THE CATACOMBS.

BY THE EDITOR.

THE insight into the life of the early Christian church which we gain through patristic literature, is well illustrated by the tomb inscriptions and paintings of the Roman and other catacombs. The symbols which we see there and the short epitaphs are simple and sometimes crude; but knowing the faith they represented, we find them impressive witnesses of a most important period in the history of mankind.

Catacombs are subterranean cemeteries, and the ones usually associated with the term are those in the immediate neighborhood of Rome built during the first four centuries of our era. These subterranean burial places are labyrinths of narrow tunnels, scarcely more than three or four feet wide, dug in the soft tufa stone without any regularity, and considering the darkness underground it is not advisable to venture into them except with a guide well familiar with their topography. The gloom is increased by the funereal atmosphere, and it would be positively dangerous to life to breathe the air for any length of time. Other catacombs have been discovered in Naples, Cyrene, Sicily, Melos, San Jenaro dei Poveri, and other places in lower Italy, also in Alexandria and Paris.

In the days of the early Roman republic the bodies of the dead were buried, while later on it became the custom to cremate them; but because of the Christians' belief in the resurrection of the body, they revived the ancient custom of burial. Thus it happens that the character of the catacombs is mainly Christian although they contain also quite a number of pagan tombs. In addition, however, there is an extensive Jewish cemetery near the Via Appia. Some tombs have been used twice, and their slabs, called opisthographs, show in most cases a pagan inscription inside and a Christian epitaph outside, which suggests the theory that pagans started this mode of burial and the Christians continued it until finally paganism
disappeared. The earliest Christian tombs which can be dated with certainty belong to the second century.

The commonest and simplest graves are called loculi or "places." The larger ones leaving a space above the dead body are "table tombs," and those with an arched top are arcosolia. The tunnels lead sometimes to rooms in which several graves are cut into the walls. They are mostly family sepulchers, and are called crypts or cubicula.

THE JEWISH CATACOMBS.
Roller, Les catacombes de Rome, IV, No. 2.

In ancient times the catacombs were called cemeteries (cemeteria) but it happened that the first one of these burying grounds that became generally known was called the "cemetery near the catacombs" (Cemeterium ad catacumbas)\(^1\) or simply "catacumbs" which later on changed to "catacombs," and this name was gradually adopted for all burial places of the same type.

The most ancient report about the catacombs which is still ex-

\(^1\) Derived from ἱλιβαῖον. It seems that this was the name of the locality around the third milestone of the Via Appia.
tant was written by St. Jerome who visited them when a boy in the year 354. St. Jerome says:

"When I was a boy receiving my education in Rome, I and my schoolfellows used, on Sundays, to make the circuit of the se-
pulchers of the apostles and martyrs. Many a time did we go down into the catacombs. These are excavated deep in the earth, and contain, on either hand as you enter, the bodies of the dead buried in the wall. It is all so dark there that the language of the prophet (Ps. lv. 15) seems to be fulfilled, 'Let them go down quick into hell.' Only occasionally is light let in to mitigate the horror of the gloom, and then not so much through a window as through a hole. You take each step with caution, as, surrounded by deep night, you recall the words of Virgil:

'Horror ubique animos, simul ipsa silentia terrent.'
[Horror here everywhere frightens our souls; so does the dead silence.]

In Jerome's time burial in the catacombs began to be discontinued and henceforth they came to be considered as tombs of the martyrs and thus became objects of reverence. With this thought in mind, Pope Damascus (366-384 A. D.) had the inscriptions renovated and the pictures improved by an artist Philocalus, a policy which was continued by several other popes.

Philocalus improved the artistic style, but he and his successors have done much harm to the historic value of these monuments.

The catacombs are referred to by Prudentius in his poem on the martyr Hippolytus, and further mention is made of them in itineraries of the seventh century. During the eighth century the tombs became gradually despoiled of their most valuable treasures, especially the sarcophagi, and the bodies of those who were assumed to be martyrs and saints. Pope Paul at the end of the eighth century started this work, and his example was followed by his successors until the catacombs had ceased to be an attraction for pilgrims. Most of the entrances became closed by sand and dust with the exception of the catacomb of St. Sebastian which remained accessible all the time.

The oldest of the Roman catacombs was that of Domitilla, a princess of the imperial house, near the Via Ardeatina. Others are the crypt of Saints Petrus and Marcellinus near the Via Labicana, the catacomb of St. Priscilla near the Via Salara, and those most frequented by visitors situated near the Via Appia, probably belonging to the third century, called the cemeteries of St. Calixtus and St. Cecilia and the Crypt of the Popes. We here reproduce a picture of the crypt of Pope Cornelius near the Via Labicana.

A volume might be written on the history of the investigation of the catacombs. We must here be satisfied with enumerating the names of the several scholars who have devoted much of their time
and energy to these curious monuments of the most interesting period of Christianity.

We will briefly mention Baronius, the church historian who
was the first to call attention to their significance. An enormous labor has been accomplished by Bosio, who laid the basis for all future work in his book entitled *Roma Sotterranea*, published in 1639. In 1651 Aringhi published a Latin translation of it, and in 1737 Bosio's plates were reedited and republished by Botteri. In 1770 Boldetti added to the contribution of his predecessors in his *Osservazioni*, and other valuable material was brought to light in 1825 by Seroux d'Agincourt, a French art historian. Raoul Rochette presented a valuable synopsis of all that was so far known but not much that was new. A new period begins with the *Monumenti delle arti cristiane primitive*, by the Jesuit priest Marchi, who for the first time refutes some wrong ideas concerning the origin of the catacombs as mere sand-pits, and proves that they were dug for the purpose of serving as regular burial places. This more scientific treatment of the subject is continued by Comendatori and

### THE MAGI BRINGING GIFTS.


Michele de Rossi, of whom the former had worked for some time in company with Father Marchi, and the brothers published their results in three large folios under almost the same title as Bosio's work *Roma sotterranea cristiana* in the years 1864-1867. An English translation of De Rossi's exceedingly valuable work has been made by Northcote, Oscott, and Brownlaw, and a German one by Prof. Franz Xaver Kraus (second edition 1897).

Most helpful for people interested in the fish-symbol of the catacombs is the long essay of J. B. Pitra, a French Benedictine monk (later on cardinal) who published his investigations in an essay entitled "*ΙΧΘΥΣ σιβ de pisece allegorico et symbolico" in the third volume of an almost inaccessible periodical called *Specilegium Solesmense*, pp. 449-543. It is followed in the same periodical by another article on the same subject by Giovanni Battista de Rossi under the title "De Christianis monumentis ΙΧΘΥΝ exhibentibus."
Among other less inaccessible publications that belong to this class we shall mention besides the valuable French work of Roller entitled *Les catacombes de Rome*, only two others, both written in German. One is the monograph by Ferdinand Becker on "The Representation of Jesus Christ under the Symbol of the Fish," and the other is by Dr. Hans Achelis on "The Symbol of the Fish and Fish Monuments in the Roman Catacombs". Both recapitulate in a condensed form the labors of their predecessors and quote all the passages of Christian literature in Greek or Latin on the fish, Becker reproducing a great number of illustrations in zincographs.

So far the investigation of the catacombs had been a monopoly of Roman Catholic scholars and only recently have Protestants in-

![MIRACLES SCULPTURED IN THE CATACOMBS.](image)


*Daniel and the lions; the miracle of Cana; the raising of Lazarus.* Found on Mt. Vatican.

cidentally devoted themselves to the problem of their origin and character. Among these investigators we will mention Mommsen who dispelled forever the idea that there was any secrecy about the origin of the catacombs and that they had been places of refuge during the time of the persecutions. It would not be impossible that occasionally some fugitive may have hidden in the catacombs, but that they were used for this purpose to any extent, or that they were meeting places of the early Christians concealed from the knowledge of pagans, is quite excluded, if for no other reason, because the narrowness of the tunnels and crypts and the bad air would make a long sojourn in the catacombs dangerous to health.

2 *Die Darstellung Jesu Christi unter dem Bilde des Fisches.* Gera, Reesewitz, 1876.

3 *Das Symbol des Fisches und die Fischdenkmäler der römischen Katacomben.* Marburg, Elwert, 1888.

4 See *Contemporary Review*, May, 1871.
THE TWO DOLPHINS.
An inscription only preserved in fragments discovered in the cemetery of Petrus and Marcellinus by de Rossi.

THE TOMBSTONE OF SYNTROPHION.
Discovered in Modena in 1862. The epitaph contains the name of the deceased "Syntrophion" and below it two fishes are swallowing seven small loaves or wafers marked with a cross.

EPITAPHS OF TWO CHILDREN.
The tomb of the former, by her parents called "Sweet Constant" was found in the cemetery of Priscilla and is reproduced by Bosio and again by de Rossi (No. 15) and Aringhi who regards it as pagan (R. S., II, 288). The second marks the resting place of Cevera Melitina, a little girl of 11 years. The writing is in Greek and the age (actate XI) is written between the two names. It was discovered in the cemetery of Hermes and is reproduced in Lupi's Ep. Sev. M., p. 65 (de Rossi, 16).

AN ANONYMOUS TOMB.
This epitaph reads "To his dear wife the well-deserving, he has erected it." There is some mistake in the years which we cannot undertake to correct.
While pagan tombs are also met with in the catacombs these burial grounds from the second to the fourth century were mainly used by Christians. It was, as Mommsen has pointed out, an era of prosperity under pagan rule, which began with the golden age of Roman civilization under Augustus and ended in the time of Constantine. At that time Rome was the center of the world; but after Christianity became the state religion the decay of Rome set in. The city was plundered successively by the Goths, the Lombards and the Vandals, and the seat of Government had been removed by Constantine to Constantinople. During this period of neglect Rome lost in prestige as well as in wealth, and its relative impotence in conjunction with its old glory made it possible for the papacy to develop. Under its guidance Rome succeeded in conquering the world a second time and regained its lost leadership by means of spiritual arms.

The significance of the catacombs lies in the spirit of the early Christians which is displayed in their symbols painted on the tombstones. Many thousands of graves are without inscriptions, others have epitaphs commemorating the names of the dead, and still others are marked with Christian symbols. In addition we have frescoes in the crypts. Considering the enormous extent of the catacombs, however, and notwithstanding the important lesson involved in these monuments, it is remarkable how small the yield is which the investigators here have discovered. The art displayed remains with very few exceptions, in even its best portions, mediocre, and the inscriptions exhibit an appalling lack of education, for wrong spelling is not at all uncommon.

The symbols are limited to the Christogram, ΑΩ, the swastika cross, the ship, bread, or seven baskets of bread, the anchor, the dove with an olive branch, and above all the fish.

Among the illustrations which decorate the walls of the crypts are, first of all and strange to say, the pagan deity Orpheus as a representative of immortality, then the Good Shepherd: further, the figure of an orante, the deceased in the attitude of prayer with raised hands, and a number of biblical subjects in general, the resurrection of Lazarus, the three men in the fiery furnace, Daniel in the lions' den, Moses striking the rock, together with scenes that deal with fishes and with water, such as fishermen, the scene of baptism, and the stories of Jonah and Noah.

From the material published by scholars from Bosio down to modern times we select the most interesting examples, and from among them especially those which exhibit the symbol of the fish
as most characteristic of Christianity at that time. It cannot be our ambition to present in this collection anything new, because the field has been thoroughly covered by these Christian archeologists.

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We will begin our enumeration with instances of fish-symbols which are not Christian. Becker refers to two pagan monuments at Rome which bear representations of fishes, but he does not hesitate to claim five other inscriptions as Christian because the word ΞΟΥΣ is inscribed on them, while our own conclusion leads us to the assumption that they belong to circles among the population of Rome where pagan and Christian views were mingled and where for safety's sake the efficacy of the symbols of both religions was resorted to.

A highly important monument is the sarcophagus which "Livia
Nicarvs constructed to her sister Livia Primitiva who lived 24 years and 9 months." Bosio who first published a reproduction of this monument in his R. S. (p. 89) with his good knowledge of the character of inscriptions and monuments, suspected its Christian origin, and Aringhi (1, 321) adopted his arguments. After him Reinesius in his Syntagma inscriptionum antiquarium (1682), p. 785, No. 8, and also Raoul-Rochette in Mémoire de l'acad. des inscript., (XIII, pp. 107-108, 224) declared the monument to be pagan and explained the Christian symbols under the inscription as later Christian additions. This however is excluded by the same-ness of the incision which in both cases is not in relief but cut into the stone. Moreover it is not probable that the space should have been originally left blank. The inscription and symbols together fill the field so harmoniously that they must have been conceived at the same time. Victor Schultze (Altchristliche Monumente, p. 233) finds himself compelled to accept the pagan origin of both inscription and symbols, and in his argument he defends his view by the following considerations:

"It is well known that ancient art possessed a representation of a shepherd carrying a sheep in his arms, as well as Christian art. The graffito in question possesses two peculiarities which definitely prove that it is not Christian. On Christian monuments the shepherd either holds the sheep with both hands or he holds two legs (or all four) in one hand, or else the animal lies on his shoulder..."
without being held at all which in reality would be an impossibility. But on the sarcophagus of Livia Primitiva the shepherd is holding

THE GOOD SHEPHERD OF THE LATERAN.  
Kraus, Geschichte der christlichen Kunst, I, 227.

FRESCO SHOWING GOOD SHEPHERD AMONG OTHER CHRISTIAN SCENES.  
In the cemetery of Petrus and Marcellinus.

the fore-legs of the sheep with his right hand while the left encircles the hind quarters of the animal, as is never seen in any of the innumerable representations of the Good Shepherd. It is likewise
without precedence in Christian art that the sheep standing around the shepherd should be distinctly indicated as rams. Hence unless we recognize this to be an exceptional instance, we cannot escape the conclusion that the shepherd of the graffito on the Vatican sarcophagus is a pagan representation.

"This line of argument is decidedly confirmed by the difference in style easily recognizable to the less practiced eye between the central group and the emblems at each side. The center group is elegantly drawn and is carefully and skilfully shaded as is not the case with a single early Christian graffito. But the fish and anchor have indefinite outlines and no shading at all; besides, one arm of the anchor is not correctly foreshortened, an error which probably cannot be ascribed to the construction of the central graffito. Then too the lines of the figures at the side are much more deeply incised.

\[5\] In our outline reproduction this feature does not appear so plainly as in the original monument.
than those of the main picture and furnish a disturbing element in its tasteful arrangement.

"Under these circumstances we must regard the shepherd of the sarcophagus of Livia Primitiva as a pagan work and include it among the number of those pastoral scenes of which ancient sculpture and painting offer innumerable examples.

"The above lines had already been written when M. Berger, secretary of the Theological Faculty at Paris, undertook at my request to examine the sarcophagus with regard to this point. He made the following statement on the subject: 'Without daring to express an opinion on the great question as to whether the fish and the anchor are later than the Good Shepherd and the two rams, I will nevertheless observe that the anchor and fish appear less carefully drawn and incised; the anchor especially is out of drawing and is placed rather awkwardly behind one of the rams, therefore I would not be opposed to your hypothesis.'

It does honor to Professor Schultze to notice the finer difference between the Good Shepherd and this presumably pagan prototype, but we would not rely upon it so much as Professor Schultze does. Nevertheless, it proves that this design must have been made before the typical attitude of the Christian Good Shepherd had been established.

The difference between the style of anchor and fish from the rest of the monument is not convincing and we cannot see that the anchor is as incorrect as Professor Schultze assumes. In fact the foreshortening of one arm seems to add to the artistic effect.

We would here add that the symbol of the Good Shepherd appears even on Buddhist monuments at Gandhara whither it was carried by Greek sculptors, and even if fish and anchor would have to be regarded as being of the same style we see no reason why all the symbols should not be considered as pre-Christian, for anchors and fishes are not absent among pagan symbols, and the Good Shepherd ought to be really the main argument in favor of the Christian origin of this sarcophagus. If the Good Shepherd is proved to be pagan we would find no difficulty in accepting also the fish and the anchor as of the same workmanship. In fact we cannot discover any motive for adding these symbols for the purpose of making the monument appear Christian.

Whatever we may think of the monument it seems a striking evidence of the transition in the use of symbols from pagan to Christian times. We know from Clement of Alexandria (III) that the early Christians did not create new symbols but selected from
those that existed such traditional emblems as could find a Christian interpretation. Among those mentioned by Clement, and according to the context he presupposes them to be in use among the pagans, he especially mentions the anchor of the pagan king Seleucus and the fish.

The picture on the ceiling of Santa Lucina shows in the center a tree with two animals of doubtful nature, commonly supposed to be sheep. It is surrounded by ornamental heads, flowers, and birds, by Cupids and figures in the attitude of prayer. Considering the fact that this was the mode in which the ancients approached the gods and in which the souls of the dead were portrayed on their arrival at the throne of Proserpine, there is not one emblem on this monument of the catacombs that can be regarded as typically Christian.
The inscription "D. M." is an abbreviation for *diis manibus* and is a purely pagan invocation of the "gods of the dead," but Christians continued to use it because it was a traditional formula, which had best be respected. It is true it betrays a continuance of pagan thought but a close analysis of primitive Christianity will show that transition is everywhere the same. Even Constantine halted between both sides and was pleased to have the labarum serve as a pagan symbol by his pagan followers while the Christians saw in it the Christogram. But the "D. M." is used at least in one instance on an unequivocally Christian tombstone discovered by Visconti near Ostia, and dated by de Rossi according to the form of letters approximately in the beginning of the third century. It reads:

*D. M.*
*M. ANNEO*  
*PAULO, PETRO*  
*M. ANNEUS PAULUS*  
*FILIO. CARISSIMO.*

The names, especially the combination of Peter and Paul, are an unequivocal evidence of the Christian character of the tomb.

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**FRAGMENT OF LICINIA'S TOMBSTONE.**  
Found on Mt. Vatican and now in the Kircher Museum.

Another tombstone marked "D. M." and bearing the inscription *IXΘΥΣ ΖΩΝΤΩΝ* is claimed to be Christian, but the evidence seems insufficient. The wreath between the D and M rather indicates the Mithraistic faith, and we know too well that the pagans also believed in a "fish of the living." We should bear in mind at
the same time that the duplication of the fish finds no explanation in Christianity while we have seen that the double fish is found in India, in China and also in ancient Babylon, where the two fishes have been placed in the starry heavens as one of the constellations of the zodiac. The stone was dug out with other monuments on

![Epitaph of Popoulenia](image1)

![Epitaph of Little Pomponia](image2)

Mt. Vatican in 1841 and is now preserved in the Kircher Museum at Rome. It is recognized, as expressly stated by Becker, that the form of the stone is unusual among Christian monuments and yet it is claimed as unquestionably Christian in spite of the D. M. because of the occurrence of the word 𐙁𐙀. Victor Schultze deems "the fish of the living" a later addition by a Christian hand (*Arch.

![Dolphin on the Trident](image3)

A pagan symbol in the cemetery of St. Calixtus.

Stud., p. 229 ff.) But if the Christian character of this monument is to be questioned we have no positive assurance that the fish or the word 𐙁𐙀 by itself can be regarded as unequivocal Christian evidence.

For other inscriptions marked "D. M." we may mention one
in the cemetery of Helena found on the tomb of Popoulenia, a Greek woman whose Christian faith becomes probable by the fish added beneath her epitaph; and also that of little Pomponia in the cemetery of Praetextatus, which de Rossi dates in the third century (No. 20). She lived two years, one month and 20 days.

Another inscription whose pagan character is indicated by the "D. M." bears the inscription "To Marcus Aurelius Ermaiscus, the well-deserving, whom his comrades mourn." The trident too is a pagan symbol and where it is found we may assume that the tomb is probably non-Christian. Another inscription including a trident is found in the cemetery of Nereus and Achilleus. (See the first illustration on page 213 in the April *Open Court*.)

After the middle of the fourth century the dedication "D. M." disappears, an indication that about this time paganism has en-

- **DOLPHINS AND PEACOCKS.**

Though this slab from the cemetery of Praetextatus is now kept in the "Hall of Christian Sarcophagi" in the Lateran Museum, its Christian origin is by no means assured.

- **FISHES AND BREAD.**

The former epitaph (discovered in Ravenna) bears below the fishes an inscription in which Valerius dedicates the tomb to his wife and his sister. The double "M" may be a substitution for the more usual "D. M." The second is from the cemetery of Hermes and shows five loaves and two fishes without any inscription.

tirely died out. With the spread of Christianity, especially under the rule of Constantine, the use of the fish-symbol on Christian tombs increases, but strange to say it disappears suddenly and there is only one after the year 400 which utilizes this symbol of Christ. Among fourteen hundred Christian inscriptions dated up to the seventh century there is none found later than that date.
There are occasional tombs that seem to be Jewish, or if not Jewish they indicate plainly that the lines of demarcation cannot be definitely drawn. Jews and Gentiles intermarried and used their sacred symbols interchangeably. Once or twice we find the seven-branched candlestick on Gentile epitaphs, and fish are sometimes scattered on Jewish tombs. A possible instance of a Jewish or Christian-Jewish tomb is that of Atokai the wife of Moses.

In the Jewish cemetery on the Via Appia there is an unequivocally Jewish tomb which exhibits two groups, one of three and one of four fishes, so arranged that one of the fishes is placed upon a high basket while the others lie beside it on the floor. The fishes are surrounded by baskets filled with bread.

**THE TOMB OF ATOKAI.**
Possibly Jewish. (From de Rossi, pl. XXXIX-XL, 10.)

A tombstone now preserved in the Oberlin Museum at Strassburg, Germany, but discovered about two centuries ago in Rome where it existed in 1727 in the Via Giustiniana, published for the first time by Schöpflin in *Alsatia illustrata*, I, p. 601, bears an inscription which reads as follows: “Here lie I, a child not yet taking any part in the communal life, of the sweetest father and fairest mother the first born, two years old, beloved of God, Heliopais, leaving my good and sweet parents; a child of God.” The name “Heliopais” means the child of Helios, the sun-god. In spite of this most pagan name the tombstone is classed as Christian on account of the ram and the two fishes. The original is written in

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*Described without an illustration by Victor Schultze in his *Katacomben*, p. 121.*
Greek verse but is partly spoiled by mistakes. The words here translated "Child of God" are abbreviated in the last line. The evidence will appeal to many, but considering the fact that the ram is not a lamb, and that we again have the fishes duplicated, and finally that the spirit of the verses is pagan and contains no reference to Christ, we must hesitate to accept the argument as conclusive.

Another slab marks the grave of a mathematician (as we believe) but scarcely a Christian. It is found in the cemetery of Nereus and Achilleus near the gate of San Sebastian and shows three emblems, the fish, the solar disk and the anchor. The solar disk contains within it a line divided according to the golden cut so as to produce a proportion in which the smaller part of the line is to the larger as the larger is to the whole. The golden cut was regarded by the ancient mathematicians as an ideal norm analogous
to the golden rule in ethics. The symbol above the line of the golden cut is doubtful. It may mean a flying bird, perhaps a dove, or even an angle, or the letter V standing for *vivae*. And again V and M may be the numbers 5 and 1000, or the initials of the person buried there.

A string of fishes is pictured on the tomb of Hlodericus, a vicar of the monastery of St. Maximus near Treves. It was discovered in 1818 and the inscription reads: “Here rest is given to the limbs of Hlodericus in the grave, who held the rank of vicar. He was a favorite among the people and in his tribe the first. His wife, of noble birth, for the sake of her love had this inscription made. He lived in his worldly time, years —. He was buried in the time of

![A Christian Inscription of the Year 400.](image)

A Christian Inscription of the Year 400.

Found in the cemetery of Quartus and Quintus on the Via Latina. The inscription relates that “Calevius sold to Avinius a *trisomum* (a tomb for three bodies) which contains the two bodies of Calvilius and Lucius.” The pictures of the fish, a house, a pair of balances, the seven-branched candlestick, and the tomb of Lazarus are extremely crude.

the seventh day before the Calends of August.” The inscription must be old because the letters are scratched into the marble and the C is made of straight lines. The fishes and birds are of a very crude construction. Steiner ascribes this monument to the fifth century, Le Blant to the sixth or seventh, but Pitra places it as early as the fourth.

The pertinent suggestion has been made by Victor Schultze (*Katacomben*, p. 129) that a fish on a tomb sometimes indicates the former profession of the occupant; for instance “Amias” is the Greek name of a certain kind of fish, “Pelagia” means “belonging to the sea” and even “Maria” may be derived from *mare*. We here reproduce the epitaph of a certain “sweet daughter Pelagia, the
redeemed.” The word *restitutae* indicates that the girl was a Christian, but the fish and anchors were probably selected as emblematic of her name.

Another fish and anchor that do not have this significance are found on the tomb dedicated “By Titus Claudius Marcianus and Cornelia Hilaritas to Cornelia Paula, who lived 10 years and 8 days.” It is significant as showing that the fish was used as a Christian symbol in the year 234 which is given by the names of the consuls.

Clement of Alexandria advises Christians to have their seals ornamented either “by a dove, or a fish, or a ship scudding before the wind, or a musical lyre which Polycrates used, or a ship’s anchor which Seleucus had engraved as a device; and if there be one fishing, he will remember the apostle, and the children drawn out of the water” (III, 11). If he had known of the fish as a symbol of Christ he would have mentioned it in this passage, but he simply lets the fish pass as one of the allowable symbols which Christians should be permitted to use on their seals, and so we may fairly well assume that the idea of the fish as representing Christ was not known to him. In the circles where he lived the use of the fish on seals was not objectionable, but it has not as yet acquired that deeper meaning which it gained shortly before and under the
rule of Emperor Constantine. We here reproduce four seals of which the first is of chalcedony from the Royal Antiquarium of Berlin, (IX, 130). It bears the inscription ΙΧΥΘ for ΙΧΘΥΣ: the second is an onyx published by Münther (Sinnbilder, I, 23) and the third is a stone from Le Blant’s collection. The reverse bears an

![Four Seals](image)

inscription in Greek which means, “Maria lived for many years.” The fourth is preserved in the Royal Antiquarium of Berlin (IX, 129). It is of red jasper set in gold and shows an anchor and the word ΙΧΘΥΣ besides the initials of the owner, T. M.

The fish is inserted also on amulets, as for instance on a bronze

![Two Amulets](image)

fish which bears a Greek inscription ΣΟΣΑΙΣ, “Thou shalt save.” Similar fish-amulets made of crystal, mother-of-pearl, ivory, and other less precious metals have frequently been found in tombs. The eight-sided sard bears an anchor and two fishes together with the name of Jesus, ΙΕΣΟΥ.

![Two Gems](image)

A gem now preserved in the Vatican Library bears the inscription ΙΧΘΥΣ in which the X is marked as a Christogram. Another is a carnelian bearing on one side a fish and on the other the head of Christ. It belongs to the collection of Charles Forget and is published by Le Blant (I, 371).
It may appear strange to Christians of to-day that the catacombs contain no instance of the cross. Since the time of Constantine, or a little after, the Christian faith was marked by the Christogram, which as a pagan emblem was called the labarum. The greatest probability of the origin of the labarum seems to be the Gallic symbol of the sun and the world. The slanting cross represents the four quarters of the world and is crowned by a solar disk which changed into the Greek ρ. Since it was of Gallic origin the soldiers of Gaul used the symbol on their shields and helmets as a protective amulet. It is well known that Constantine used the sign before he was a Christian, but when he acknowledged his leanings towards Christianity the Christians were quick to recognize the appropriateness of the symbol, which according to the emperor's

\[ \text{DEO SANC} \, \rho \, \text{VNI} \]

\[ \text{LVCITE} \]

\[ \text{CVM PAC} \]

\[ \text{(sic)} \]

\[ \text{TOMB OF LUCIUS THE COOPER.} \]

After Navarro's *Filumena*, I, 283 (de Rossi, No. 44; Bosio, R. S., 303.)

interpretation had assured his success in battle. The legend tells us that he saw the sign in a dream and learned that it would be conducive to victory. The same story is told in different ways by pagans and by Christians.⁹

The Christogram exists in several forms both as an upright and a horizontal cross, and its occurrence is quite frequent in the catacombs. One instance occurs on the tomb of Lucius. The Christian character of this monument cannot be doubted, for besides the repeated use of the Christogram and the Good Shepherd the inscription is essentially Christian in its formulation: "To the holy and one God, Christ. O Lucius, peace be with thee." The Latin of *tecum pacce* is of course an error, as it should be either *tecum pax*, or *cum pace*. The fish here portrayed is shaped like an

⁹ For details see "The Chrisma and the Labarum," *Open Court*, XVI, 428.
cel and thickly covered with filaments. The wooden pail or tub seems to indicate that Lucius followed the cooper's trade. This tomb was found in a cemetery on the Via Latina.

Another tomb bearing the Christogram is that of Aemilia Cyriace. It was found in the garden of the mendicant monks at Rome. It is now lost but a copy made by Lupi is preserved in the Vatican. The mistakes in the inscription are easily corrected. The statement is made that Eucarpus, her father, and Secunda, her mother, have

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{AEMILIA CYRIACE} \\
\text{(sic) DECESSIT DIE Y KAL} \\
\text{(sic) SCPI OYAE VIXIT} \\
\text{ANN XVI MENS VI} \\
\text{DIES VIII EVKARPVS} \\
\text{PATER ET SECVNDA MATER} \\
\text{FECERVNT BENEMERENTI}
\end{align*}
\]

EPITAPH OF AEMILIA CYRIACE.

placed this tombstone to their little daughter Aemilia Cyriace, who lived 16 years, 6 months, and 8 days.

In the tombstone of Calimera the symbol of Christ's name is artistically framed in a conventional diagram and accompanied by a fish. It was found in the cemetery of Hermes.

The tomb of Pomponia is marked by a hammer as well as by the fish and Christogram, but this is not claimed as a symbol of martyrdom and admits of no explanation except that it bears some relation to the private affairs of the deceased.

The Christogram is found also on an altar piece in the church of St. Trophinus at Arles.

An inscription belonging probably to the fifth century and found in Palazzolo, Sicily, reads in an English translation thus: "Here lies Marinna who lived honorably and without blame, and left this world to go to the Lord at the age of 37 years, paying her debt on December 24, but she loved God. Do not disturb my tomb and do
not expose me to the light. But if thou shouldst admit the light may God show thee the light of his wrath.” The tomb is marked by a Christogram and a Greek ΙΧΘΥΣ, thus indicating the Christian

**TOMBSTONE OF POMPONIA.**

**AN ALTAR-PIECE AT ARLES.**
From Lé Blant, p. 44.

**Symbol from the tomb of Marinna.**

character of the inscription, although the curse at the end is a reminiscence of pagan times.

The word ΙΧΘΥΣ, shown on the next page, is painted in black without further information on the wall of the crypt of Cornelius, in the cemetery of St. Calixtus. It is probably not a tomb inscription
but an expression of the faith of a visitor. Underneath it in our illustration we read that "Eutychus the father, a servant of God, has dedicated this to Eutychianus his very sweet son, who lived 1 year, 2 months, 4 days." He marks his Christian faith by the Christogram and the Greek word IXΩΥΣ. The fourth line is an abbreviation of Dedicavit vixit annum annum menses duo dies quattuor. The letter J before the Christogram may stand for Jesus. The third inscription in our illustrations is full of errors and means "Marcianus the neophyte has died. The heavens stand open to thee. Live in peace."

It will be noticed that together with the absence of the cross in all our illustrations from the catacombs we miss also any indication of martyrdom, and it seems that in the age during which the catacombs served as burial places, the life of a Christian was much more peaceful than is commonly assumed, and the fact has gradually been conceded that ancient martyrdom has to be considerably limited. First we have the strange fact that Christian persecutions took place under the very best emperors, not under the villains except the first persecution attributed to Nero, but the Tacitean report of this has with good reasons been doubted and can no longer be regarded as historical. Concerning the pictures preserved in the times of ancient Christianity, Victor Schultze says in his Katakomben (page 261): "As in the circle of early Christian pictures contemporary representations of martyrdom are missing, so the inscriptions (in the catacombs) are void of any indication which characterizes or even merely suggests martyrdom. The titles which
mention a martyrdom have either been added afterwards, as for instance the epitaph of Cornelius (mentioned by Schultze, page 256), or are falsifications of a later date.” To the latter class which are easily identified belongs the inscription communicated by Aringhi (1, 33) from the cemetery Ostrianum, 1643, and the comment that a “flask with his blood has been placed beside it.” The inscription reads: “Primitius in peace, who after many anxieties lived as a courageous martyr 38 years. He made it for his sweetest and well-
deserving wife." In the middle of the inscription stands the Christogram surrounded by a double circle.

The catacombs contain not only inscriptions and symbols but also pictures. Most of them are crude, but there are some cemeteries which are ornamented with artistic paintings indicating that they were used by a wealthier class of people. This is especially true of the frescoes in the cemetery of St. Calixtus which is one of the most interesting portions of the catacombs. It contains frescoes representing Orpheus lyre in hand, Odysseus passing the Sirens, the demons of death, the story of Jonah in all its aspects.

The raising of Lazarus, symbols of the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist. These last are found in a special crypt whose decoration is devoted to the subject of the sacraments. Besides many representations of eucharist scenes there are also groups of loaves and fishes suggestive of the sacred meal. Between two strata of
graves we find a fresco showing two fish swimming on the surface of the water and carrying baskets with five loaves. Within each basket is a red glass of wine. Again in other parts of the

FRAGMENT OF A TOMBSTONE IN MARBLE.
Now in the Musso Cristiano di S. Giov. in the Lateran at Rome.
A fish swims above flowerlike ornaments.

...same cemetery the symbolic character of water is further represented by Moses striking the rock with his staff, and the fisherman pulling out the fish. On a trident a fish is twisted snake-like, and

\[ \pi \iota \sigma \tau \omicron \omicron \sigma \varsigma \kappa \pi \iota \omicron \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varsigm