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Communications

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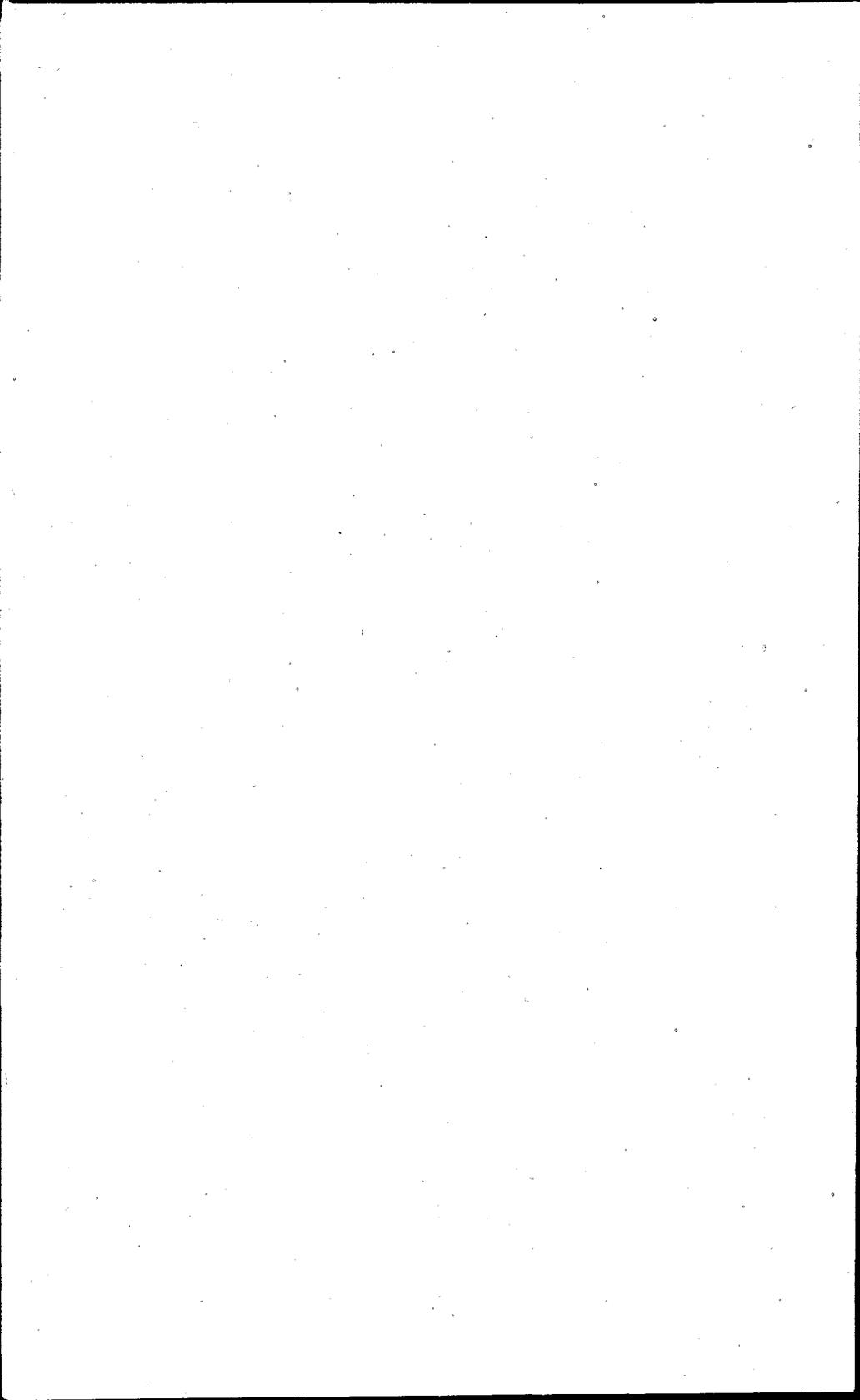
Cambridge:

DEIGHTON BELL & CO.; MACMILLAN & BOWES.

LONDON: G. BELL AND SONS,

1891.

Price 8s. 6d.



Professor MIDDLETON then made the following communication.

ON A CHRISTIAN ENGRAVED GEM IN THE COLLECTION
OF THE REV. S. S. LEWIS.

BEFORE describing this very interesting gem I will say a few words on the origin of its design.

In many cases Pagan motives were adopted by the early Christians for their representations of Christ. One of these, in which Christ is represented as the Good Shepherd, is taken from an early Greek design of Hermes Psychopompus; Hermes, that is, in the character of the conductor of souls to the realms of Hades.

In Greek Art Hermes Psychopompus is represented in various ways: in one of them, the original of the Good Shepherd type, he is shewn standing, and bearing on his shoulders a ram or sheep—typifying the soul of the dead person. This type is known as Hermes Criophorus—the Sheep-bearer; Pausanias mentions an early and very sacred Criophorus statue as existing in his time at Tanagra in Boeotia, the work of the celebrated Athenian sculptor Kalamis, c. 500—460 B.C.: see Paus. IX. 21. 1¹.

Many bronze statuettes of this group have been found in various places both in Greece and Italy. In other works of art Hermes Psychopompus is represented escorting the soul in human form to the banks of the Styx, where Charon the ferryman waits to carry the ghost over the dark stream. In this scene the soul is represented as a graceful human figure,

¹ Owing to the sudden death of the Rev. S. S. Lewis, who had kindly promised to supply a cut of a coin on which the Hermes Criophorus is represented, we are obliged to omit this illustration. Coins of Tanagra with this type are illustrated by Imhoof-Blumer and Gardner, *Numismatic Commentary on Pausanias*, 1885-7, Plate x, Nos. 11 and 12.

with nothing to indicate that it is not a living person. This motive occurs on some very beautiful terracotta reliefs, and also on some of the painted *lecythi* of Attica, and Eretria in Euboea. Some recently discovered *lecythi* in the Central Museum at Athens have a different method of representation of the soul, which occurs in the often repeated subject of mourners bringing offerings to the *stele* over the grave of a dead friend.

On these the soul is represented as a minute winged figure, hovering over the sepulchral *stele*, and extending its hands towards the friend or relation who is standing by the grave.

In Greek art Death was never treated in a horrible or painful way; and among the early Christians there was the same habit of avoiding any painful subjects in their painting and sculpture.

On the Sarcophagi and in the Catacomb paintings of the third and fourth centuries the scenes of Christ's life which are selected are those which illustrate His power or His beneficence, not His Death or Sufferings. In later times the case was very different, and scenes of horror and torture of every kind became the favourite subjects for the Medieval Artists.

If the personification of Death was represented in Greek Art, Death (*Thanatos*) was treated in a graceful way, either, as on the Attic *lecythi*, as a handsome bearded man bearing the corpse of the person commemorated, with the help of *Hypnos* (Sleep), who is represented as a similar winged figure, but without a beard; or, as on the sculptured column from Ephesus, as a beautiful winged youth, differing only from *Eros* in the fact that he is armed with a sword.

Another variety of the Good Shepherd type was taken by the early Christians from the Greek or Graeco-Roman conception of *Orpheus*. In some of the earliest catacomb paintings this subject is adopted without any modification to suit its new

meaning. The Christ-Orpheus is represented as a youth wearing the Phrygian cap, seated, playing the lyre to a circle of listening beasts and reptiles of all sorts. In later representations sheep only surround the seated figure, which thus becomes more distinctly that of the Good Shepherd.



FIG. 1. Gem with a representation of the Good Shepherd, enlarged: the straight lines show the actual length and width of the gem.

On Mr Lewis' gem (fig. 1) we have the more frequent Criophorus type of the Good Shepherd, which occurs in many forms in Christian Art of the third to the fifth century. It is especially found in the following connections: on the elaborate Sarcophagi reliefs of the third and fourth centuries; on the Catacomb paintings of the same date; on terra-cotta lamps; on rings and engraved gems; and on those curious glass vessels with pictures in gold leaf, of which so many examples have been discovered in the Catacombs of Rome and Naples. Figures in the round of this type are very rare. The most perfect example is a statuette of about half life size, which was found during the excavations of the lower Church of S. Clemente in Rome. This latter figure seems to date from the second half of the third century. It is closely similar in design to the figure on Mr Lewis' gem, but is inferior to it as a work of art, being, like all the sculpture of that date, clumsy in type and coarse in execution. This is one among many examples of skill in the

lesser arts surviving long after the more important arts of painting and sculpture on a large scale had fallen into a state of decadence.

The workmanship, not only of gems, but also of coins and ivory reliefs, is, in many cases, very good even during the period of the late Roman Empire.

Mr S. S. Lewis' signet-gem is a very beautiful sard, an oval of about 1 inch by $\frac{3}{4}$ inch wide, engraved with a figure of Christ, bearded, in short tunic and long boots; bearing a sheep with curved horns on his shoulders. He stands on an anchor, emblem of Faith; two lambs leap up towards Him. Behind Him is a tree, on which three birds are sitting. In the field are two fishes—the IXΘΥΣ being the well-known emblem of Christ.

In the *exergue*, below the anchor, is a small cross on a disc.

The workmanship is unusually fine, both in proportions and details. The design is pictorial in style, and an unusual amount of the field is unoccupied.

On the whole it is the finest gem of the kind I have ever seen. From its exceptionally fine workmanship it cannot be later than the fourth century, and, if the figure of Christ had not been bearded, I should have given it an earlier date. It has unfortunately been damaged by re-polishing, which gives, at first sight, a dubious look to the gem.

In point of *technique* it is an interesting example of very skilful work with the wheel and the drill, as is described by Pliny (*H. N.* xxxvii., § 200), in an interesting passage which gives the various methods of work employed by gem-engravers, the most important being the use of tools driven by a bow and drill—"plurimum vero in iis terebrarum proficit fervor."

Perhaps the finest collection of gems of this type is that in the possession of Dr Drury Fortnum, who has written some interesting articles on them in the *Archaeological Journal*; see Vol. xxvi., page 137; Vol. xxviii., page 266; Vol. xxix., page 305; Vol. xxxiii., p. 111; and Vol. xlii., p. 159.

This collection includes many rings, either wholly of metal, or set with engraved gems, with figures of the Good Shepherd represented by the Orpheus and the Hermes Criophorus type.

Mr PIGOTT (Rector of Abington Pigotts) then read a paper on his Parish Registers, recently published at Norwich¹. These Registers date from 1653 to 1813, and consist of 4 vols.; the first three are of parchment, the 4th is of paper, and contains marriages only.

Baron Anatole von HÜGEL gave a short description of an extensive Roman refuse-pit, and of a burial-place of uncertain date, which he had excavated in Alderney during the last Long Vacation (see *Fifth Annual Report of the Antiquarian Committee*).

Samples of the pottery, glass and other objects found in the pit were shewn: also the following specimens selected from among the objects recently added to the Museum.

Three Roman fibulæ (bronze), and a number of palæolithic and neolithic stone implements from the neighbourhood of Cambridge.

Thirty-four urns, food-vessels, and cups (rough earthenware) from Muskau in Silesia.

A fine urn and a small jug (earthenware) from a Roman grave in Malta.

Fragments of figured pottery from India, Brazil, and the West Indian Islands.

A large series of stone and other implements from Egypt, South Africa, the West Indies and Australia.

A set of highly finished personal ornaments from the Solomon Islands.

¹ The Parish Registers of Abington Pigotts, otherwise Abington *juxta* Shingay in the County of Cambridge (1653—1812). Edited by W. Graham F. Pigott, Rector. 4to. Norwich. Privately printed for subscribers only by Agas H. Goose, Rampant Horse Street, 1890.

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