

MANUALS OF EARLY CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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THE EARLY CHURCH
ITS ORDERS AND INSTITUTIONS
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PREFATORY NOTE

THIS little volume is a sequel to the manual entitled *Christianity and the Roman Empire*, by the Rev. W. Addis, M.A. (1893). Assuming the relations to the State described in that book, it endeavours to delineate in simple terms the complicated phases of the internal growth and organization of the Church.

The different types of ecclesiastical fellowship and government exhibited at the present day in Churches founded on the Congregational, Presbyterian, and Catholic conceptions, all have their roots in the first two centuries of Christian history after the 'Prophet of Nazareth' had proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom and had passed away. The great change which the disciples had expected in their own lifetime, receded more and more into the distance, and at length the Church had to accommodate itself to the permanent conditions of the society in the midst of which it had been planted. In doing so it was natural that it should be deeply influenced by the beliefs, the usages, the ritual forms surrounding it. The Empire had established peace over a vast area from East to West. Free communication made the labours of missionaries of various faiths easier than at any previous period. The limitations of traditional cults began to break down under the wider teachings of philosophy; and the new ideas embodied in the Oriental religions which sought to obtain a footing in Rome, provided a kind of ferment out of which fresh varieties of thought and life might grow. To sketch the process by which the Christian Church gradually acquired a particular kind of government, and embodied its faith and hope in special rites, which ultimately secured its predominance over all rivals, is the object of this book. Within its narrow limits much is inevitably left unsaid. But to those who desire some acquaintance with the origin of the claims and practices of historic Christianity, it is commended as a useful guide.

J. ESTLIN CARPENTER.
OXFORD, *August*, 1907.

PREFACE

IN the following pages I have made large use of Dr. J. Estlin Carpenter's articles in *The Christian Reformer*, Vols. III. and IV., and of Prof. Lindsay's book. *The Church and Ministry in the Early Centuries*, especially in the chapters on the Prophetic Ministry and the Episcopate. Among other works which I have found helpful, and which students are advised to read, are: Réville's *Episcopate*, Harnack's *What is Christianity? Expansion of Christianity, History of Dogma*, Wernle's *Beginnings of Christianity*, Hatch's *Hibbert Lectures*. Anrich's *The Influence of the Mysteries on Christianity*, Cumont's *The Mysteries of Mithras*, and Baur's *Church History*. The English books are easily accessible, and several of the foreign works are translated.

I am indebted to Dr. J. E. Carpenter for valuable advice in the selection of materials, and to Mr. Philip Green for help in correcting the proofs.

A. H. T.
LEICESTER, *August*, 1907.

CHAPTER I

THE CHURCH IN THE FIRST CENTURY

I. JESUS AND THE CHURCH

(1) **The Mission of Jesus.** It is now generally agreed that the Gospels which relate the life of Jesus, with the possible exception of the Fourth, are not first-hand evidence; they are compilations of earlier material, written or oral, made at a time when Christianity had already passed beyond the confines of Palestine; they give by no means a connected or similar account. But in all of them Jesus is represented as teaching a lesson rather than as founding a society. As early as his twelfth year¹ he seems to have come to the conviction of the Fatherhood of God, which was to form so large a part of his preaching. At the same time, no doubt, he was becoming familiar with the religious ideas and hopes of his countrymen. For many years the Jewish nation, passing from under one foreign yoke to another, had been expecting the dawn of a brighter age, and the coming of a great Liberator. It was only natural that Jesus should wish to be enrolled by the baptism of John among those who were prepared for the coming crisis. But in the course of this Baptism² he is represented as having received a revelation of his own Messiahship, while the Temptation in the Wilderness suggests a mental conflict, through which he found himself called, not to lead his nation in a career of earthly domination, but into the blessedness of a spiritual kingdom. Thus the mission of Jesus was to preach a new conception of God, to introduce fresh principles of life, and in so doing he felt the consciousness of a task entrusted to

¹Luke ii. 42 sq.

²The account of the Baptism and Temptation are probably church pictures of the endowment of Jesus with the Holy Spirit. But they may also contain some memory of his spiritual experiences.