acceding to office. The Christians naturally shared the prevalent taste for ivory-carvings, though they often adapted the existing forms to new purposes. For instance, they inscribed upon diptychs the names of living and dead members of the community whom it was desired to commemorate at the services of the Church, the reading of the Diptychs being part of the Great Intercession for the Living and the Dead which occurs (usually close to the Consecration) in all primitive Liturgies. Sometimes old consular diptychs were used for this purpose; but even in the fourth century subjects of a purely Christian character were already being produced. The magnificent Early Byzantine leaf of a diptych representing the Archangel Michael, of which a cast is here exhibited, the original being in the Mediaeval Room (Table-Case F), was made as a diptych in the proper sense of the word, the back being sunk to receive a coating of wax. About the sixth century large ivory plaques were used for ornamenting the covers of church books, and several of these have been preserved. The oval Roman jewel-box (*pyxis*) was adapted by Christians as a receptacle for the consecrated bread, and also, at a rather later period, for relics, as may have been the case with the fine





PLATE II. IVORY PANELS FROM A CASKET. FIFTH CENTURY.  
(See p. 65.)









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example in the collection ornamented with the martyrdom of St. Menas (No. 297 and plate IV). But for the latter purpose rectangular wooden caskets of larger size covered with a number of separate ivory plaques were more usual, and for some such form of casket the remarkable early ivories, Nos. 291 (plate II) and 292 were doubtless made. Episcopal thrones were also ornamented with ivory plaques, the most famous example being one still preserved at Ravenna, and associated with the name of Bishop Maximianus, the contemporary of Justinian. Caskets and diptychs continued to be popular throughout the history of the Eastern Empire, but by the tenth century diptychs and triptychs made exclusively for devotional uses were already common. Ivory carving was practised from the first in all the great centres of population; in Italy, Rome, Milan, and Ravenna were successively famous in this respect, while, outside Italy, Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor all produced excellent work. These countries enjoyed particular advantages as the raw material was easily obtained, while the population of such towns as Alexandria had a hereditary aptitude for the industrial arts. Early Christian ivories date from the fourth to the seventh century; and while work which may be described by the distinctive term Byzantine was produced in the same period, the greater part of the fine work of the Eastern Empire, which still survives, falls between the ninth century and the twelfth.

Among the casts of ivories which may be assigned to Italy are two well-known sets of plaques from caskets of about the beginning of the fifth century, one (No. 292) containing three panels with two fragments carved with conventional scrolls, the other (No. 291, plate II) four panels. The first panel of the first set shows Moses striking the rock, the second St. Peter raising Tabitha from the dead, and the third two distinct subjects, St. Paul conversing with Thecla, and the stoning of St. Paul. The panels of the second set represent: (1) Pilate washing his hands, Our Lord bearing the Cross, and the Denial of St. Peter; (2) the death of Judas, and the Crucifixion; (3) the Maries at the Sepulchre; and (4) the Incredulity of St. Thomas. The Crucifixion scene is among the earliest known, and the characteristic absence of realistic treatment should be remarked; it has a parallel in the Crucifixion carved on the almost contemporary doors of the Church of St. Sabina at Rome. The style of both the above sets of panels recalls that of the Roman sarcophagi of the period, and they may be with much probability assigned to a Roman School. No. 294 is an early example of the Baptism, probably North Italian work of the sixth century.



Conspicuous among the ivories from the Christian East is the leaf of a diptych (No. 295), with a figure of the Archangel Michael, which has already been mentioned (p. 41 and frontispiece). It

belongs to the earliest period of Byzantine art, and perhaps goes back as far as the reign of Theodosius (375–395), though considered by some to date from the time of Justinian. At the top is a Greek inscription: *Receive these gifts, and having learned the cause —*, doubtless continued upon a second leaf, now lost, which was perhaps carved with the figure of an emperor to whom the angel offers the Orb as an emblem of sovereignty. Written in ink on the sunk surface at the back, originally intended for the wax, is a prayer in a hand of the seventh century, of which only the first words are legible. No. 302 A (plate ix) is a remarkable panel from a Byzantine casket probably dating from the tenth to the twelfth century, and representing two scenes from the history of Joseph. On the left the patriarch



FIG. 36.—Bronze reliquary cross. 12th century. (No. 559.)

Jacob blesses Ephraim and Manasseh; on the right is the death of Jacob, Joseph being seen in an Egyptian tiara standing at the head of the bier. Worthy of special remark are also the four pyxes or oval boxes, made from sections of elephant's tusks.



FIG. 37.—Byzantine bronze money-weight. 6th century. (No. 453.)

No. 297 (plate iv, fig. 2) has carved upon its sides the story of the Martyrdom of St. Menas of Alexandria (see p. 80), in which city it was probably made in the sixth century. On one side the saint is seen before the Roman judge, while the executioner already raises the sword to strike and an angel flies down to receive his soul; on the other he stands, clothed in the long chlamys (see p. 26) which marked his rank, at the entrance to his sanctuary between the two camels of the legend, while male and female worshippers approach from either side. No. 298 (plate iv,

fig. 1) shows Daniel in the usual Oriental costume (see p. 26), standing in the attitude of prayer (see p. 21) between two lions, while Habakkuk conducted by an angel approaches from the left





**PLATE IV. IVORY BOXES OF THE SIXTH CENTURY : DANIEL IN THE DEN OF LIONS, AND THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. MENAS.**  
(See p. 66.)







to bring him food. On the other side is a symbolical scene; and beneath the space formerly covered by the lock is a cross between two geese. The third pyxis, No. 289, is of a purely secular nature, and of earlier date, probably belonging to the fourth century: it is included in the collection because boxes of this kind are known to have belonged to Christian Churches, to which fact they have owed their preservation. The original of the fourth example, formerly in the possession of the Sneyd family, is probably a ninth-century Carolingian copy of a Syrian model, and is carved with a Scene representing Our Lord healing the Man possessed with devils. Other ivories in this Case are:



FIG. 38.—Byzantine bronze pound-weight, with two military saints. (No. 483.)

a small square plaque from a Byzantine casket of the tenth to twelfth century, representing the Archangel Michael with a staff (part of the Scene of the Expulsion from Eden); a diptych with busts of Apostles, Saints, and Angels of the twelfth century; and a side leaf of a triptych of similar date with a bust of St. John the Baptist and a figure of a bishop making the gesture of benediction. A panel (No. 296), which was perhaps made in Egypt in the sixth century, represents the Raising of Lazarus; two panels from caskets of the ninth century have, one (No. 299), the Descent into Hell, the other (No. 300), the Nativity and the Washing of the Infant Jesus, the last episode being one of those adopted by Christian art from the Apocryphal Gospels (see



p. 22): in this ivory the contrast between the classical representation of Hell as the City of Hades, and that of Western mediaeval art where it appears as an enormous monster with widely opened jaws, is worthy of remark; the figure standing to the left of Our Lord is St. John the Baptist, who invariably appears in later Byzantine versions of the scene, but Adam, and the kings and prophets of the Old Testament, who are also usually included, are here absent. No. 302, which represents the Entry into Jerusalem, is Byzantine work of the tenth to twelfth century.

On the other side of the case half the space is occupied by



FIG. 39.—Bronze lamp. 5th century. (No. 502.)

a number of small objects, crosses, medallions, buckles, &c., chiefly of bronze, the Byzantine bronze gilt plaque (No. 544, fig. 24), the curious bronze plaque (No. 543) with an imperial equestrian figure, and the rude bronze relic-crosses of about the twelfth century chiefly found in Egypt and Asia Minor (Nos. 558, &c. fig. 36), being specially worthy of notice; in the other half is a good series of Byzantine bronze weights of the fifth or sixth century (Nos. 425-483), most of which are *exagia* or standard money weights, with their denominations usually inlaid in silver on the upper surface (fig. 37). The unit is the *solidus* or *νόμισμα*, seventy-two of which were equivalent to a pound; and its abbrevia-



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**Wall-Cases 1-3.**

The upper part of these cases contains a series of bronze lamps and other bronze objects chiefly dating from the fifth to the seventh century. Some of the types have been found in Italy and the West, but the majority come from Egypt. Attention may be

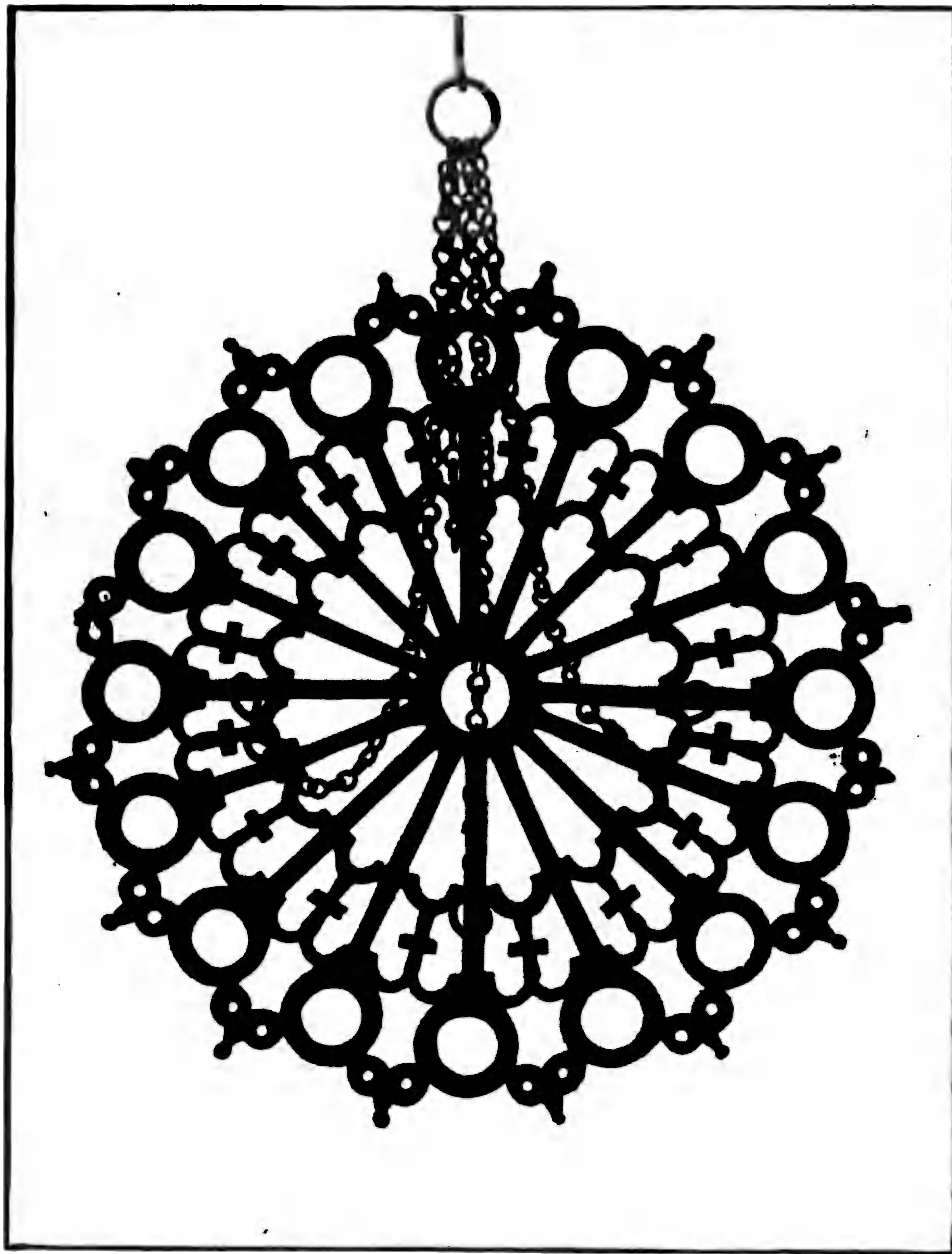


FIG. 41.—Bronze hanging disc for lamps (*polycandelon*). Byzantine. (No. 529.)

called to the fine lamps with dragons' heads (No. 502, fig. 39); and to those in the form of birds (Nos. 509-512). The stands with pricket tops which fit into corresponding cavities in the lamps are also worthy of notice (fig. 40), but many lamps were



made for suspension or for placing upon a flat surface, and these are without the cavity in the bottom. The bronze discs (fig. 41) hanging from the top of the case are *coronae* or *polycandela*, meant to be suspended from the roof: the holes round the circumference were probably filled with small glass lamps. In addition to the lamps there are on the central shelves miscellaneous vessels and



FIG. 42.—Byzantine bronze steelyard-weight: probably bust of the Emperor Phocas. (No. 485.)

objects of bronze, among which the following may be noticed: the steelyard-weight (No. 485, fig. 42) in the form of the head of an Emperor, perhaps Phocas (602-610 A.D.); the stamps for marking property (No. 486, &c.), some with owners' names, others with acclamations, dating from the fourth to the sixth century; the bronze censer from Syria (No. 540) with scenes from the history of Our Lord; and the ewer and basin of the sixth to



seventh century from Spain with inscriptions recording the maker's name, and quoting Rev. v. 5 (plate x).

Along the bottom of these and the following cases up to No. 9 are carved stone ossuaries from Palestine and a number of tombstones (No. 931, &c.) from Carthage, Gaul, and Spain, dating from the fourth to the sixth century. Two of them (Nos. 931 and 935) are from the graves of children, who lived eight years and three months respectively; on the absence of date upon these early stones, see above, p. 12. In the same place are various miscellaneous objects, including terra-cotta stamps, fragments of two tiles of the late fourth or the fifth century stamped with the name Narses and the Sacred Monogram  $\text{P}$ , and a piece of an Early Byzantine vessel of thick red pottery, stamped with monograms and figures of the Archangel Michael (No. 930).

#### Wall-Case 4.

A small Early Byzantine silver treasure of about the sixth century, found at Lampsacus on the Hellespont. It comprises



FIG. 43.—Monogram and inscription on Byzantine silver spoon of the sixth century. (No. 390.)

a tripod lamp-stand (No. 376), beneath the foot of which are two impressions of an official 'hall-mark'; a cylindrical vessel (No. 377), perhaps a chalice; two circular shallow dishes (Nos. 378-379) with monograms, perhaps patens, one having beneath it more Byzantine official stamps (plate VI); a border for a table (?) made of beaten silver; fragments of a folding-stool or stand made of silver with iron

cores; fragments of a gold necklace and earring; and an interesting series of spoons having monograms on the sides (fig. 43) and metrical Latin and Greek inscriptions on the handles and bowls, derived from the Eclogues of Virgil and the traditional sayings of the Sages Solon, Bias, Chilon, and Pittacus. Four other spoons bear the names Mark, Luke, James, and Peter, perhaps in this case referring to Apostles, though as a rule the names found on spoons are those of their owners. All the inscriptions and monograms are or were inlaid with niello.

#### Wall-Cases 5-8.

The upper part of these cases contains a famous silver treasure dating from the fourth to the fifth century, found in 1793 on the



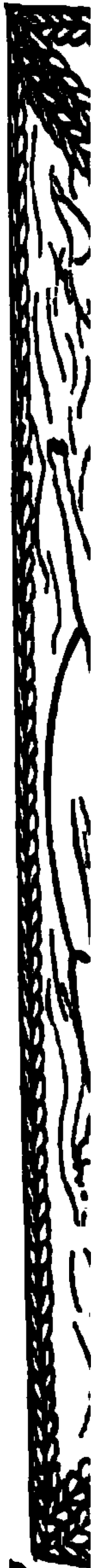


PLATE V. SILVER BRIDAL CASKET OF PROJECTA.  
(See p. 78.)



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Esquiline Hill at Rome. It comprises the toilet articles of Projecta, a Roman lady of rank, wife of Secundus, a member of the great family of the Asterii, whose name, together with that of her husband, is inscribed on the lid of the large casket in the centre of Cases 7-8 (plate v and fig. 44). The inscription, which is preceded by the Sacred Monogram  $\text{P}$ , runs: *Secunde et Projecta vivatis in Chri(sto)*, proving that its owners belonged to the Christian Community. The figures on the body of the casket (plate v), which

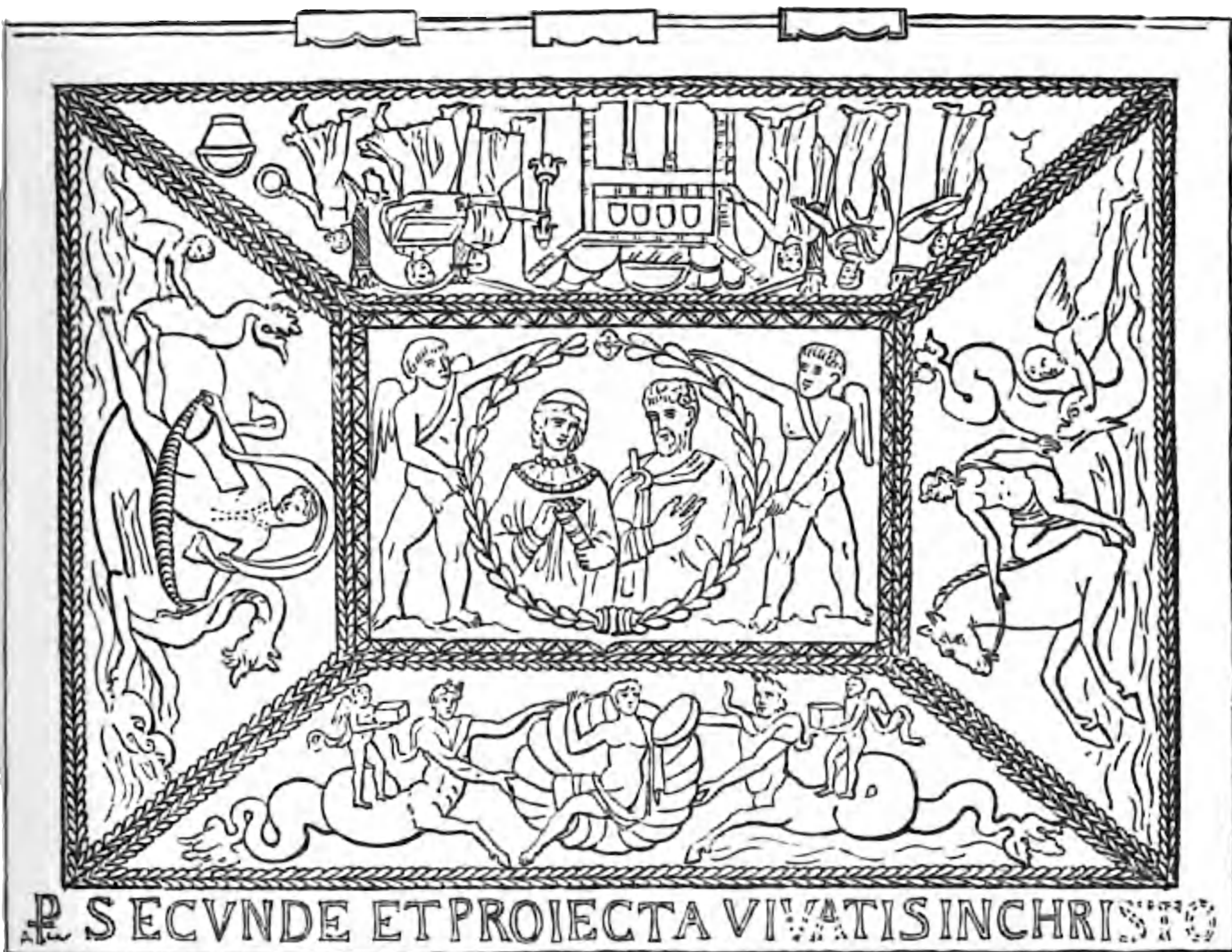


FIG. 44.—Top of the silver bridal casket of Projecta (No. 304). (See also plate V.)

was evidently a bridal gift, are Projecta and her attendant maids; round the lid is an interesting scene depicting the first entrance of the bride into her husband's house, mythological groups representing Venus, and nereids with tritons and sea-monsters; and, on the top, portrait-busts of the married pair in a medallion of the style seen on sarcophagi of the same period (plate xi). It may be remarked that the old custom of conducting the bride to her husband's house in a festal procession with dances and songs was



continued by Christians, though the scene here represented is probably purely pagan in character. This casket, with its mythological subjects, has often been quoted as an illustration of the laxity of Christian sentiment prevailing about the close of the fourth century, of which it is not an isolated example. Other interesting parts of the treasure are the dome-shaped casket (No. 305) ornamented with figures of the Muses, and containing silver bottles for perfumes and essences (fig. 45); a large ewer (No. 307) bearing the inscription, *Pelegrina, utere felix* ('Pelegrina, may good luck attend thy use of me!'); an elegant flask with embossed ornament (No. 306); a large fluted dish (No. 310); two sets of four circular and four rectangular dishes with inlaid monograms (Nos. 312-319); two ornaments (Nos. 336-337), probably from the arms of a chair,

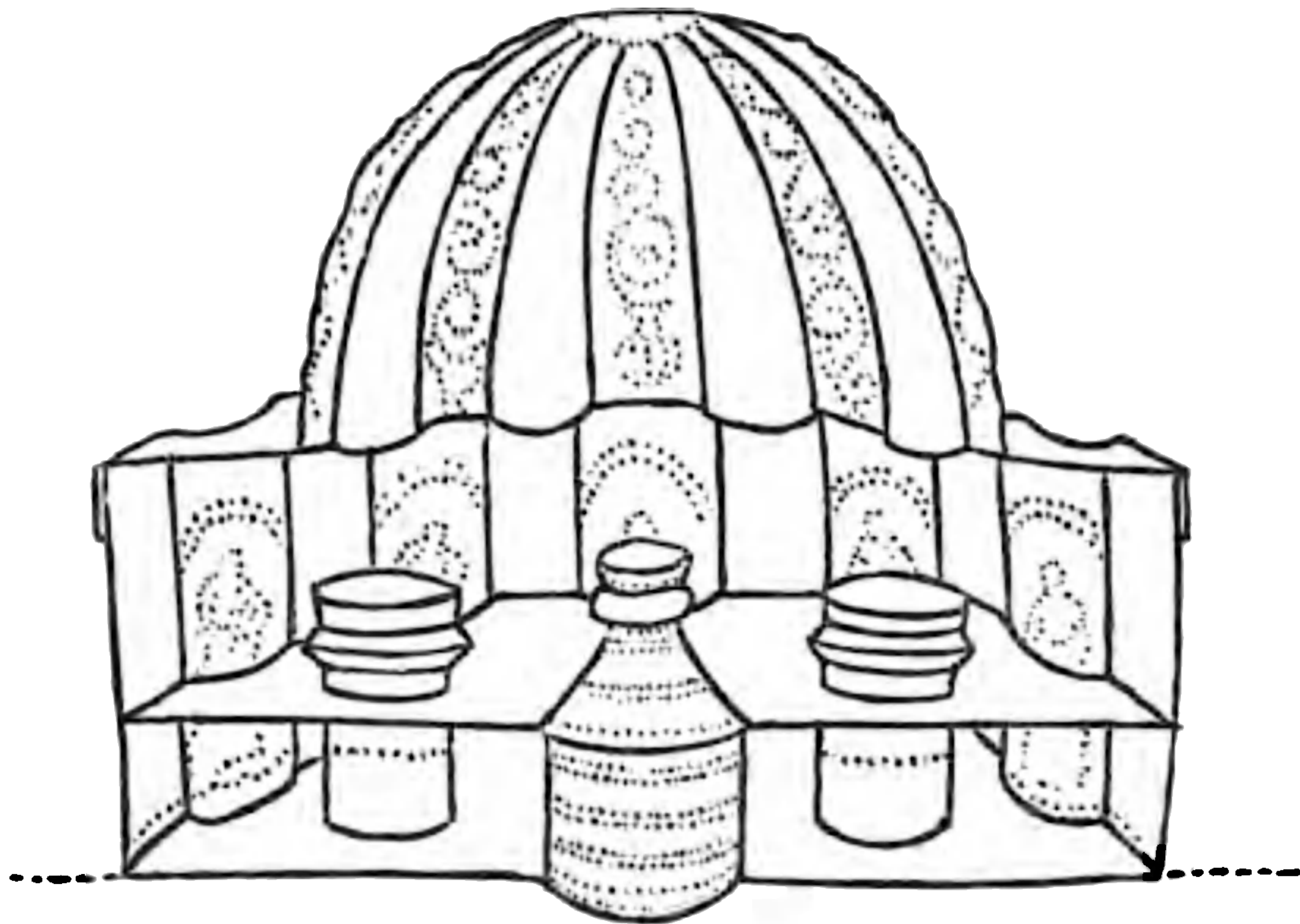


FIG. 45.—Section of dome-shaped silver casket.

in the form of forearms holding pomegranates; four figures (No. 332) representing the personifications of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, and Antioch, perhaps serving to ornament the ends of the poles of a litter; silver-gilt horse-trappings (*phalerae*), (Nos. 338-343); and a number of smaller objects, brooches, pins, rings, and charms.

The miscellaneous nature of the objects comprising the Esquiline treasure suggests that the whole may have been buried at some time of danger, such as a barbaric invasion.

On the shelf in Wall-Case 5 are also placed some Roman silver spoons of the fifth century, found in 1886 in the neighbourhood of Rome, and inscribed with names and monograms inlaid with niello.





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## Wall-Cases 9 and 10.

In the central part is a silver treasure found at the close of the nineteenth century near Kerynia, on the North Coast of Cyprus; and consisting of a plate, a shallow basin, a hexagonal censer, and a number of spoons. From considerations of style, and from comparison with other examples of Byzantine silver chiefly in Russian collections, this treasure, which probably belonged to a church or monastery, may be ascribed to the sixth century. Byzantine silver plate of this class is thought to have been extensively made in Syria, whence it was largely exported; the Russian examples



FIG. 46.—Byzantine silver censer of the sixth century from Cyprus. (No. 399.)

were traded into the interior of that country in exchange for furs, and have been principally found in the Government of Perm, together with contemporary silver dishes of Persian (Sassanian) workmanship. The large plate with the nielloed cross in the centre (No. 397, plate XII) is an almost exact parallel to a plate in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. The saint represented in relief in the centre of the basin (No. 398, plate XII) is either St. Sergius or St. Bacchus, two popular Syrian martyrs, who were captains of the foreign division of the Imperial Body-guard, and are identified by the peculiar collar worn round their necks as



a sign of their military rank. The censer (No. 399, fig. 46), which once had a bronze lining, is of an early form, replaced in later times by a bowl-shaped type with a high foot: on three of its faces are Our Lord between St. Peter and St. Paul; on the opposite three faces are the Virgin between St. John and St. James (?). The spoons, which were perhaps originally private property bequeathed at the death of the owner to the Church, may have been used for feeding the poor, such a use of silver spoons in early times having been recorded; many of them are remarkable for the animals depicted upon the bowls, recalling the similar animals seen upon mosaics and sculptures of the Early Byzantine period. One is punched with the name of a former owner, Theodore.

An interesting point in connexion with this treasure is the occurrence on the bottom of the censer and the large plate, of a number of stamps of several 'hall-marks' a considerable number of which are known to exist on pieces of Byzantine silver (fig. 47). Similar stamps have already been noticed on objects belonging to the contemporary Lampsacus treasure, in Wall-Cases 4 and 5 (see above, p. 72).

#### Wall-Case 11.

The principal contents of this case are various glass vessels and other objects which could not be accommodated in the Table-Cases. On the shelves may be remarked: a goblet (No. 652) of the fourth to the sixth century, found at Cologne, engraved with Adam and Eve, Moses striking the rock, and the Raising of Lazarus; a globular vessel (No. 653) of similar date and also from Cologne, with a Greek inscription 'Drink and prosper' cut in relief round the sides; a flask of blown glass from Cologne (No. 654) in the form of a fish, and a fragment (No. 655) from the side of a cup with a fish of opaque white glass in relief, of equally early date; and a cup imbedded in mortar, with a two-handled flask with blue crosses in relief, both said to have been found in the Catacombs, but of doubtful origin. On the front shelf are several medallions (Nos. 686-696) made of coloured glass pastes, with figures of Our Lord (fig. 48), the Virgin, and Saints (fig. 49) in relief, found in various places, chiefly in the Christian East, and probably dating from the eleventh to the thirteenth century; and some small pendants of clearer glass (Nos. 697-709), chiefly from Syria and Palestine, with early subjects such as the Good Shepherd (fig. 50), probably of the fourth or fifth century.

On the wall at the back of this case are a Byzantine panel-picture of about the thirteenth century from Syria, representing the Annunciation, Nativity, Baptism, and Transfiguration; and photographic reproductions of objects from a silver treasure of the



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fourth century from Carthage (Nos. 356–375) which form part of the Franks Bequest in the passage leading to the Gold Ornament Room, but are not at present exhibited for want of space. At the bottom of the case may be seen a cast of the stamps (fig. 51) upon the Roman pewter cakes, of the fourth century, bearing the Sacred Monogram, found in the Thames, and now exhibited in Table-



FIG. 47.—Stamps on the base of the silver censer, fig. 46.



FIG. 48. —Byzantine glass medallion with bust of Our Lord. (No. 686.)



FIG. 49.—Byzantine glass medallion with figure of St. Theodore. (No. 693.)



FIG. 50.—Glass pendant with the Good Shepherd. (No. 697.)

Case E of the Central Saloon at the head of the Main Staircase. In the same place are a sketch of the monogram scratched on the bottom of a pewter dish from a Roman Villa in Hampshire, exhibited in the same saloon (Wall-Case No. 98); and a cast of the top of a terracotta lamp, now in the Canterbury Museum, supposed to have been found in Kent. This lamp is of a type usually ascribed to the sixth or the end of the fifth century, and it seems



improbable that it can have been introduced into this country before the withdrawal of the Romans. On Christian antiquities of Roman date found in Britain see above, p. 3.

### Wall-Cases 12, 13.

#### Collection of Terracotta Lamps and Flasks.

The lamps fall into two main groups, one, chiefly from Carthage, Sicily, and Italy, represented almost entirely by



FIG. 51.—Terracotta lamp, probably from Egypt. (No. 822.)



FIG. 52 —Terracotta lamp with the story of Jonah. (No. 718.)

the type shown in fig. 52; the other, comprising more varied forms (figs. 51 and 53), obtained in Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and Asia Minor. The examples of the first type are exhibited on the slope, those of the second at the bottom of the Cases. The greater part of these lamps date from about the sixth century,





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and their forms differ from the older Roman types, examples of which may be seen among the Romano-British Collections in the Central Saloon at the head of the Main Staircase. Lamps of this kind were used for ordinary domestic purposes, but were also deposited in or near the tombs of the dead, and kept burning at shrines of martyrs. The majority of those in the collection were obtained from excavations at Carthage, which was a great centre of their manufacture; these are mostly made of a rather bright red ware, distinct from the buff-coloured pottery which usually characterizes the lamps of Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, while the designs upon them are more finely executed. On the other hand, the majority of lamps with inscriptions come from the latter countries. See examples in Wall-Cases 21-22, and on the lower shelves of Wall-Cases 176-179 in the Third Egyptian Room.

*Slope.* Attention may be specially drawn to the following lamps:—No. 718 (fig. 52), Jonah and the monster; No. 720, Daniel with an angel and Habakkuk; No. 721, Our Lord trampling upon the dragon; No. 727, the Spies with the grapes of Eshcol; to the various animals represented

in Nos. 728 to 753, among which the dove occurs most frequently; to the various forms of the sacred monogram, Nos. 758 to 781; and to the crosses on the succeeding numbers.

*Bottom of Case.* In the front row are a few lamps of western type, for which there was not room above; among them is a mould (No. 804), with intaglio designs, for the upper half of a lamp: the top and bottom halves of these lamps were made separately, and stuck together before being placed in the furnace. The remainder of the lamps in this part of the case are from the Christian East, especially Egypt, Syria (fig. 53), Palestine, and Asia Minor; they are of various forms, but usually of poor execution, and they rarely have representations of the human figure.



FIG. 53.—Terracotta lamp from Syria. (No. 835.)



*Upper Shelves.* Terracotta flasks (*ampullae*), with two handles, connected with the shrines of saints or other holy places. It was the custom of pilgrims, especially about the sixth century, to carry away flasks of this kind filled with the oil used for the lamps kept burning before the shrines of Saints and Martyrs, the most famous examples, which were made of lead, are those sent from the Holy Land to Theodolinda, Queen of the Lombards, in the early seventh century, and still preserved at Monza in Italy. The majority of the terracotta *ampullae* come from Egypt and bear representations of St. Menas or Mennas, an Egyptian martyr of the military or official class, decapitated during the persecutions of Diocletian's time. The legend relates that the saint's body was



FIG. 54.—Terracotta flask with St. Menas between two camels (No. 860.)

placed upon a camel which was let loose to follow what course it chose ; and that in the place where the camel stopped, some miles from Alexandria, a grave was made and a shrine subsequently built. In allusion to this legend, St. Menas is constantly represented as standing between two camels (fig. 54), though the animals are often of so fantastic a form as to be very difficult to recognize. This subject is commonly found on one side of the flasks, the other side generally having a Greek inscription meaning 'the blessing



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of St. Menas.' In many examples, e.g. Nos. 886–892, a head of negroid appearance is seen, possibly representing a Libyan. The martyrdom of St. Menas is represented on the ivory box in Table-Case B (No. 297, plate iv).

## COPTIC ANTIQUITIES.

As Egypt is exceedingly prolific in Christian antiquities, and exercised a great influence upon Christian art (see above, p. 42), a few words must be said on the history of Christianity in that country. According to tradition, Alexandria was converted in 69 A.D. by the evangelist St. Mark; but although little is known of the development of the new faith at the beginning of our era, by the middle of the second century the Egyptian Church had grown to considerable proportions, and not long afterwards could boast of the famous names of Clement and Origen. Egypt now became renowned for the number of monks and anchorites who lived in solitude in remote parts, especially the Scete desert, the Natron Valley, and the Thebaid. The Egyptian Christians, who are called Copts, from *Kubt*, the Arabic version of the Coptic form of the Greek word *Αἰγύπτιος* (Egyptian), belonged to the ancient Egyptian stock; in their general personal appearance they still resemble their forefathers as known to us by the representations upon the monuments, but their features have been modified by intermarriage with Arabs and tribes of the Eastern Sudan. In the fifth century Egypt was distracted by the Monophysite heresy (see p. 6), which was condemned by the Council of Chalcedon in the year 451; but the Copts refusing to accept the condemnation, the schism became permanent, also affecting the Abyssinian Church (see below, p. 93) which descends directly from that of Egypt and shares the Monophysite belief. The Coptic Church was not exterminated by the Mahomedan Conquest in the seventh century, indeed its relations with the conquerors were at first friendly, for the Copts had been so hardly used by their fellow Christians on account of their heretical beliefs, that the Arab invasion was actually welcomed. But in the eighth and ninth centuries the Arabs began both to persecute and make proselytes, so that large numbers of Christians abandoned their faith and became Mahomedans; throughout the Middle



Ages the condition of those Copts who did not embrace Islam was almost uniformly one of great misery.

The influence of Egypt on the minor arts of other countries during the early Christian period, which is noticeable for example in the case of ivory carvings, is due less to the native Coptic element than to the development under Greek influences and in favourable geographical conditions of the motives and subjects common to the Christian East. The Copts, however, began at an early date to copy many of the commoner types of Hellenistic art, distorting them by an orientalizing treatment, and occasionally adding details derived from ancient Egyptian sources; this process of degradation naturally increased as Alexandrian art declined, and illustrates in the Nile Valley that general reaction of Oriental feeling by which the supremacy of Greek ideas on the Eastern shores of the Mediterranean was ultimately overwhelmed. The old Egyptian sign *ankh*  is commonly found on Coptic antiquities as a substitute for the cross.

Coptic antiquities have survived in great numbers owing to the extraordinary dryness of the Egyptian climate, which keeps even wooden objects and textile fabrics almost in their pristine condition. Large cemeteries, such as that at Akhmîm, the Greek Panopolis, have yielded enormous numbers of small and perishable objects, which are still perfect through having been preserved from the action of wind and rain, and throw great light upon the life of the people in the period which begins with the fourth century. The most remarkable of these antiquities are the garments, which are often beautifully embroidered with tapestry work; of these the British Museum has but few specimens, the largest collection in this country being preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington. The Christian antiquities from Egypt in the collection are distributed among the various classes (pottery and bronze lamps, ivories, &c.) into which it has been divided. An attempt has, however, been made to exhibit together specimen examples selected from these classes in order to give a general notion of the early work produced by the Copts. In mediæval times the Egyptian Christians adopted the decorative style of the Arabs.

The Copts are now a mixed race, and those who have remained Christians are at present divided into scattered communities numbering about six hundred thousand. They speak Arabic, but Coptic, which is ancient Egyptian with an admixture of Greek words written in Greek characters with





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the addition of a few demotic signs, is still used, together with Arabic, in their services. The spiritual head of the Coptic Church is a patriarch residing at Cairo. He has under him four metropolitans or archbishops, one of whom is the *Abuna* of Abyssinia (see p. 93).

A Coptic church is externally rectangular, but has usually at the east end three internal apses which severally belong to the *haikal* or central sanctuary (corresponding to the *presbyterium*, see p. 33), and to two smaller lateral sanctuaries. It has a nave with two aisles, each with an upper gallery or *triforium*, but there is no clerestory; at the west end there is a vestibule or narthex partially walled off from the nave, but not always entered by a central western door. The church is usually surrounded by other buildings, so that little of it is seen from the outside, the most conspicuous features being the domes, of which there may be any number from three to twelve, three being generally placed over the eastern apses. The windows are small, and the impression of darkness in the interior is increased by the numerous screens which traverse the building. The first of these divides the three sanctuaries from the choir, and is pierced by three doors leading into each of them. It is the most solid and opaque of all, being made of carved and inlaid woodwork between seven and ten feet high, and has along the top panel-pictures representing the Virgin and the Child, apostles and prophets; the central door is opened during the mass, but is at other times covered by an embroidered silk curtain. The second transverse screen divides the choir from the rest of the nave; it is of wooden lattice-work, and sometimes also has pictures along the top. The third screen divides the

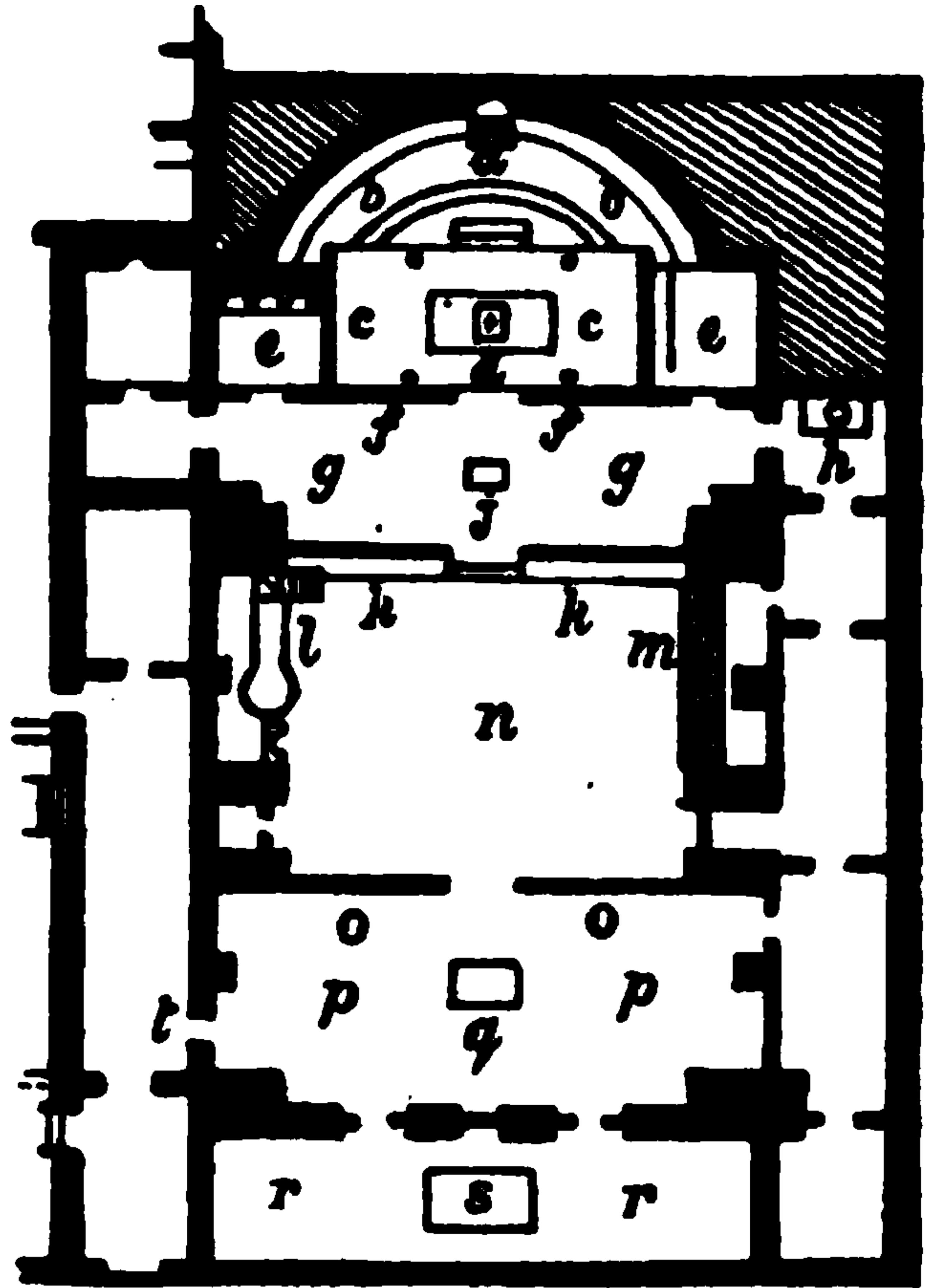


FIG. 55.—Plan of the Coptic church of Abu-'s-Sifain, Cairo (after Butler, 'Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt'). a. Patriarchal Throne. bb. Marble bench for priests. cc. Haikal or sanctuary. d. Altar. ee. Lateral sanctuaries. ff. Haikal screen. gg. Choir. h. Font. j. Lectern. kk. Screen. l. Pulpit. m. Locker for relics. n. Men's division. oo. Screen. pp. Women's division. q. Tank in which the priest annually washes the feet of the poor. rr. Narthex. s. Epiphany tank, formerly used for baptism at Epiphany. t. Door.



body of the nave into two parts, the front part being reserved for men, while the women are accommodated at the back, between the men and the narthex; in former times the women's places were in the upper galleries, as was commonly the case in the East. The small Coptic churches are thus divided into no less than five transverse sections, as may be seen from the annexed plan (fig. 55). The pulpit stands on the north side of the nave, the lectern being in the choir; the

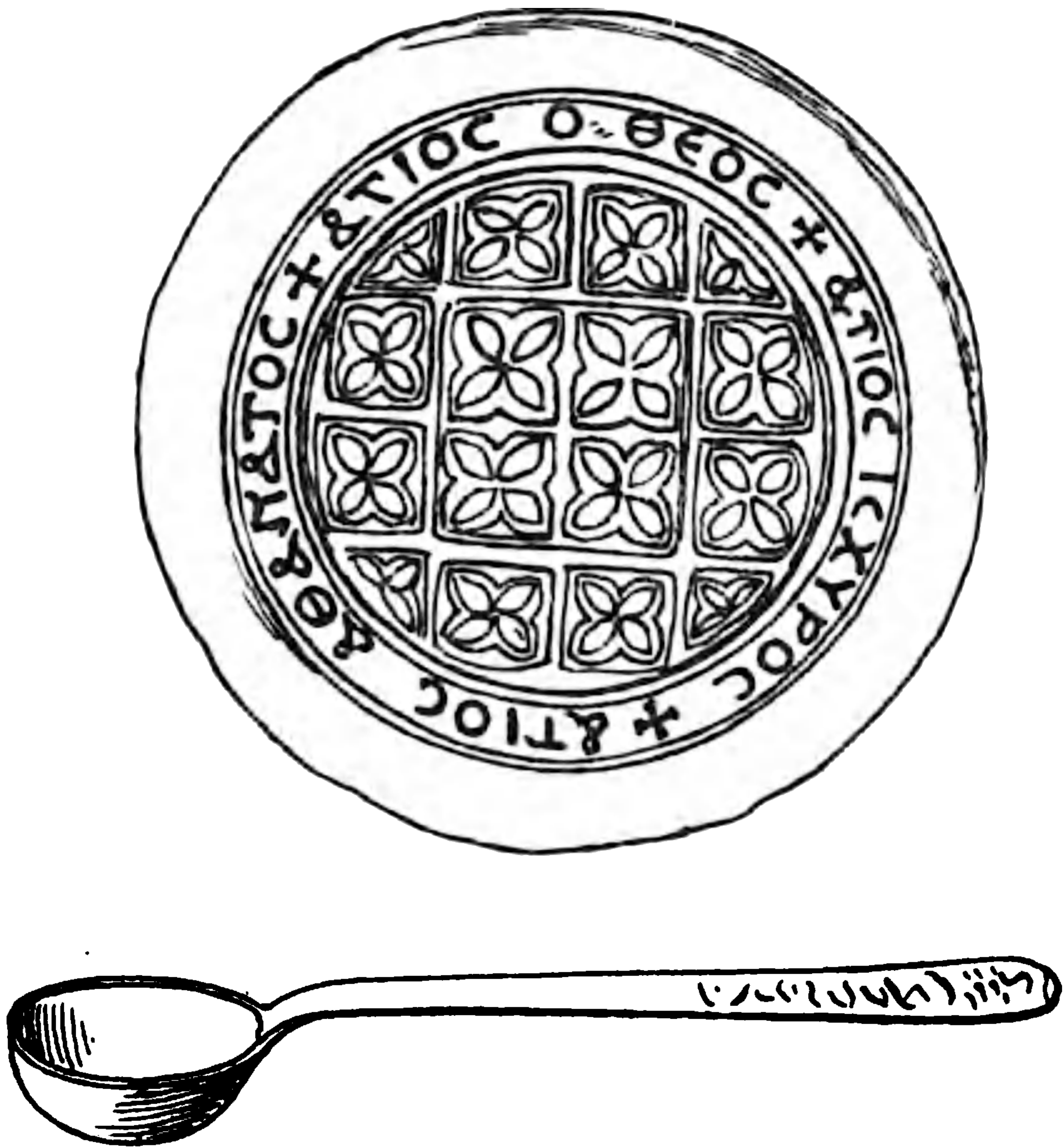


FIG. 56.—Coptic Eucharistic bread and spoon (after Butler).

font, originally outside the church, is now in a baptistery within it, but not always in the same place.

The Coptic altar is an almost cubical structure of brick and plaster, with a sunken rectangular space in the top, in which is placed a wooden tablet, resembling those used in Abyssinia (see p. 94), carved with a cross having above and beneath it the Greek letters *alpha* and *omega*, and at the corners the initial letters of the Greek words 'Jesus Christ, Son of God': above this tablet, which is concealed by the altar-cloth, the elements are placed at the mass. The altar stands free beneath a canopy resembling the *ciborium* (see



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simply a case for the chalice at the consecration. It is a cubical box painted on the sides with sacred subjects, and having at the top a circular hole large enough to admit the chalice, which is of the same height, so that the paten when



FIG. 59.—Coptic stole  
(after Butler).

placed upon the top of the tabernacle lies flat upon the rim of the chalice. The fan (fig. 57, Greek *rhipidion*, Latin *flabellum*), originally intended to keep away flies, has survived among the Copts, but is principally used for processional and other purposes. Glass phials are generally used for the wine and sacred oils, and silver boxes for incense. Other objects placed upon the altar are a pair of candlesticks; a book of the Gospels hermetically sealed in an ornamental silver case; a small hand-cross; and a kind of diadem of silver and gold usually ornamented with texts, which is placed on the brows of the bride and bridegroom during the marriage ceremony (see p. 56). At the north side of the altar stand an ewer and basin for washing the hands, and round it may be placed a number of standard candlesticks. The censers, which are freely used during services, are of silver or bronze.

The Copts use at the Eucharist unfermented wine made from the juice of raisins, and leavened bread of white flour, made into round cakes about three inches in diameter and one inch thick (fig. 56). These are stamped with a diaper of crosses enclosed in squares surrounded by a Greek inscription, either the *Trisagion*: 'Holy God, holy mighty, holy immortal'; or the *Sanctus*: 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts.' The bread is first divided into

five pieces, and the four central squares, called the *isbodikon*, are reserved for the priests alone. At the end of the service similar, but unconsecrated, cakes are distributed among the congregation: one of these may be seen in Case 23.



The vestments used by Coptic priests are in general similar to those of the Orthodox Greek Church (see p. 105). They consist of a tunic like the *sticharion*, girdle, stole, cuffs or armlets (cf. the Greek *epimanikia*, see p. 105), *phelonion* or supervestment, and *shamlah*, but they are seldom all worn together. The tunic is a long white garment with short close sleeves, usually embroidered in gold or silver thread or silk, with the Virgin and Child accompanied by angels upon the breast, and with an angel and crosses on each sleeve. The *shamlah* (fig. 58) is a long band or scarf of white silk or linen worn over the head and hanging down the back; the girdle, usually of silk with silver clasps, is worn over the tunic at festivals; the stole for priests and bishops (*epitrachelion* or *patrashîl*, see fig. 59) is distinct from that of deacons, and is not worn on ordinary occasions: it is an embroidered band of various colours, six feet long and nine inches broad, with a hole at one end through which the head is placed; the armlets of embroidered silk or velvet are tied over the forearm, but are chiefly worn at ceremonies of investiture or ordination; the *phelonion* now somewhat resembles a cope, and when worn by the patriarch or by bishops has a hood.

Of vestments and insignia distinctive of the higher clergy may be mentioned the white woollen pall embroidered with crosses, worn by the patriarch, and resembling the Greek *omophorion* or the archiepiscopal pallium; the cylindrical crowns or mitres worn by the patriarch and by bishops within their own dioceses; and the staff, between five and six feet long, made of wood, ivory, or silver, resembling a tau-cross rather than a crozier, and terminating in a small cross flanked by two retorted serpents' heads (fig. 60). The same kind of staff is used in the Greek Church (see fig. 106).

Among objects of more general use are processional crosses, usually of silver, not dissimilar in shape from the brass Abyssinian crosses in Wall-Cases 16-18; the bronze and glass lamps suspended before the screens and pictures; and the bolster-shaped silk cases of relics, usually kept in chests or

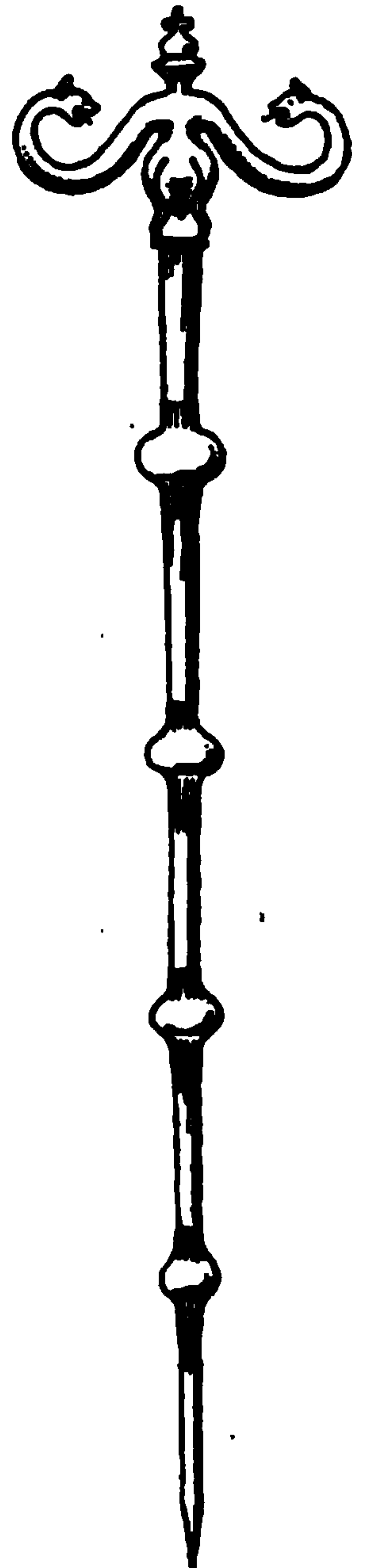


FIG. 60.—Coptic pastoral staff (after Butler).





FIG. 61.—Ancient Coptic tombstone. (No. 942.)





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cupboards in the body of the church. The Copts have no crucifixes.

The walls and pillars of the churches are frequently covered with frescoes; but none of these, and but few of the pictures, are of artistic merit, nearly all being of later date than the Middle Ages. Church music is extremely primitive, and the principal instruments employed are cymbals and tongueless hand-bells struck with small iron rods. Large church-bells were forbidden by the Mahommedans at an early date, and the congregations have since been summoned by a kind of wooden gong, universal in the Greek Church under the name of *simantron* (see p. 104).

It may be added that there are many close resemblances between the vestments and the ritual of the Armenian and Syrian Churches and those of the Copts.

#### Wall-Case 23.

A fine example of the characteristic Coptic tombstones (fig. 61), the majority of which are considered to date from the seventh or eighth century. The most striking features of the ornamentation are the crosses and the curious eagle-like doves which are frequently met with upon these monuments; towards the top is a Greek inscription in memory of a lady named *Sophrone*. Above will be seen a circular slab with a similar dove holding an olive-branch in its beak, and a large cross of gilt leather from Medinet Habu, Thebes.

#### Wall-Cases 19-22.

The Cases contain a variety of objects in bronze, pottery, plaster, wood, and stone, illustrative of the minor arts of the Copts from the fourth to the eighth century. Many of them have been obtained from the cemeteries, such as that of Akhmim (Panopolis). The following are worthy of especial remark: the bronze vessels (fig. 62); the two inscribed pottery lamps (Nos. 805-6), and the fragments of flat dishes or plates of red ware impressed with Christian designs (fig. 63); the plaster seals (Nos. 958-968) from large wine-jars; the stamps of limestone and wood; the fragments of carved wood and bone, &c. At the back of Cases 19-20 is a linen tunic with applied tapestry ornament (fig. 64), of a type frequently found in Coptic cemeteries, and extensively illustrated in the large series of early textiles at South Kensington; below are other examples of Coptic textiles. On the wall at the back of Cases 21-22 are framed a number of cedar panels of



mediaeval date (thirteenth century) from a door in the church of St. Mary (*Al Mu'Allaka*), Cairo. They are interesting examples of the later Coptic Art, in which Christian subjects are found side



FIG. 62.—Bronze patera. (No. 534.)

by side with a decorative style purely Saracenic in character. The subjects represented are: The Annunciation and Baptism (on one panel, plate XIII), Nativity, the Entry into Jerusalem, the Descent into Hell, the Pentecost, and the Ascension.



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positions. The pottery *ostraka*, most of which come from Medinet Habu, were largely used by village headmen and scribes for receipts and accounts, and by school children learning to write ;



FIG. 64.—Tapestry medallion on a tunic from a Coptic cemetery. (No. 951.)

examples may be seen in the Third Egyptian Room, Table-Case M.

In the bottom of the Cases are various objects, some of doubtful authenticity, supposed to be connected with the later Gnostic (see p. 31) superstitions of the Middle Ages.



## ABYSSINIA.

Abyssinia, a mountainous country in which the Blue Nile takes its rise, lies to the south of Egypt and Nubia, and is inhabited by a mixed population of Hamitic, Semitic, and Negro blood. It owed much of its early civilization to Arabs from Yemen, who entered the country before the Christian era, and were for a long time accessible to Graeco-Roman influence. Christianity had been introduced from Egypt by the fourth century, and the Abyssinians joined with the Copts in adopting the Monophysite belief (see above, p. 6); the *Abuna*, or head of the Abyssinian Church, is still a Copt nominated by the Patriarch of Alexandria. From the fifth century to the end of the Middle Ages little was heard of this Ethiopian kingdom; but in the early sixteenth century the Portuguese made it known to Europe, and their missionaries endeavoured to convert its inhabitants to Latin Christianity. Their efforts were, however, unsuccessful, and in the first half of the seventeenth century the missionaries were expelled from the country, which was once more to a great extent cut off from European influences. At the close of the seventeenth century a new era of exploration was inaugurated by the voyage of the French doctor Poncet, who was followed in the eighteenth century by the British traveller James Bruce.

As might be expected from the savage environment of the country, and the long periods during which it remained in isolation, the Christian belief in Abyssinia has been much corrupted by superstitious beliefs and practices, while various ideas and usages have also been adopted from Jewish and Mahomedan sources.

The clergy and the monks, who are very numerous, are almost the only persons in the country who have any pretensions to learning, and their knowledge is chiefly confined to a superficial acquaintance with a book of the Gospels, the Psalms, the liturgies, and the lives of Saints. The Abyssinian Church has retained the Christian sacraments and feasts, and the fasts which are prescribed, but not universally observed, occupy more than a third of the year. The Abyssinian liturgy belongs to the same family as that of the Copts, and, like it, is a descendant of the Alexandrian liturgy of St. Mark.

The churches are usually circular buildings, seldom more than fifty feet in diameter, with conical thatched roofs and four entrances at the principal points of the compass. Out-



wardly they rather resemble the *tukul* or ordinary native hut, but they are placed in enclosures surrounded by a wall and planted with shrubs and trees, in which the priests' houses and the church treasure-chamber are situated (fig. 65). The interior has three concentric walls at regular intervals, which form two circular galleries or passages surrounding a central space called the Holy of Holies (*Kedesta Kedestan*), where the altar stands. The outermost of these galleries is occupied by the congregation, the males standing on one side, the women on the other, while the inner is reserved for the priests, to whom alone the entrance to the Holy of Holies is permitted. The door of the sanctuary is covered by a curtain or veil, and its walls are decorated, as are sometimes those of the outer circles, with sacred subjects and scenes from the lives of saints, painted



FIG. 65.—Church of Amba Derho, Abyssinia (after J. T. Bent, 'The Sacred City of the Ethiopians').

on the surface, or on pieces of canvas, parchment, or even paper attached to it. There are no seats for either priests or people. On the altar, which is frequently covered with a silken cloth, is placed the *tâbut*, a model tabernacle resting upon a rectangular slab of wood usually engraved with a cross and with various inscriptions. This slab (fig. 66), which is regarded as the most sacred object in the church, is probably related to the Coptic altar-slab (see p. 84), and the tabernacle is considered by the Abyssinians to be a copy of the Ark of the Covenant which Menelek I, son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, is said to have brought with him from Jerusalem, and which they believe to be still preserved in the cathedral at Aksum. These slabs are held to be so sacred that, when they are removed from the churches to be carried in procession, they are always carefully draped and concealed from





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one hand a rattle or sistrum (see fig. 67 and the examples exhibited in the Cases), closely resembling those used in ancient Egypt (examples in the Fourth Egyptian Room, Table-Case A); and in the other a wooden crutch about five feet long with a brass or ivory head, possibly related in idea to the ancient magician's rod. The rattle is shaken to accompany the chants of the dancers, and the crutch is used to beat time; the crutch is, however, also employed as a support during the long services; for, as we have seen, there are no seats in the churches. The dance is accompanied by drums, two of which may be seen in fig. 68. In processions handsome brass crosses engraved with sacred subjects

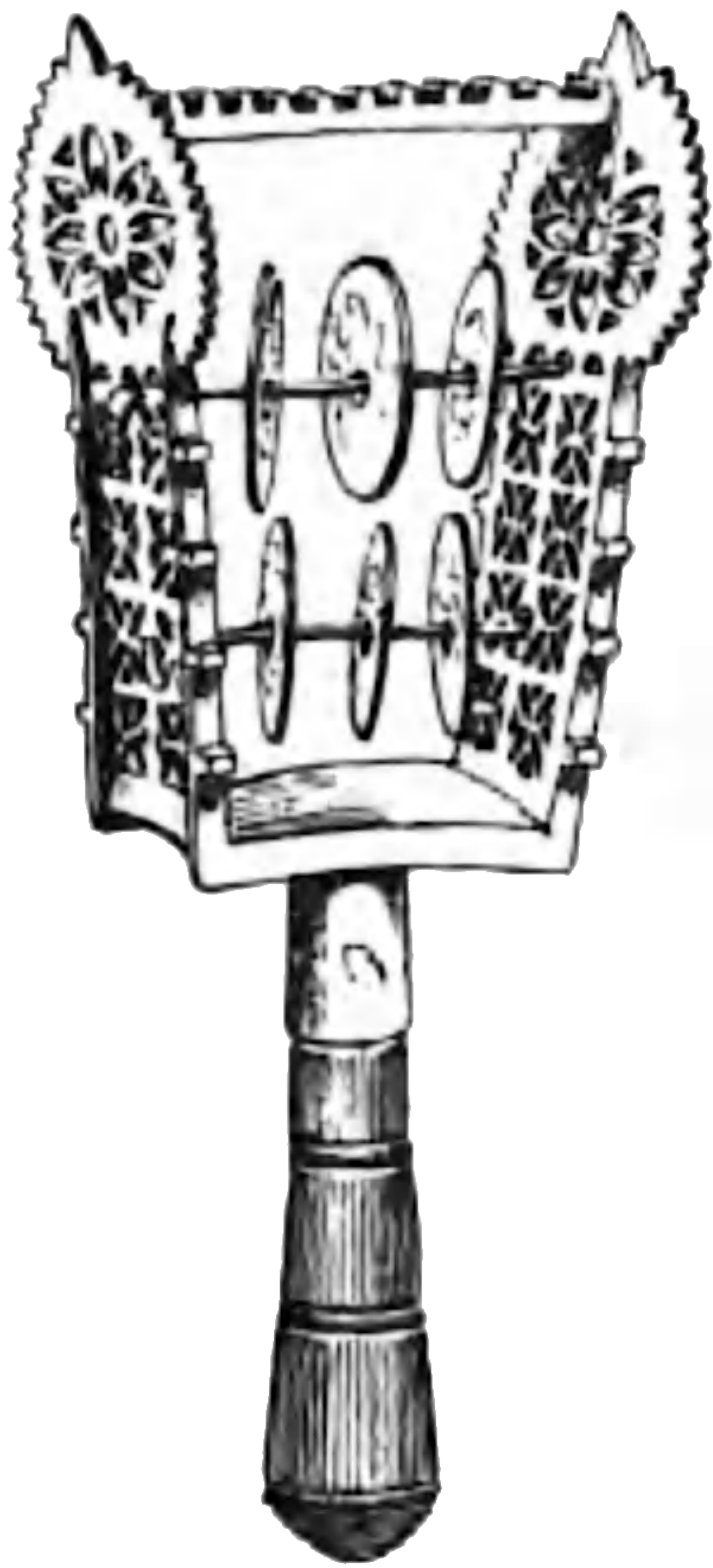


FIG. 67.—Abyssinian priest's rattle.

(see the fine examples in the Cases, and plate XIV) are carried, and also gorgeous red and yellow umbrellas decorated with silver ornaments. A cross, sometimes with ostrich eggs fixed on the points, surmounts every church, and hangs in the Holy of Holies; in this connexion it may be of interest to mention that all over Western Asia, as well as in Egypt and Abyssinia, ostrich eggs may often be seen hanging in churches and mosques, where they are probably placed as symbols of the creation, it being a very ancient belief that the world was produced from an egg. Though here and there European bells have been introduced, the ordinary church-bells of Ethiopia are large slabs of wood or slate-like stone suspended from a bar, and similar to the wooden *simantra* (see

p. 104) commonly used in the Greek Church. The common symbol of Christianity is a blue string worn round the neck. The liturgical language of Abyssinia is Ethiopic or *Ge'ez*, a Semitic tongue akin to that used in early times by the Arabs of Yemen (see above); the name, which is in full *Lisana Ge'ez*, means 'the tongue of the free,' and the syllabary is written from right to left. Owing to conquests by Gallas and people from Tigré, a number of foreign words were gradually introduced, and new signs were invented to express them; eventually the dialect of the province of Amhara became predominant, with the result that Amharic is now the general language of the country. The manuscript exhibited in the



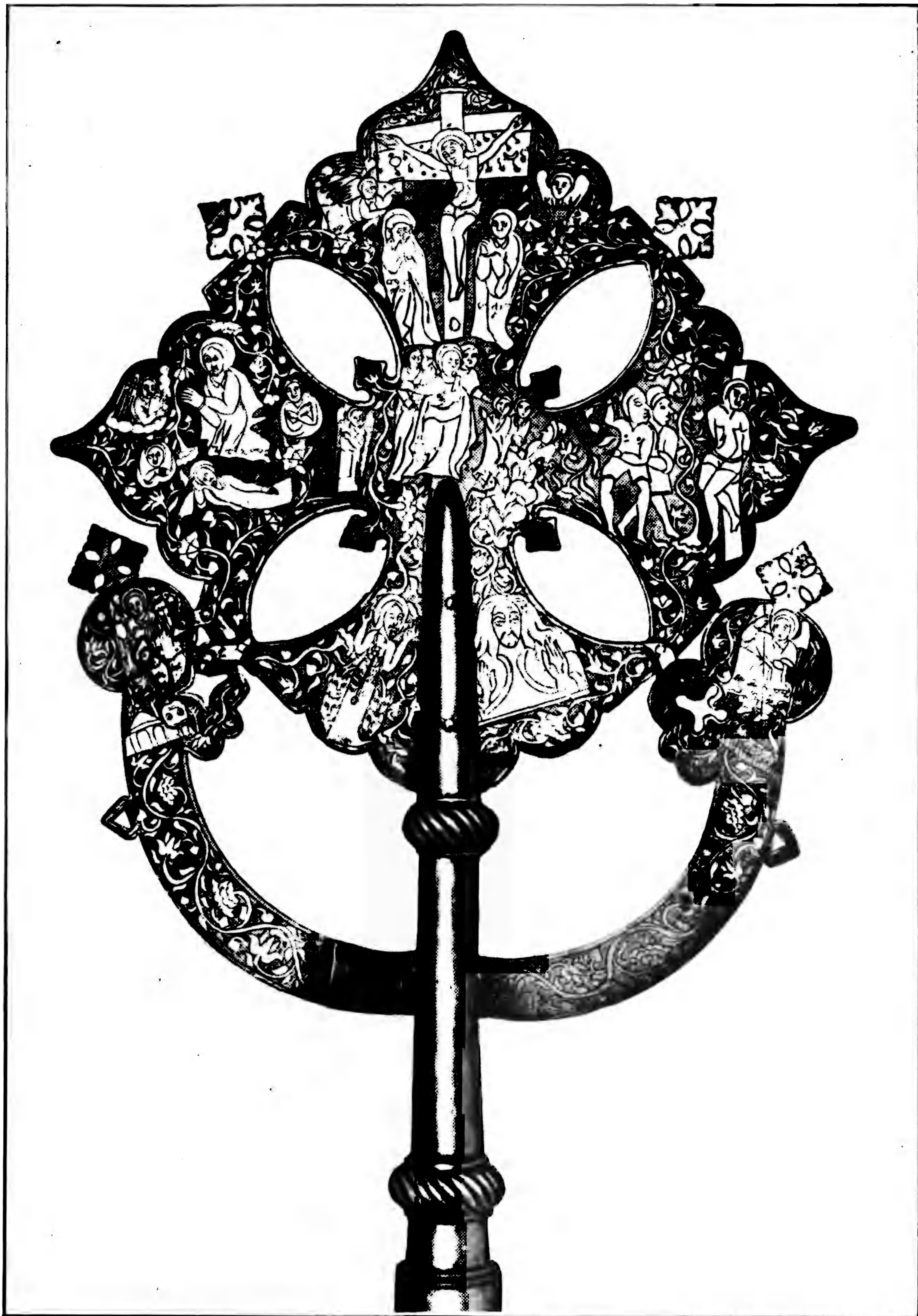


PLATE XIV. GILT BRONZE CROSS FROM ABYSSINIA.  
(See p. 97.)



Abyssinian religious picture in the shape of a large Crucifixion upon canvas, obtained by Mr. J. Theodore Bent in 1893 and presented by him to the British Museum. Like the engravings upon the metal crosses, it shows traces of Western (Portuguese) influence in the treatment of the central subject, for the feet of Our Lord are pierced with a single nail, whereas in Eastern Crucifixions and in the West up to the thirteenth century, the feet are nailed separately. The picture was found cast on one side, because the colours were somewhat faded, in the Church of the Saviour of the World at Adowa; but it cannot be of any great antiquity, as many of the accessories of costume and equipment are similar to those in use in Abyssinia at the present day. Round the principal subject are grouped smaller scenes representing events in the history of Our Lord; among these the Flagellation and the Entry into Jerusalem can be clearly distinguished.

### **THE GREEK CHURCH: RUSSIA.**

The Orthodox Eastern Church is practically a federation of autonomous National Churches in communion with one another, agreeing exactly in doctrine and almost exactly in rites, customs and discipline; but, unlike the Latin Church, acknowledging no central authority. In the case of a general synod, however, the Patriarch of Constantinople would probably preside.

These National Churches are:—

1. The Patriarchate of Constantinople, consisting of Turkey in Europe, most of Asia Minor, and Cyprus.
2. The Patriarchate of Alexandria, comprising Egypt.
3. The Patriarchate of Antioch, including all Syria except Palestine, and having an undefined eastern boundary.
4. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, confined to Palestine.
5. The Church of Russia, by far the largest and most important of these Churches.
6. The Church of Greece.
7. The Church of Servia.
8. The Church of Roumania.
9. The Church of Montenegro.
10. The Church of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
11. The Orthodox Eastern Church in Austria-Hungary.

The four Patriarchates are governed by Patriarchs, and the other Churches by their respective 'Holy Governing Synods' or by some chief metropolitan. Their relations to one another and to the See of Constantinople are not unlike those of



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Nevertheless, all these differences of practice are allowed to be retained by certain bodies of Christians of the Oriental Rite, known as 'Uniates,' who have placed themselves under the jurisdiction of the See of St. Peter.

The collection connected with the Eastern Church being chiefly of Russian origin, a brief note on the ecclesiastical antiquities of that country, with a few remarks on the arrangement of the churches and on the vestments of the clergy, may be here conveniently added. At the close of the ninth century the northern Slavonic tribes had been organized by Scandinavians from Sweden, whose culture resembled that of the Northmen in Western Europe. The capital was ultimately established at Kieff on the Dnieper, and during the tenth century the Russians descended the river in fleets of light boats to harry the western shores of the Black Sea. But in the year 970 their armies, which had invaded Bulgaria and entered the plain of Thrace, were totally overthrown by the Byzantine Emperor John Zimisce. Soon after this defeat they were converted to Christianity by command of their prince Vladimir, and along with the precepts of their new faith began to learn the elements of Byzantine civilization. The earliest centres of Russo-Byzantine art were on the South Coast, where models imported from Constantinople were soon imitated by local craftsmen; but the new influences almost immediately reached Kieff, and many of the antiquities of this period found in Southern Russia, especially enamelled objects, prove that the Russians were soon able to produce work of very fine quality. Architecture, which had originally employed wood, was now developed in the Byzantine style, and churches were ornamented with mosaics. For two hundred years Byzantine civilization had time to spread in the Dnieper Valley; then came the Tartar invasions of the early thirteenth century, devastating the fertile lands to the North of the Black Sea and cutting off the Russians from direct communication with the South. Remains of the minor arts of this earliest period of Christianity are to be seen in the great Russian Museums, but they are rare in other countries. The great majority of Russian religious antiquities to be seen in Western Europe belong to the later period, which began after the Tartars had been defeated and the Russian people were once more able to develop their national life.

For the visitor to a Museum the interest principally centres in objects connected with the public or private worship of



the Russians. Of the former class the British Museum has no examples, though some idea of their nature may be gathered from the annexed illustrations; the latter is chiefly represented by the various types of crosses and ikons (Greek εἰκῶν = image or picture), either painted or cast in metal. These ikons, in the form of a picture for the wall or portable devotional tablets, are ubiquitous in Russia. The churches possess famous and venerated pictures, some of considerable antiquity, while in the dwelling-rooms of private houses lesser ikons are usually placed in the angle formed by two walls. At the corners of the streets and in public places there are countless shrines with tapers and lamps burning, before which the passers-by make the sign of the cross. It has already been remarked that objects dating from the early period of Russian Christianity before the Tartar invasions are rare in the Russian Collections of European Museums. The enamelled brass diptychs and crosses, and the other small antiquities which form the bulk of such collections, mostly belong to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, while some are even later; but they often have an appearance of greater antiquity because the treatment of the subjects generally follows the old Byzantine traditions. The inscriptions upon these religious objects are in the old Slavonic language which has been retained by the Church, and which differs from modern Russian much as mediaeval English differs from that of to-day. It is frequently called *Cyrillic* after St. Cyril, who, with his brother St. Methodius, went as a missionary among the Northern Slavs in the second half of the ninth century, and introduced the alphabet which now bears his name for the use of the Moravian and Bulgarian peoples. Cyril's alphabet was composed of contemporary Greek letters with added characters, the additions being made necessary by the number of sounds which the Greek letters were unable to render. The Cyrillic characters bear a close resemblance to those of the modern Russian alphabet.

The shape of the Russian church (fig. 69) is not always uniform; it seldom has aisles or transepts, and is usually much broader in proportion to its length than the churches of the West. It has a large central dome surrounded as a rule by at least four cupolas, generally of the bulbous shape (fig. 70) derived from Tartar sources, and either covered with gilded plates or painted in brilliant colours. It preserves most of the internal features of the Byzantine Church, which, as we have seen, was itself considerably indebted to the Early Christian



basilica. But the heavy cylindrical columns are painted all over with large figures of saints on a dull gold background, and the walls and roof are similarly decorated, the whole producing, in the dim light admitted by small windows, an effect which is very strange to the Western eye.

At the east end, usually raised by a few steps to a higher level than the body of the church, is a central apsed sanctuary like the *presbyterium* of a *basilica* (see p. 33), commonly

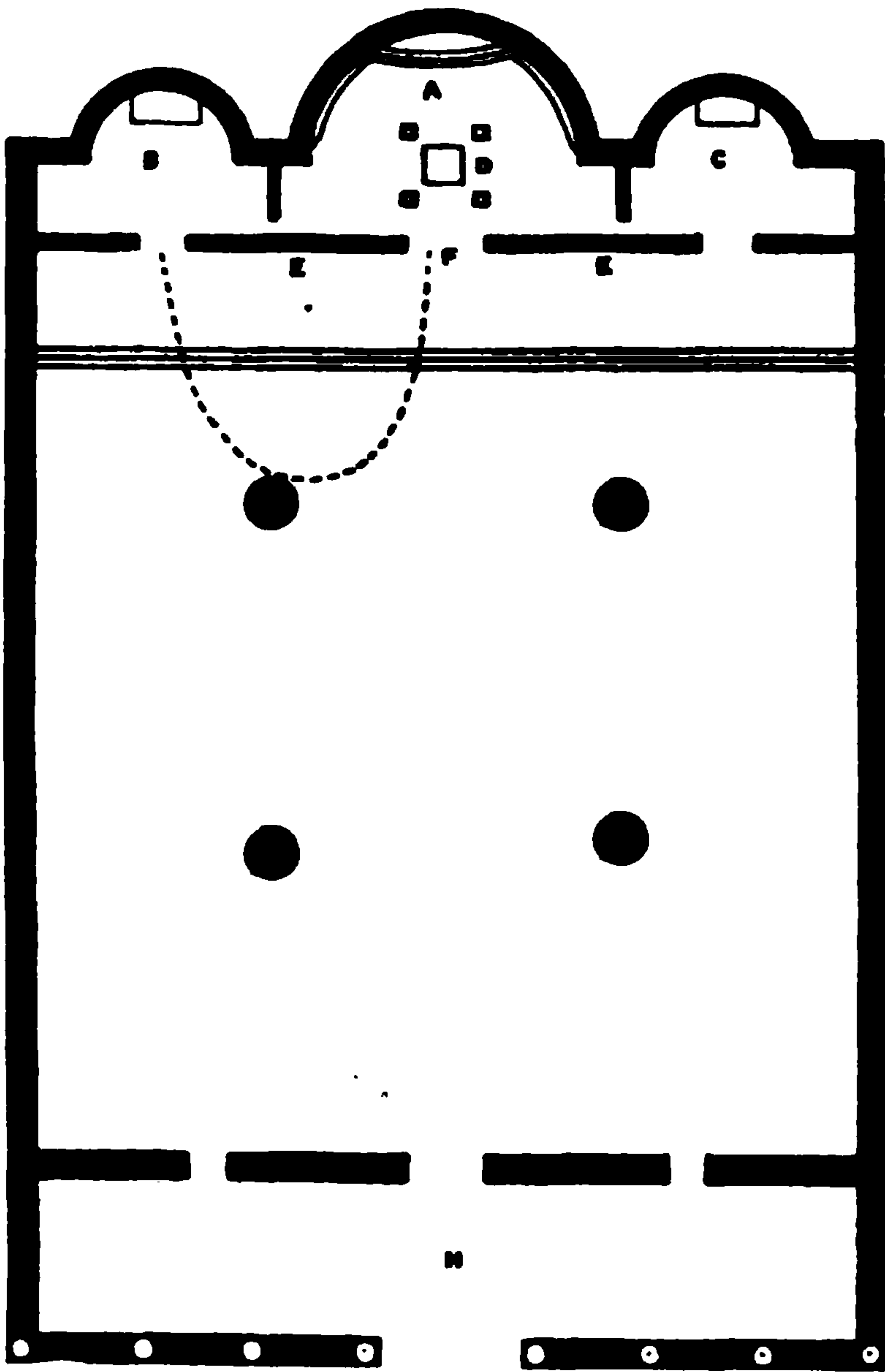


FIG. 69.—Plan of a Russian church (after King, 'Rites and Ceremonies of the Greek Church in Russia'). A. *Bema*. B. *Prothesis*. C. *Diakonikon*. D. Holy Table. E. *Iconostasis*. F. Holy Door. G. *Trapeza*. H. *Narthex*.

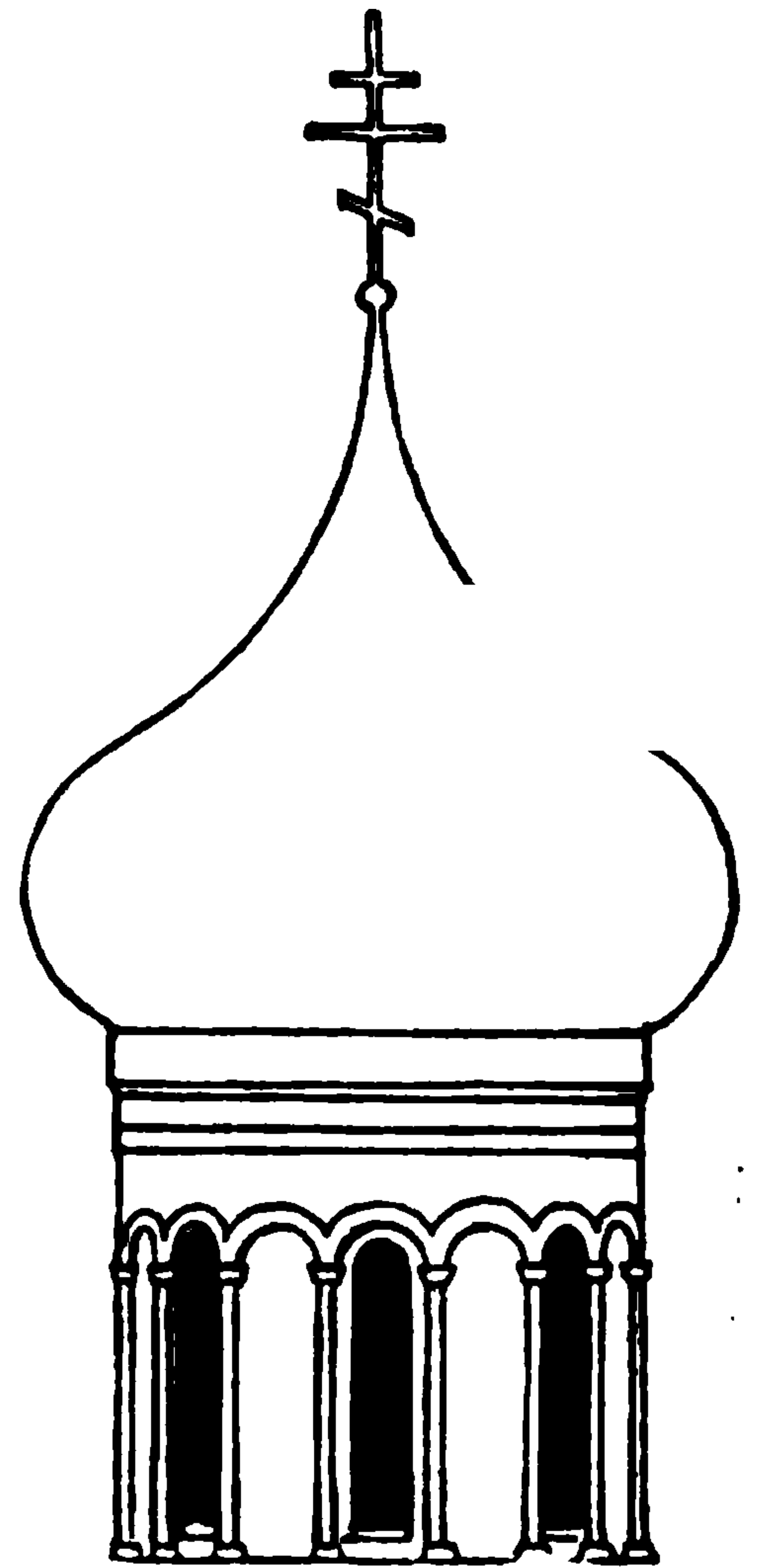


FIG. 70.—A Russian cupola.

called the *bema*, and on either side of this two lateral chapels, the chapel of the *Prothesis* on the north, and the *Diakonikon* on the south (cf. p. 33), the former containing the table on which elements are prepared before the service, the latter the holy vessels and the vestments, which are under the care of a deacon. Right across the church in front of the sanctuary and chapels runs a high solid screen (*iconostasis*), a most characteristic feature of a Russian church, which is





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together to the people; the Holy Lance (fig. 71), used for dividing the bread in the *Prothesis* before the Consecration; the asterisk (*Aster, asteriskos*, literally, star; fig. 71), corresponding to the Coptic *dome* (see p. 85), placed over the paten to prevent the veil from touching the bread; the fan or flabellum (*rhipidion*, usually of silver, in the form of a cherub's head upon a handle, cf. fig. 57), with which the deacon fans the elements; the *thermarion* or vessel containing the warm water to be mingled with the wine in the chalice after consecration, a rite peculiar to the Orthodox Eastern Church; and veils for covering the chalice and paten. There

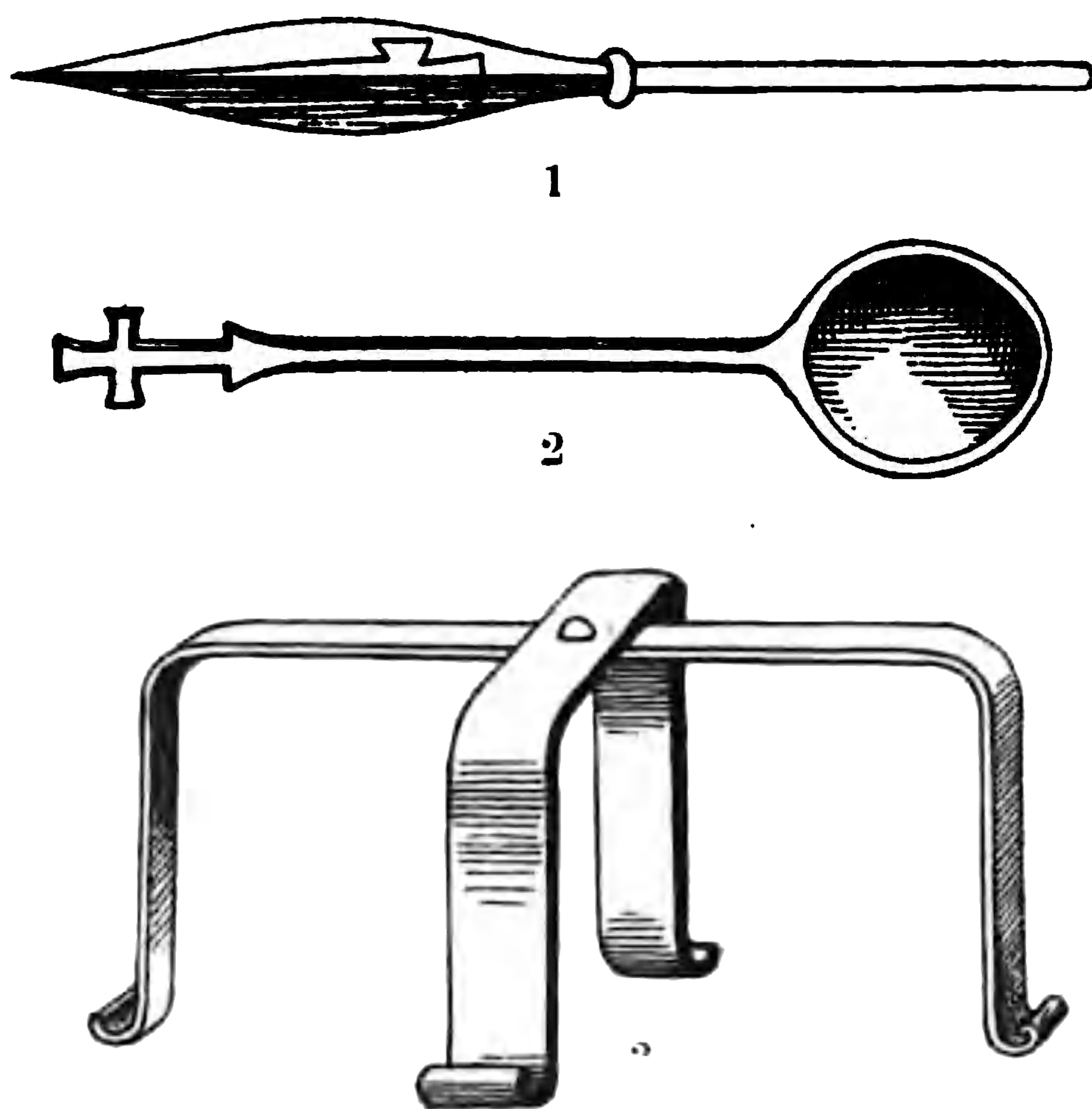


FIG. 71.—Utensils of the Greek Church. 1. Holy Lance. 2. Eucharistic spoon. 3. Asterisk.

also stands upon the altar a chrismatory (*alabastron* or *Bikion*) for the chrism. Other utensils in general use are censers (*thumiasteria*) and holy-water stoups with sprinklers, though holy water is less commonly used in the Greek than in the Roman Church; and a wooden or metal gong (*simantron*), struck before the beginning of the service. There are various kinds of lamps, including chandeliers and smaller lamps, suspended before the ikons, as well as great numbers of tapers. Two candlesticks, one for two, the other for three candles, are respectively symbolic of the two natures of Christ and the Trinity, and are used by bishops at certain parts



of the liturgy and while giving the benediction (fig. 72). The bread used for the Eucharist is a circular cake stamped with the characters shown in fig. 73; these are an abbreviation of the Greek sentence: 'Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς νικᾷ, *Jesus Christ conquers*.

The clergy when out of doors wear a cassock, which may be of any sober colour, and a high black hat without a brim; this hat, which the higher clergy cover with a veil, is retained during the service.



FIG. 72.—Russian bishop (to left) and archimandrite (to right) (after King).

The vestments of a priest, which are not all worn on every occasion, are the *sticharion* or long girded tunic, corresponding to the Latin alb, but not always white; the *epitrachelion* or stole, which resembles the Coptic stole already described (p. 87, and fig. 59), and worn in the same way; the *epimanikia* or detachable cuffs for the forearm, embroidered with crosses; the *phenolion* or *phelonion*, a supervestment resembling the chasuble in being poncho-shaped, and the cope in being very ample at the back; and the *epigonation*,



a lozenge-shaped piece of stiff embroidered silk or velvet with a cross upon it, worn on the right side by dignitaries, and peculiar to the Eastern Church. A bishop (see fig. 72) has the same vestments except the *phelonion*, for which he substitutes a tunic with short broad sleeves embroidered with crosses called *Sakkos*; in addition he is distinguished by the *omophorion*, a narrow band round the neck with long de-



FIG. 73.—Characters stamped on the Eucharistic bread in the Greek Church.

pending end, resembling the earlier form of the archbishop's pallium of the Western Church, though not necessarily made of wool; a crown or mitre, quite different in shape from that used in the West (an example is to be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum); a pectoral cross; a medallion, called *Panagia*, with a picture of the Virgin hanging over the breast; a long mantle (*mandyas*) somewhat like a cope; and an episcopal staff similar to that in use among the Copts (fig. 60), and quite unlike the Western crozier. Deacons wear *sticharion*, *epimanikia*, and a narrow stole called *orarion* over the left shoulder. There is great variety in the colours of the vestments. The services of the Greek Church are extremely complicated, and it is impossible to give any account of them within the space here available.

### Wall-Cases 14 and 15.

In these Cases is a series of enamelled brass devotional plaques and crosses of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; a painted picture of the Virgin and Child in an enamelled silver frame; small devotional carvings in wood and ivory, including one of the wooden crosses with minute designs attributed to Mount Athos; a heavy iron penitential crown from the Monastery of Kieff, of a type formerly worn by Russian ascetics, and represented by several examples in the National Historical Museum at Moscow; two enamelled silver chismatories, &c.

In order to give a general idea of a Russian enamelled cross of the seventeenth or the eighteenth century, a good example has been reproduced (plate xv). The following account of the various inscriptions upon it will doubtless be of use to those who may possess articles of a similar nature. In the upper part are represented the first and third persons of the Trinity; at the top is God the Father, described by the words *Lord God Sabaoth*, with



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both hands extended, the fingers raised in the act of benediction ; beneath is the dove with the inscription *Holy Spirit* above it ; on either side are two descending angels, with the legend *Angels of God* on two separate labels, beneath which are two other words *King of Glory (Isar Slavui)*.

Above the head of Our Lord are the four initial letters of the words *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews* ; and in the angles of the cross contained in the nimbus, the two Greek words  $\delta\ \omega\nu$ , which signify 'The existing,' i. e. the eternal (One). The long inscription above the arms of Our Lord reads, '*The Crucifixion of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ the Son of God* ; and that below the arms: *We adore thy Cross, O Lord, and glorify thy holy resurrection*, which is a verse from the *Troparion* (or anthem) sung at the *Stavroproskynesis* or Adoration of the Cross on the third Sunday in Lent, and also upon Holy Cross Day. Beyond the arms of the cross are the first and last letters (IC XC) of the two Greek words *Ἰησοῦς Χριστός*, Jesus Christ. Below, on either side of Our Lord's body and divided in two halves by it, is the word *Nika*, victory ; the letters K (*Kopie*) and T (*Trost*), meaning lance and reed respectively, which are almost always placed by the side of these instruments of the Passion, are here by exception absent. On the foot of the cross are two pairs of letters, the uppermost M and L signifying *Miesto lobnoe* or *place of a skull*, the lower pair P (R) and B, *Raspiat byst*, He was crucified. On the conventional hill from which the cross rises, are two further pairs of letters, the first Γ (G), A, standing for *Glava Adama*, 'the skull of Adam,' the second Γ (G), Γ (G), for *Gora Golgotha*. 'the Mount of Golgotha.' In the centre of the mount is seen the skull of Adam, in allusion to the tradition, commonly reproduced in Byzantine art, that the first man was buried upon the site where Christ was crucified. On the back of the upper part of the cross is another inscription, very commonly placed in this position, reading as follows: *The Cross, the guardian of the whole Universe ; the Cross, the beauty of the Church ; the Cross, to kings dominion ; the Cross, to believers safety ; the Cross, to angels glory ; the Cross, to devils wounding ;* the whole being taken from the *Exaposteilarion*, a sort of anthem used at Orthros or morning service on Wednesdays and Fridays.

It will be noticed that, as universally in Byzantine and Greek representations of the Crucifixion, and also in Western representations earlier than the thirteenth century, Our Lord's feet are nailed separately and not crossed one above the other. The cross with eight extremities, as shown in the plate, is that especially associated with the *Raskolniks* or dissenters of the Russian Church. But it is also in general use among the Orthodox.

In the bottom of the Cases are two wooden models inlaid with pearl-shell, one of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem,



the other of the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem; a wooden water-vessel in the shape of a church, from the Caucasus, pearl-shells from Palestine carved with scriptural subjects in relief, and other small objects of miscellaneous character.

On the top of the Cases round the room are several fragments of sculpture, including a cornice, and a capital of a column with human figures in relief.

### THE MEDIAEVAL ROOM.

#### Wall-Cases 35 and 36, and Table-Case F.

In these Cases are exhibited the ivory carvings, casts of which have been described above, p. 64.

### CORRIDOR LEADING TO THE ROOM OF GOLD ORNAMENTS AND GEMS.

This corridor contains the larger part of a collection of ancient jewellery bequeathed to the Museum in 1897 by Sir A. Wollaston Franks, K.C.B., and therefore kept together as the Franks Bequest.

In the first Case to the left of the door will be seen a fine Byzantine gold bracelet (No. 279 and fig. 74) with an open-work hoop, and a bust of the Virgin upon the medallion in the front.

Among the collection of rings, in a Case immediately opposite the inner door on the right, leading into the Gold Ornament Room, in the fourth and lower rows, are a number of Early Christian and Byzantine rings of bronze, silver, and gold. No. 49 (fig. 30) is a remarkable ring, perhaps of the fourth century, with an open-work inscription, *Accipe dulcis multis annis* ('Accept (this present), sweet one, (and may it be yours') for many a year!'), showing that it was once a gift and perhaps a betrothal ring. No. 50 has engraved on it in Latin *Arborius, mayst thou live in God!* with the sacred monogram between Alpha and Omega; and the next few rings and bezels of rings, some of which are engraved with portraits in intaglio, are inscribed with acclamations of a similar character. No. 77 has the later form of the sacred monogram (†) in openwork. At the end of this row are a few Gnostic gems (see p. 30). The last two rows contain Byzantine rings, some of which, like Nos. 190 (fig. 75) and 207 (fig. 31), are of very fine





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seven radiating serpents, showing that it was worn as an amulet for protection against disease or accident, this design being commonly employed for this purpose. Round the hoop is an inscription which is very frequent upon Byzantine rings: *Lord, preserve the wearer*, which also occurs upon the adjoining numbers (fig. 79). The gold rings, Nos. 171 and 172 (fig. 78), afford a good example of the commonest form of Byzantine monogram, the letters of the

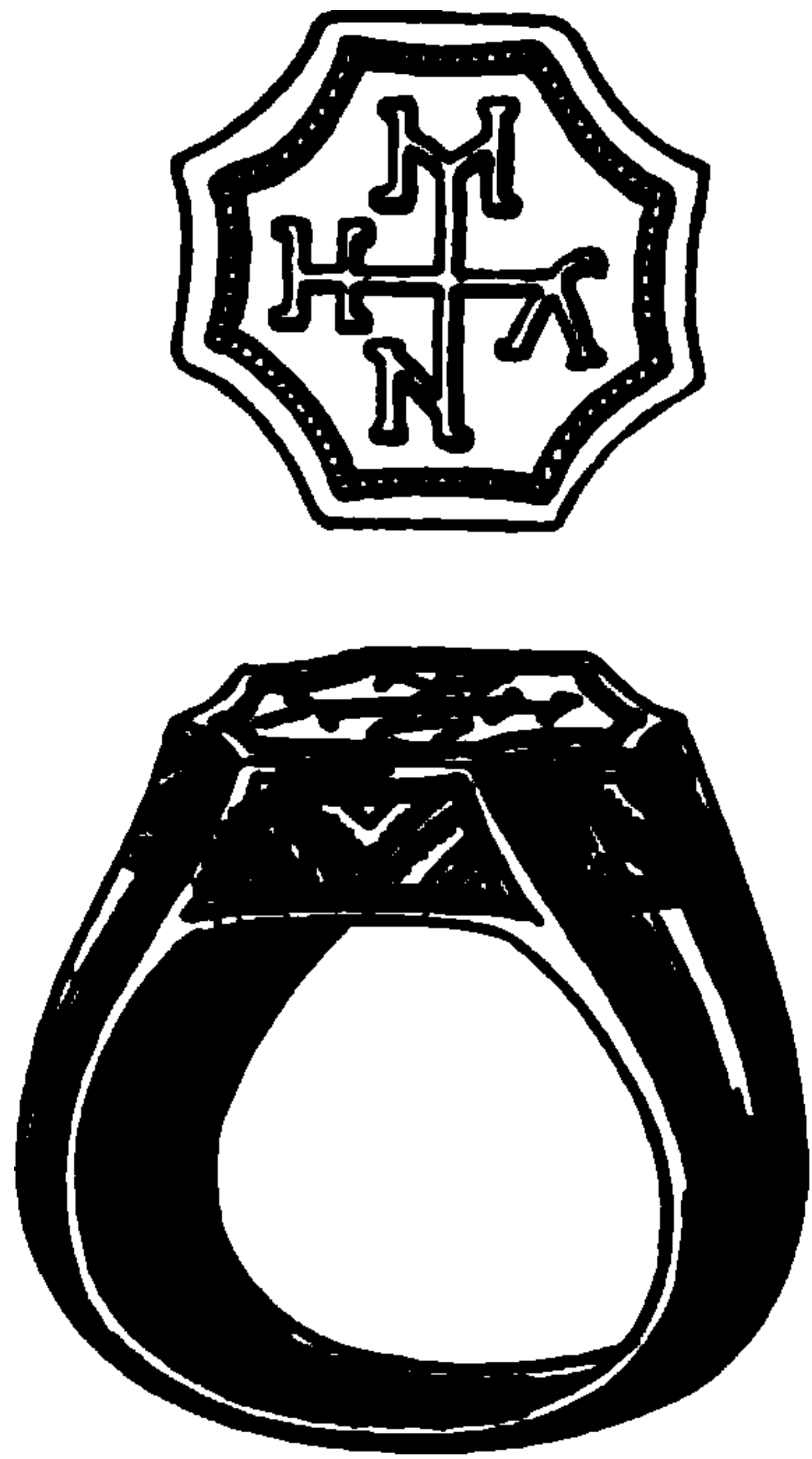


FIG. 78. — Byzantine gold ring with cruciform monogram. (No. 171.)



FIG. 79.—Byzantine bronze ring with inscription. (No. 139.)

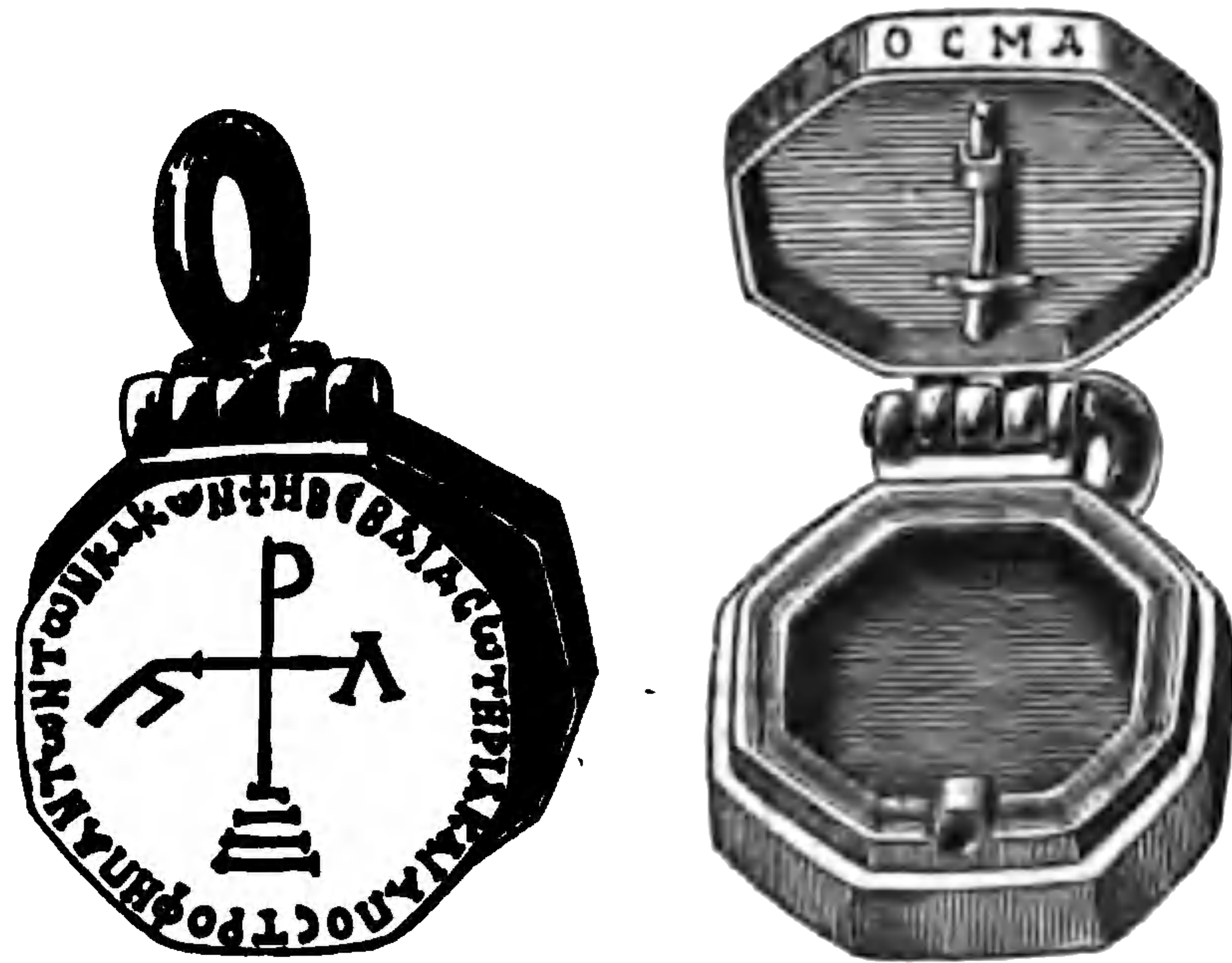


FIG. 80.—Byzantine gold and nielloed reliquary. (No. 284.)

name being distributed on the extremities of a cross. This type of monogram is especially frequent between the eighth and tenth centuries. The large gold ring, No. 210, the hoop of which is moulded to represent two hares, has for bezel a coin of the Emperor Marcian (450–457 A. D.), and can thus almost certainly be assigned to the fifth century.



In the lower half of the second compartment of the Wall-Case on the right of the opposite door leading into the Gold Ornament Room are a few Byzantine jewels. Nos. 253-4 are gold buckle-plates with imperial busts in niello, found with coins of Constantius in Asia Minor, and dating from the fourth century. No. 284 (fig. 80) is a very interesting little gold reliquary of the tenth century, with a nielloed representation of the Nativity on the front, and a cross with monogram on the back. Round the back and



FIG. 81.—Byzantine gold pectoral cross. (No. 285.)

edges runs an inscription showing that the contents were relics of SS. Cosmas and Damian. The gold pectoral cross, No. 285 (fig. 81), has on it the text 'But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ' (Galatians vi. 14). The cross-bow-shaped gold brooch, No. 264, which may be as old as the fifth century, has upon it in Greek the words: 'The Grace of God.' Among the gold earrings, attention may be drawn to Nos. 275 and 276, which are good examples of a type also found in barbaric graves in Hungary: they are considered to date from about the seventh century.



## GOLD ORNAMENT ROOM.

Entering the Gold Ornament Room, and turning to the left, the visitor will find in the top row of Wall-Case O a few Early Christian and Byzantine rings, No. 48 (fig. 82), which is not later than the fourth century, having a fish engraved in intaglio upon the emerald of its bezel, and No. 60 having a monogram with a cross. The gold ring, No. 131, is in the same style as the marriage-rings in the Corridor, and so is No. 121 (see above), but this example has on the bezel the Annunciation with the words from St. Luke i. 28, 'Hail, thou that art highly favoured.' No. 211 can be assigned to the sixth century, the coin

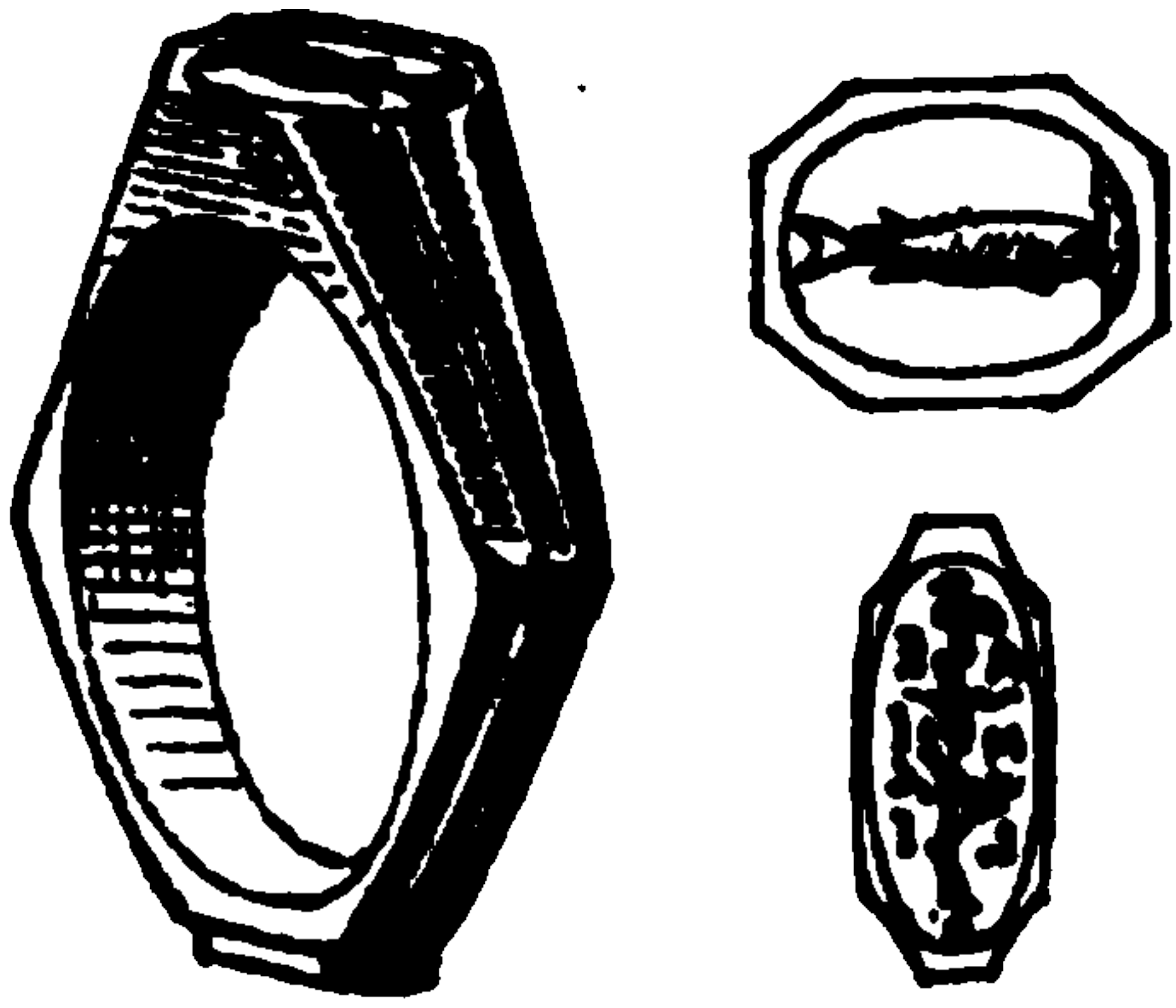


FIG. 82. — Gold ring engraved with a fish. (No. 48.)

which forms the bezel bearing the effigy of Justinian.

In Table-Case W, No. 287, a gold pectoral cross suspended from a bar at the back has nielloed figures of Our Lord, the Virgin in the attitude of prayer between two angels, and a military saint (either St. Theodore or St. George) transfixing a dragon with a spear. The cross is also inscribed with the name of the owner (fig. 83).



FIG. 83. — Byzantine gold pectoral cross. (No. 287.)

## GLASS ROOM.

## Central Case C.

In this case are two remarkable blue glass vases of the fifth century, resembling the earliest form of chalice represented on Early Christian and Byzantine monuments, and possibly themselves used as chalices. No. 658 (fig. 83) still has both its handles, and was found near Amiens (the ancient Samarobriva) in France; No. 659 is unfortunately mutilated.



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