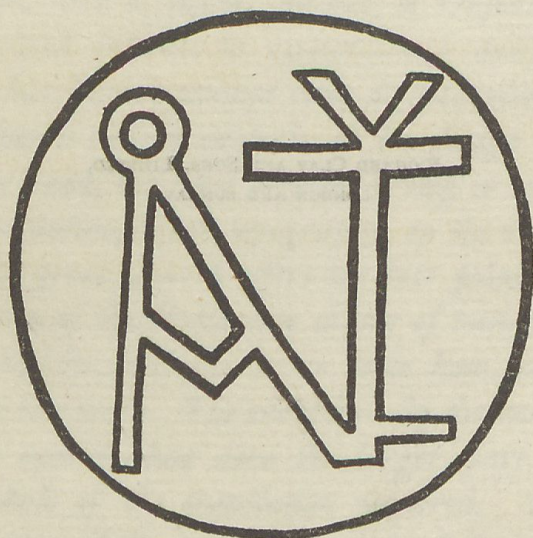


THE CHURCH OF
SANCTA SOPHIA
CONSTANTINOPLE
A STUDY OF BYZ-
ANTINE BUILDING
BY W. R. LETHABY &
HAROLD SWAINSON



1894

Macmillan & Co. London & New York

CHAPTER VI

RELICS, TREASURE, AND THE LIGHTING OF THE CHURCH

§ I.—RELICS.

The True Cross.—There would seem to be little doubt that a discovery was made about 326 of what was supposed to be the true Cross. S. Cyril of Jerusalem, writing some twenty-five years later, says that portions of the Cross were spread all over the world. We have seen (p. 14) that early historians relate that a portion of this precious relic was sent to Constantinople by Helena. The principal part however remained at Jerusalem until it was taken by Chosroes. It is described by some of the pilgrims to the holy city as being encased in silver. Brought back from Persia by Heraclius in 628 together with the spear and sponge, it rested for a brief interval in S. Sophia, where it was "uplifted"; but it was again returned to Jerusalem until 636,¹ when under the fear of the coming troubles the larger portion at least was removed. Rohault de Fleury, who devoted a folio volume to the Instruments of the Passion, quotes a letter from Anseau, a priest of the Holy Sepulchre in the twelfth century, which was sent to Paris with a portion of the Cross. According to this account the Holy Wood was divided into nineteen small Crosses, of which Constantinople possessed three besides the "Cross of the Emperor," and Jerusalem retained four. We have positive evidence that in the century before Heraclius Constantinople was a centre where portions of the Cross were to be obtained: thus

¹ Drapeyron, *L'Empereur Heraclius*, 279.

Radegunde, wife of Clothaire, received a fragment from Justin II. and Sophia in 569.¹ At this time, according to John of Ephesus, there was "a day of the adoration of the Holy Cross of our Saviour; on this festival the Cross is brought out and set up in the Great Church, and the senate and all the people of the city assemble to worship it."² Probably the Exaltation was celebrated concurrently at Jerusalem and at Constantinople.

When we more definitely hear of the True Cross at S. Sophia, it is evident, from the frequent occasions in which it is transported to different parts of the church, and to the palace, that it was quite small, a relic in fact.

Arculf (*circa* 680), as we have seen, describes it as kept in a chest, on a golden altar, which was only two cubits long by one broad. He says: "it should be specially noticed that there are not two but three short pieces of wood in the cross; that is, the cross beam, and the long one divided into two equal parts."

Now in the *Menologium* of Basil we have a representation of the Exaltation of the Cross, which the patriarch is uplifting in an ambo. It is represented as a double cross made up of three pieces, not of two. A miniature of the finding of the Cross in the National Library of Paris shows the same form. Didron remarks that the cross with double branches probably originated in Greece, "for it is constantly seen in Attica, in the Morea, and on Mount Athos." This form appears frequently on the later coins of Constantinople, and we find that most of the relics of the True Cross which still exist on Mount Athos and other places are made up with double arms. A reliquary for the fragment, said to be that which was sent to Radegunde, was preserved in the monastery of S. Cross at Poitiers in the last century. The field was of *cloisonné* enamel, blue with here and there a red flower. A drawing of this relic, of which we give an outline,³ shows that this fragment of the True Cross was made up in the double-armed form, which was repeated in

¹ Fortunatus celebrated its acceptance by a hymn.

² *J. of Ephesus*, ed. R. P. Smith, 140.

³ Figured in Molinier's *L'Emaillerie*, Paris, 1891.

the relic at the Ste. Chapelle.¹ Two such relics now at Venice are doubly interesting, for besides a cross of this form two supporting figures are represented which are inscribed Constantine and Helena.² Now Cedrenus and other late writers say that in the Kamara of the Milion were the figures of Constantine and his mother, with the cross between them. The same composition appears in the

mosaics at the monastery of S. Luke. The two Venice relics bear the names of the Empresses Maria (1180) and Irene (1350).

Fig. 14 represents the Poitiers reliquary; the True Cross as shown in the *Menologium*; and a cross from a late coin. We cannot doubt that the Cross at Constantinople was of this form. Was it the result of the conjunction of three pieces as mentioned by Arculph, or did the upper arm from the first represent the label?

With the Cross were associated the other Instruments of the Passion—the Crown of Thorns, the Sponge and Spear, and slabs from the Tomb.

The catalogue of relics by Nicholas Thingeyrensis (1200) says, "In S. Sophia is the Cross of the Lord which Helena the Queen brought;"³ but at that time the greater part of the Cross and other relics of the Passion seem to have been transferred to the chapel in the palace of Boucoleon, where they were seen by Robert de Clari (1200). The

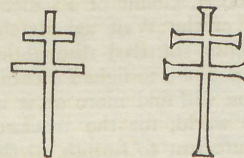
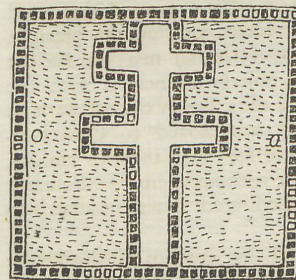


FIG. 14.—Showing form of True Cross at S. Sophia.

¹ Figured in Schlumberger's *Nicephorus Phocas*.

² See Ongania, *Il Tesoro*, Fig. 33 and p. 102.

³ Riant, *Ex. Sac. C.P.*, vol. ii., p. 213.

anniversary of the day on which they were moved from S. Sophia, August 14th, was kept as a holiday. According to Paspates all the relics of the Passion were removed in 1234. Baldwin II. took the Crown of Thorns which was acquired by S. Louis. It is evident, however, from the later Pilgrims quoted below, and from Mandeville, that a part of the Passion relics remained or that others were acquired.

Other Treasure and Relics.—"Not only kings and patriarchs, but also private individuals and monks brought to Constantinople relics of the apostles and martyrs, ancient ikons, and all kinds of sacred objects connected with the saints of the church. Anything of value in the whole land of Palestine was for the most part moved to Constantinople, and such was the reverence for relics that no church, monastery, nor oratory was built without them."¹ So early as 415, when S. Sophia was rededicated, it was necessary to have fresh relics (see page 16).

A description of the relics and the treasure of Constantinople is given in the letter supposed to have been written in 1095 by Alexius Comnenus to Robert, Count of Flanders, in which he craves the assistance of the West against the Turks. After enumerating the relics scattered throughout the city, he continues, "If you do not care to fight for these, and gold will tempt you more, you will find more of it at Constantinople than in the whole world, for the treasures of its basilicas alone would be sufficient to furnish all the churches of Christendom, and all their treasures cannot together amount to those of S. Sophia, whose riches have never been equalled even in the temple of Solomon."

The dispersion of the relics and treasures of S. Sophia and the other churches at Constantinople has been exhaustively treated by Count Riant.² The description by Anthony, Archbishop of Novgorod, who visited S. Sophia in 1200, three years before the capture by the Crusaders,

¹ Paspates, *Byzantinae Meletae*, p. 285.

² *Des Dépouilles Religieuses enlevées à Constantinople au xiii siècle par les Latins*, 1875, and the fuller work, *Exuviae Sacrae Constantinopolitanae*, 1877.

furnishes the best account of the accumulated riches of the great church. We give this in full from the French version contained in *Itinéraires Russes en Orient*.¹

"I, Antonius, Archbishop of Novgorod, an unworthy and humble sinner, by the grace of God and by the help of S. Sophia, who is the Wisdom and the Eternal Word, reached in safety the imperial city, and entered the great Catholic and Apostolic Church. We first worshipped S. Sophia, kissing the two slabs of the Lord's sepulchre. Furthermore we saw the seals, and the figure of the Mother of God, nursing Christ. This image a Jew at Jerusalem pierced in the neck with a knife, and blood flowed forth. The blood of the image, all dried up, we saw in the smaller sanctuary.

"In the sanctuary of S. Sophia is the blood of the holy martyr Pantaleon with milk,² placed in a reliquary like a little branch or bough, yet without their having mixed. Besides that there is his head, and the head of the Apostle Quadratus, and many relics of other saints: the heads of Hermolaus and Stratonicus; the arm of Germanus, which is laid on those who are to be ordained patriarchs; the image of the Virgin which Germanus sent in a boat to Rome by sea; and the small marble table on which Christ celebrated His Supper with the disciples, as well as His swaddling clothes and the golden vessels, which the Magi brought with their offerings.

"There is a large gold 'disc' for the mass, given to the patriarch by Olga, a Russian princess, when she came to the imperial city to be baptized.³ In this disc there is a precious stone which displays the image of Christ, and the seal-impressions from this are used as charms; but on the upper side the disc is adorned with pearls.

"In the sanctuary is likewise preserved the real chariot of Constantine and Helena, made of silver; there are gold plates, enriched with pearls and little jewels, and numerous others of silver, which are used for the services on

¹ *Soc. Orient Latin. Séries Géog.*, vol. v.

² Alluded to on a single page of MS. in the British Museum (*Cott. Claud. iv.*)

³ In the reign of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, see *Ceremonies*, vol. ii., ch. xv.

Sundays and feast days: there is water also in the sanctuary coming out of a well by pipes.

"Outside the smaller sanctuary¹ is erected the 'Crux Mensuralis,' which shows the height of Christ when on earth; and behind that cross is buried Anna, who gave her house to S. Sophia, where now is the smaller sanctuary, and she is buried near. And near this same smaller sanctuary are the figures of the holy women and of the Virgin Mother holding Christ, and shedding tears which fall on the eyes of Christ. They give of the water of the sanctuary for the blessing of the world.

"In the same part is the chapel of S. Peter the Apostle, where S. Theophania is buried. She was the guardian of the keys of S. Sophia, which people used to kiss. There is also suspended the carpet of S. Nicholas. The iron chains of S. Peter are kept there in a gold chest; during the feast of 'S. Peter's Chains' the emperor, the patriarch, and all the congregation kiss them [see Fig. 8]. Near by, in another chapel, is also shown the crystal of the ancient ambo, destroyed when the dome fell.

"By the side of [the images of] the holy women is the tomb of the son of S. Athenogenius. . . . There are no other tombs in S. Sophia except that, and a lamp hangs in front of it, which once fell, full of oil, without being broken. The place is inclosed by a wood screen, and the people are not allowed to enter.

"When one turns towards the gate one sees at the side the column of S. Gregory the Miracle-Worker, all covered with bronze plates. S. Gregory appeared near this column, and the people kiss it, and rub their breasts and shoulders against it to be cured of their pains; there is also the image of S. Gregory. On his feast day the patriarch brings his relics to this column. And there placed above a platform is a great figure of the Saviour in mosaic; it lacks the little finger of the right hand. When it was finished, the artist looked at it and said, 'Lord, I have made thee as if alive.' Then a voice coming from the picture said, 'When hast thou seen

¹ The French translation has *Diakonikon*: Riant, in *Exuv. Sacrae*, C.P. says "smaller sanctuary:" the Anon. says *skenophylakium*.

me?' The artist was struck dumb and died, and the finger was not finished, but was made in silver-gilt.

"Above the gate is depicted on a large panel the Emperor Leo the Wise, and in front of it is a precious stone, which illuminates S. Sophia at night-time. This same Emperor Leo took a certain writing from Babylon, which was found in the tomb of the prophet Daniel. It was copied, and on it were written the names of the Greek emperors. At the royal gate is a bronze romanistum¹ or bolt by which the door is closed. Men and women are brought to it, and if they have drunk serpent poison or any other poison, they cannot remove the bolt from the mouth, until all the evil of the disease has trickled away with the saliva.

"By the great altar on the left is the place where an angel of the Lord appeared to the boy who was guarding the workmen's tools, and said, 'I will not leave this spot as long as S. Sophia shall remain.' Three figures are shown in this place, for the angels are painted there; and a multitude of people come there to pray to God. Not far from there is the place where they boil the holy oil, burning underneath it old ikons, whose features one can no longer trace. With this oil they anoint children at baptism. Above the sanctuary there rises in the air a great hollow vault covered with gold. In the sanctuary are eighty candelabra of silver for use on feast days, which occupy the first place, besides numberless silver candelabra with many golden apples.

"Above the great altar in the middle is hung the crown of the Emperor Constantine, set with precious stones and pearls. Below it is a golden cross, which overhangs a golden dove. The crowns of the other emperors are hung round the ciborium, which is entirely made of silver and gold. Thus the altar pillars and the sanctuary and the bema are built of gold and silver, ingeniously made, and very costly. From the same ciborium hang thirty smaller crowns, as a remembrance to Christians of the pieces of money of Judas. To the ciborium were attached curtains,

¹ This must be the same as Robert de Clari's "buhotiaous" fastened to the ring of the great door of S. Sophia.

which were formerly drawn by the bishops during the services. We asked why they did so, and they answered so that the priests should not see the women and the people, but should serve the supreme God with a pure heart and soul. Later the heretics,¹ when nobody could see them as they were behind the curtains, took the body and blood of Christ, and spat them out, and trampled on them. The Spirit warned the fathers of this heresy, and the fathers fixed the curtains to the columns of the ciborium, and set an archdeacon near the patriarch, metropolitan, or bishop, so that they should worship God holly without heresy. . . . When Jerusalem was taken by Titus many sacred vessels and curtains were brought to [New] Rome with the royal treasures and given to the church of S. Sophia. In S. Sophia also are preserved the tables of the Law, as well as the Ark and manna. The subdeacons, when they sing 'Alleluia' in the ambo, hold in their hands tablets like those of Moses. During the procession of the Holy Sacrament the eunuchs commence to sing, and then the subdeacons, and then a monk chants alone. Then many priests and deacons carry the Holy Sacrament in procession; at this time all the people not only below, but also in the galleries, weep in great humility. What then ought to be the fear and humility of the bishops, the priests, and the deacons in this holy service?

"How magnificent are the gold and silver chalices, garnished with precious stones and pearls! When the splendid chest, called Jerusalem, is brought out with the flabella, there rises amongst the people a great groaning and weeping. . . . But here is a wonderful miracle, which we saw in S. Sophia. Behind the altar of the larger sanctuary is a gold cross, higher than two men, set with precious stones and pearls. There hangs before it another gold cross a cubit and a half long, with three gold lamps, which hang from as many gold arms (the fourth is now lost). These lamps, the arms or branches, and the cross, were made by the great Emperor Justinian who built S.

¹ *I.e.*, the iconoclasts, of whom a number of stories are told by the Russian pilgrims.

Sophia. By virtue of the Holy Spirit the small cross with the lamps ascended above the big cross, and again slowly came down again without going out. This miracle took place after matins, before the commencement of the mass: the priests who were in the sanctuary saw it, and all the people in the church who saw it cried with fear and joy, 'God in His mercy has visited us.' . . . This great and wonderful miracle was wrought by God in the year 6708 [A.M.] on Sunday, May 21st, being the Commemoration of S. Constantine and his mother Helena, during the reign of the Emperor Alexius and the patriarchate of John. It was on the feast of the 318 fathers. Iverdiatinus Ostromitza was then living at Constantinople; he was an ambassador from the great Roman duke. Nedanus, Domagirus, Demetrius, and Novgaro were also there.

"At S. Sophia on the right near the sanctuary is a piece of red marble, on which they place a golden throne; on this throne the emperor is crowned. This place was surrounded by bronze closures to prevent people walking on it; but the people kiss it. At this place the Holy Virgin prayed to her Son, our Lord, on behalf of all Christians; a priest who was guarding the church at night saw her. On the same side is also the grand icon of S. Boris and S. Glebe, which artists copy. When officiating, the patriarch holds it high up in the tribune.

"In the chapel behind the altar are affixed to the wall the upper slab of the Lord's sepulchre, the hammer, the gimlet, and the saw, with which the cross of the Lord was made; also the iron chain which was hung to the gate of S. Peter's prison, and the wood of the cross which Christ's neck touched. This is inserted in a reliquary in the form of a cross. In this chapel above the door is painted S. Stephen, protomartyr, and a lamp is hung before him; when any one has bad eyes, they put round his head the rope by which this lamp is hung, and his eyes are healed.

"There is also the figure of Christ whose neck the Jew struck,¹ and the bronze trumpet of Joshua, who took Jericho, and the marble mouth of the well of Samaria.

¹ See this story in *Golden Legend*, "Exaltation of the Cross."

Near it Christ said to the woman of Samaria, 'Give me to drink;' the well mouth has been cut in half, and the Samaritans still draw water [from the other half].

"There lie also the bodies of S. Abercius, S. Gregory, and S. Sylvester, and the heads of Cyrus and John, and many other relics. There also is the Baptistry, upon which is painted all the history of the baptism of Christ by John in the Jordan: and how John taught the people, and how little children and men threw themselves in the Jordan: all this was executed by Paul the Skilful during my lifetime, and there is no painting like this. There are there wooden supports, upon which the patriarch has had placed the figure of Christ, thirty cubits high; Paul first painted the Christ with colours made of precious stones and crushed pearls mixed with water; this image is still at S. Sophia.

"And when they sing matins at S. Sophia, they sing first before the great doors of the church, in the narthex, then they enter and sing in the middle of the church; then they open the paradise gates, and sing the third time before the altar. Sundays and saints' days the patriarch assists at matins and at mass, then he blesses the singers from the ambo, they stop singing and then say the *polykronia*: then they begin to sing again, and sing as harmoniously and sweetly as the angels till the Mass. After matins are finished, they put off their surplices and then go out and ask the patriarch's benediction for the mass. After matins the prologue is read in the ambo till the mass; when the prologue is finished, the liturgy is commenced, and, after the service is over, the chief priest in the sanctuary recites the prayer called 'Of the ambo,' while the second priest recites it in the church on the side of the ambo, away from [the sanctuary]: both, when the prayer is finished, bless the people. In a similar way vespers are sung. There are no bells at S. Sophia, but a little hand-bat [*hagiosidère*] which they strike for matins, though they do not strike it for mass and vespers, as in other churches: they follow the precepts of the angel in having this bat; the Latins have bells. When they built S. Sophia, they inclosed holy relics in the walls of the sanctuary. There are also many cisterns at

S. Sophia. Above [evidently *under*] the galleries are the cisterns and storehouses of the patriarchs and of the Church. Vegetables of every kind [suitable for the table] of the patriarchs, melons, apples, and pears are preserved at the bottom of the cisterns in baskets hung by cords: when the patriarch wants to eat, they bring them up quite fresh: and the emperor eats them also. The bath of the patriarch is also above [under] the galleries; the water of the fountains mounts by pipes, and the rainwater is preserved in cisterns. On the galleries are painted all the patriarchs and emperors of Constantinople, and those who shared their heresies. In the choirs of the church are five heads ornamented with pearls like a silver [word indecipherable] Lazarus, the image painter¹ . . . first painted at Constantinople, in the sanctuary of S. Sophia, the Virgin holding Christ and two angels. . . . S. Sophia has 3,000 priests; 500 share in the benefices of the church and 1,500 have no share; when one of the 500 priests dies, his place is taken by one of the 1,500."

Frankish Occupation and After.—Three years after the visit of Anthony, Constantinople was taken by the Latins. One of the Crusaders, Villehardouin, writes, "Of holy relics I need only say it contained more than all Christendom combined; there is no estimating the quantity of gold, silver, precious vessels, jewels, rich stuffs, silks, robes of vair, gris, and ermine, and other valuable things—the production of all the climates in the world. It is the belief of me, Geoffrey Villehardouin, maréchal of Champagne, that the plunder of this city exceeded all that has been witnessed since the creation of the world."

Much of the accumulated wealth of six centuries—the gifts from emperors and private individuals of "sacred vessels of gold and pearls and precious stones"²—was removed by the Venetians and Franks. Many of these precious objects are lost beyond hope of recovery; such are

¹ Lazarus was a martyr in the cause of image-worship. See Bayet, *L'art Byzantin*.

² Cedrenus, ii., p. 609. Irené gave a cross "distinguished for its pearls"; Theo. Cont., p. 703.

the candlesticks and crosses. As some representation of these we give a figure of a gemmed processional cross, with its *seizae* of jewels, from the *Menologium* of Basil (Fig. 15).

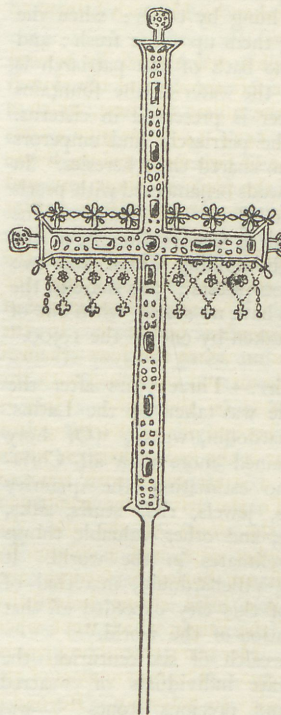


FIG. 15.—Jewelled Processional Cross.

now close the church of S. Mark's . . . and two censers of gold from S. Sophia of such grace and beauty that one cannot see them without being astounded." He also

¹ Ongania, *Il Tesoro di San Marco*, pp. 57, 59. Rohault de Fleury, *La Messe*.

In the treasury of S. Mark's at Venice there is however a rich hoard of vessels, lamps, and other objects, which were taken from the churches of Constantinople; and many of these crystal lamps, agate cups, and enamelled book-covers doubtless belonged to S. Sophia.

Amongst these may be mentioned an agate chalice with the name Sisinnius. This may probably be referred to a Patriarch of Constantinople of that name in 996; another with the name Ignatius to a patriarch in 877; a third with the inscription "Lord help Romanus, the Orthodox Emperor" to Romanus Lecapenus (919—944).¹ Extracts from the Venetian historians mentioning objects brought from Constantinople are given by Riant. Paulus Maurocenus speaks of "the many holy relics, and small figures, and chalices and patens and other beautiful things from the church of S. Sophia;" also, "the very same doors which

mentions, though it is not quite clear if he associates this with S. Sophia, "The palla of silver-gilt with the figures of our Lord, the Virgin, the Apostles, prophets, doctors, and martyrs, which is now placed in the church of S. Mark."¹

The head of S. Pantaleon was taken by Henrich Ulmen to the church of the saint at Cologne.

After the interregnum, S. Sophia was visited by several other Russian pilgrims, who have left accounts of the church which agree very closely. Of the fullest of these, which is by an anonymous Russian writer, 1424—1453, we give a condensed abstract, as it contains one or two more points, shows the acquisition of other relics in the place of those lost, and is useful for comparison with the anonymous Greek author translated in the next chapter:—

Near the west door in the middle of the narthex are the doors of the ark of Noah and the chain which bound the apostle Paul. Above the door is the miraculous image of the Saviour, and a lamp is suspended before it. In the sanctuary is the life-giving Cross on which the Jews crucified Christ. The stone on which He sat and conversed with the woman of Samaria is in the chapel on the right. Here is the table of Abraham. At the bottom of the church against the wall to the right of the altar is the bed of iron on which martyrs were burnt. Here is a stone coffer with relics of Martyrs and the Innocents. To the left is the tomb and the whole body of Arsenius: the doors of the ark: the bench where Jeremiah the prophet wept, and a column by which Peter wept. To the left are buried S. George and S. Theologos. On the left is a little shrine beautifully built; it contains the image of the Virgin which wept when the Franks held Constantinople. Her tears, resembling pearls, are kept in a coffer before the image. The instruments of the Passion are exposed from Thursday to Saturday. Beyond is the image of Christ in marble, and the cross of S. John chained to the wall. Near the Holy Table in the bema is the tomb of S. John Chrysostom, covered by a plank overlaid with gold and gems. To the right on entering the church are situated a well and large basin of marble in which the patriarch baptizes. One

¹ *Exuviae Sacrae Constantinopolitanae*.

leaves S. Sophia by the south door; at some steps from the gate, to the left, is the Church of the Holy Saviour; above the door is suspended an image which an emperor attempted to destroy. Behind the bema of S. Sophia is the church of S. Nicholas. Near by in front of the door which is behind the altar of S. Sophia is the place where they bless the water, plunging in the Cross; a roof covered with lead surmounts the basin of green marble. It is here they baptize the emperors; four cypresses and two palms form a crescent in this place. Some distance in front of the ambo of S. Sophia is a pedestal of marble which supports the holy chalice; it is within a stone inclosure, and is covered by a vault of gilt copper. From the entrance of the church to the ambo is 66 cubits, and it is 30 beyond to the sanctuary, which is 50 long by 100 wide. The church is 200 cubits wide and 150 high. Above the first door is Solomon in mosaic in a circle of azure.

That these accounts accurately relate the stories of the guardians of S. Sophia is sufficiently proved by La Brocquière, who was told in 1433 that S. Sophia possessed "one of the robes of our Lord, the end of the lance that pierced His side, the sponge that was offered to Him, and the reed that was put in His hand. I can only say that behind the choir I was shown the gridiron on which S. Lawrence was roasted [the iron bed], and a large basin-like stone on which they say Abraham gave the angels food when they were going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah."

§ 2.—LIGHTING.

The description by the Silentiary¹ of the lamps and candelabra which illuminated the Great Church forms one of the most fascinating parts of the whole poem. Although the multitude of lamps which once lit up the interior have long disappeared, the main features of the lighting may be brought back to our imaginations by comparing the description with illustrative examples. First then in the central space under

¹ See our p. 49.

the great dome, chains fell from the height of the upper cornice, where they were probably attached to strong bronze arms which projected far out like the present metal stakes which project in the exedras on the first-floor cornice. These chains all terminated at some height above the floor in supporting the great sweep of a metal circle to which were suspended flat circular discs of silver, each of which was pierced with holes into which were dropped glass oil vases with rims which prevented them falling through. With these discs were associated crosses of metal which also carried lamps. These, cross and disc together, or alternately, hanging round in a great circle made a "circling chorus of bright lights" within which was a large corona of other lamps and above it a large central disc.

Then along the sides of the church were rows of lamps in the forms of silver bowls, and ships; other rows of lights were attached to beams supported above the floor by metal standards, and to projecting metal arms, or suspended rods. Upon the beam of the iconostasis was a row of candelabra, each with a series of horizontal circles diminishing upwards about the stem, like a fir-tree, issuing from a silver bowl. Above the centre of the iconostasis was a great standard light-bearing cross. Round about the ambo similar light trees were placed.

Light coronae, crosses, or single lamps were favourite gifts to a church, and in these objects S. Sophia probably became much more wealthy as time went on. Michael III., for instance, gave to the church in 867 "a circle (*kuklos*) for lights which they call a polycandelon, as big as any of the others but all of gold weighing sixty pounds. To it was given the first and most holy place."¹ "A chalice and paten superior to all the others, as well as a polycandelon in the form of a cross with many lamps," are also mentioned as given by Michael. His successor Basil I., "as there was a danger of the sacred lamps being extinguished for want of oil," assigned for the use of the church "the tribute called *mantea*, so that the light might never be quenched."² The

¹ Theoph. Contin., ed. Bonn, p. 211.

² *Ibid.*, *Life of Basil*, ch. 79.

Anonymous doubtless exaggerates beyond belief with his 300 polycandela and 6000 lamps all of gold, but the kinds

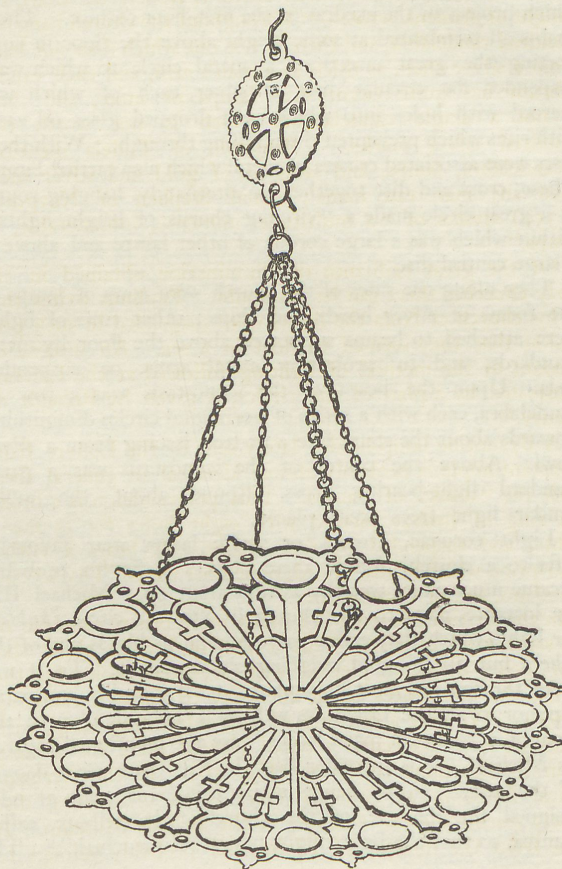


FIG. 16.—Polycandelon or Disc, for Seventeen Lamps, in the British Museum.

of candelabra he speaks of must have been perfectly well known (p. 140).

At the end of the twelfth century, Robert de Clari, the knight of Amiens, wrote—"Throughout the church hang one hundred candelabra, and there is not one which does not hang from a silver chain as thick as a man's arm, and each candelabrum has quite twenty-five lamps or more, and there is not a single candelabrum which is not worth two hundred silver marks." Benjamin of Tudela mentions "candelabra, lamps, and lanterns, of gold and silver more than any man can name;" and Stephen of Novgorod (1350) speaks of "a multitude immense, innumerable, of lamps."

Of the great brilliance of illumination obtained in the early churches there can be no doubt. Paulinus writes that at his church at Nola the lights were suspended in such profusion that they seemed to float in a sea. An interesting account of the method of lighting followed at the Lateran, illustrated by a plan of the circles, is given by Rohault de Fleury.¹

A Byzantine lamp-holder lately sent to the Louvre from Constantinople is probably almost identical in general form with the "discs" of Paulus. This polycandelon is a broad flat ring of bronze pierced with eight holes for as many lights, and suspended by four chains. It bears a votive inscription which reads, "Lord, remember thee of Thy servant Abraham, son of Constantine."²

In the British Museum is a much more ornate example of the same kind of disc. This is also of bronze, about sixteen inches diameter, pierced with seventeen holes for the lights, the interspaces being cut away to form a radiating pattern. We give a drawing of this interesting lamp, with which we have associated a small pierced plate for a lamp chain in the same collection (Fig. 16). In the Archaeological Museum at Granada there is an ornamental disc closely resembling the example in the British Museum. It came from the mosque of Elvira, and probably belongs to

¹ *La Messe*, vol. vi., p. 78.

² See fig. in *Byz. Zeitschrift*, 1893, p. 142.

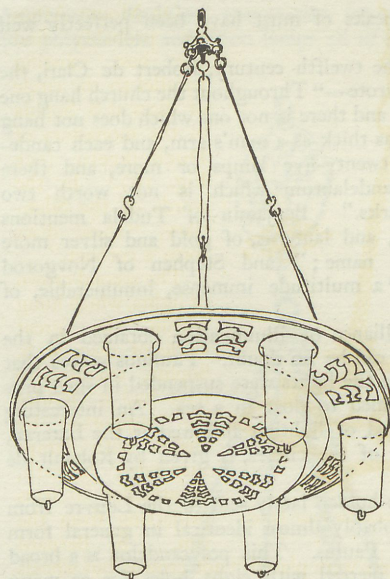


FIG. 17.—Silver Polycandelon from Lampsacus, in the British Museum.

ner plate, the holes for the lamps being around the rim. This lamp-holder is of silver, and was brought from Lampsacus near Gallipoli with several altar vessels inscribed with a monogram which reads MHNA or AMHN. In Fig. 17 we have restored the oil vases. Another bronze polycandelon has recently been brought from Egypt by Professor Flinders Petrie: this is about eight inches across (Fig. 18¹).

¹ In the figure 18 the attachment for the chain is shown at A, the chain of monograms is taken from Rossi, B shows the provision for the chains in the last example (Fig. 17), where there is a slight mistake, the alternate piercings in the rim being crosses as here shown.

the ninth century. We mention this because the bottom plate of the modern mosque lamp with the small holes which take glass tubular vessels eight or ten inches long and only about two inches in diameter, continues the tradition of the Byzantine polycandela, and the oil vessels well represent those like spear shafts mentioned by the Poet.

In another example in the British Museum the disc is not quite flat but of the form of a dinner

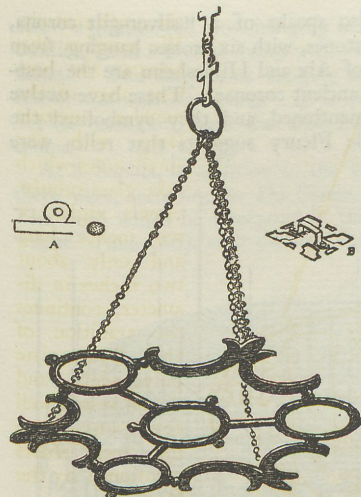


FIG. 18.—Coptic Polycandelon for Four Lamps.

On Mount Athos we probably find the best existing parallel to the circle of discs at S. Sophia in the monastery of Docheiariu (see Fig. 19).¹ In the words of the Silentary, "these discs form a coronet."

The second crown of lights, which hung within the great circle of discs at S. Sophia, would also have had a circular rim supported by chains with lamps suspended beneath, or attached to arms projecting from the rim. S. Bernard

speaks of a church where were placed "not crowns but wheels with precious stones and lights around them." To these circular candelabra ecclesiastical writers usually give the title of coronae. Leo III. gave to the basilica of S. Andrew at Rome a "gold corona of lamps set with gems." Other authors call crowns with lamps of this kind *phara*; we read in Leo Ostiensis of a "pharum or large crown of silver with six and thirty lamps hanging from it."² They are also spoken of as *cycli*, but more generally as *polycandela*. The *Chronicon Cassinense* mentions "a pharos or crown of silver, weighing a hundred librae, twenty cubits round about, with twelve towers projecting from it, and thirty-six lamps hanging from it. This was fixed outside the choir, before the great cross, by an iron chain adorned with seven gold apples."³

¹ Adapted from a photographic view in A. Riley's *Mountain of the Monks*. ² Du Cange. ³ Lib. iii. This was at Milan.

The same chronicle also speaks of a "silver-gilt corona, coloured with precious stones, with six crosses hanging from it." The great circles of Aix and Hildesheim are the best-known examples of the ancient coronae. These have twelve towers like that just mentioned, and they symbolised the New Jerusalem. R. de Fleury suggests that relics were

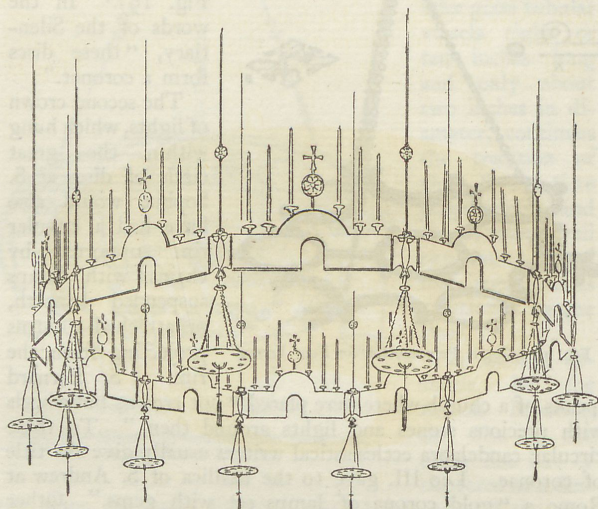


FIG. 19.—Corona with Lamp Discs, Mount Athos.

contained in such turrets. An extremely beautiful pharos in the Hermitage Museum represents a basilica.

The light crosses were very generally known throughout Christendom, and the historian Socrates mentions that crosses of silver with burning candles upon them were carried in processions in the time of Chrysostom. According to Anastasius, at S. Peter's there was a large pharos "in the form of a cross which hung before the presbyterium having 1,370 candles;" this was lighted four times a year;

also "a gold carved cross hanging before the altar with twelve candles," and "a cross lamp with two little ships and three fishes." The lamp cross hanging in S. Mark's is the best-known example remaining. It is possible that those at S. Sophia mentioned with the discs hung horizontally to four chains.

At S. Sophia, in addition to the discs, crosses, and circles, there were, according to Du Cange, lamps hung from nets. The word which he interprets in this way is that translated "skiff" (line 480), as it means a small row-boat. How he

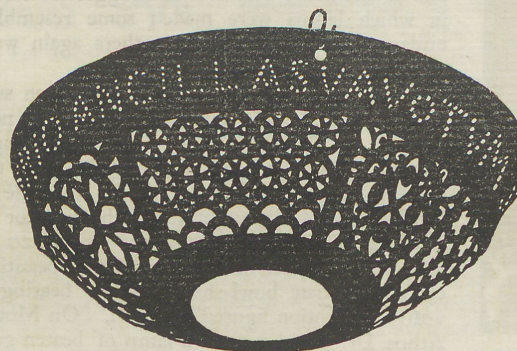


FIG. 20.—Single Lamp with Votive Inscription.

gets his interpretation of nets it is difficult to see. We mention it here for its intrinsic beauty only: it was a familiar arrangement for lamps. Anastasius in his *Lives of the Popes* speaks of one of the churches at Rome having "a pharos in the form of a net," and again of a large pharos "like a net with twenty baskets," and also "a bronze net with silver baskets."

The hanging lamps in the form of ships mentioned by our poet would have carried the oil vessels round their sides. A most interesting example of a lamp of this kind is given in the *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities* (Smith and Cheetham). It represents a small vessel with a mast and sail, con-

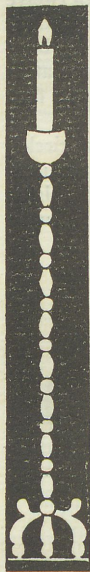


FIG. 21.
Sixth-century
Candlestick.

taining two figures, one steering, and the other looking out from the prow. These figures are either Peter and Paul or more probably Christ and Peter. The symbolism of the ship for the Church is too familiar to need comment; the mast in the centre, without which the ship is unsafe, as S. Ambrose says, typifies the cross without which the church is unable to stand. The galley form of lamp was well known also in antiquity. In the Christian era it was only one of the many beautiful and suggestive forms in which lamps were made; some resembled birds, crystal fish, or shells, others again were bowls of white or emerald glass.

In the sanctuary there would have been suspended large single lamps which burnt perpetually (*Akoimeto*). A very fine single Byzantine lamp of this kind is shown in the fifteenth-century picture by Marco Marziale in the National Gallery, in which the interior of S. Mark's figures as the temple. In Fig. 20 we give a restoration of fragments of a beautiful early Christian bowl-shaped lamp bearing a votive inscription figured by Rossi. On Mount Athos Dr. Covel noticed a lamp of beaten gold set with jewels.

The treasury of S. Mark's probably still contains lamps which hung in S. Sophia: one of especial beauty is a glass bowl with circles cut on the outside and attached to a metal rim on which is inscribed in Greek, "St. Panteleon, succour thy servant Zacchariah, Archbishop of Iberia, Amen."¹

In illustration of the tree-like candelabra which stood above the beam of the iconostasis, and round the ambo, we may mention the well-known classical examples. A lamp-bearer in the museum at Brussels is described as "an *arbuste* of considerable size and irregular trunk and branches with lamps suspended from the extremities of its boughs."

¹ For this and other lamps see especially *La Messe* and *Il Tesoro*.

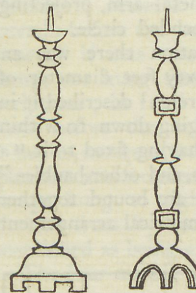


FIG. 22.—Candlesticks.

Anastasius mentions a "tree of bronze with candlesticks to the number of fifty in which were placed wax candles, thirty-six lamps as well hung from the boughs." Paulinus also speaks of hanging candelabra at Nola "with branches like a vine bearing little glass cups which resembled burning fruit; when they were lighted it was like the sudden burst into life of spring flowers."

Besides all these oil lamps there would have been a great number of standing candlesticks in the sanctuary.

The Anonymous speaks of some the height of a man. One constant type is represented in Fig. 21; this is inlaid in mother-of-pearl on the apse walls at Parenzo, and is of Justinian's time. Fig. 22 shows two others from the *Menologium*. Wax candles, which are frequently mentioned, were patterned and coloured.

The miracle of the moving cross of lights mentioned by Anthony reminds us of a remarkable custom in regard to the great coronas of lights in Byzantine churches which is observed on Mount Athos, and also at Sinai, and is probably ancient. A part of the great festival service at Vatopedi consists in singing the *Polyeleos*. "When the last of the multitude of candles had been lighted in the great coronas under the domes, the monks fetched long poles, with which they pushed out the candelabra to the full extent that their suspending chains permitted and then let them go, the result being that in a few minutes the whole church was filled with slowly swinging lights."¹

The method of lighting described by the Silentary has not changed in the unchanging East. S. Sophia is still lighted by a myriad little lamps arranged in rows, or suspended in circles. The single lamp is a small glass vessel of oil on which floats the wick; the two typical forms being like a bowl or an elongated tumbler. These cups are hung by three chains,

¹ A. Riley, *Mountain of the Monks*.

or inserted in a ring, at the end of a metal arm, projecting from the wall or from the rim of a suspended circle.

Up to the time of Fossati's restoration there was an immense polygon of probably some sixty feet diameter of iron rods suspended from the dome. Grelot¹ described it in 1680 as a large circle of iron rods hanging down to within eight or ten feet of the pavement and having fixed to it "a prodigious number of lamps, ostrich eggs, and other baubles." In the mosque of Achmet, several rings are bound together by straight rods, making overhead a geometrical arrangement

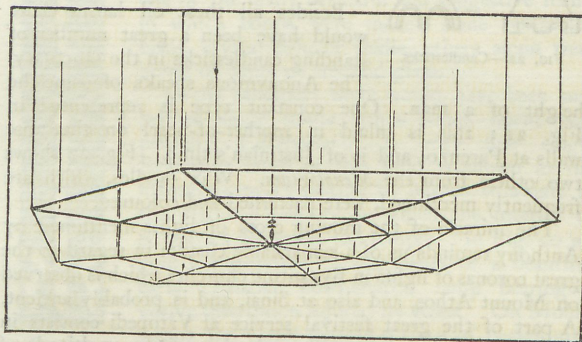


FIG. 23.—Hanging Rods for Lamps in S. Sophia until 1850.

of bars, from which the lamps are suspended; although these are all Turkish, the system remained from Byzantine times. Fig. 23 is re-drawn from Fossati. (*Aya Sophia*, Constantinople, 1852.) One of the most beautiful methods is that of suspending the lamps to long straight iron bars running the whole length of the building as at S. John Studios.

In the mosque of Damascus, before the recent fire, there were hanging assemblages of circles one above another somewhat similar we may suppose to the trees of the poet. At

¹ P. 154.

Salonica a network of lamps which hangs almost like a curtain before the bema of S. Demetrius may illustrate the "nets," if nets there were. During Ramazan festoons of lamps are hung from minaret to minaret arranged in inscriptions; in 1676 Dr. Covel of Cambridge saw illuminations before the Sultan at Adrianople which represented "castles, mosques, peacocks, Turkish writings, &c., extremely pleasant and wonderful to behold." These were formed by lamps hung to light frames; the method was probably derived from Byzantine illuminations such as the fireworks mentioned as being exhibited in the Hippodrome.

The four marble pillars that stand up out of the parapet at the western gallery of S. Sophia (Fig. 41) must always have carried lights on metal branches at the top, much as at present; and the long metal stakes with hook ends, that project from the first cornice at the angles of the exedras, and from which chandeliers hang, are possibly original in some cases.

The multiplication of small lights is the most brilliant system of illumination, for not only is there light everywhere but flame, and hence no shadows. Whoever sees the great church lighted for the solemn services of Ramazan, when, according to Fossati, "six thousand lamps are suspended at various heights," may imagine the splendour of the lighted interior in Byzantine times. When, after one of the services, the lamplighters walked round and extinguished the lamps with a whisk from long fan-shaped brooms, we saw the need of the passages above the different cornices; and leaving Constantinople one April evening, as we slowly wound round the point, while the circle of windows in the lighted dome seemed to hang above the city, we realised that it was no idle saying of the poet's that the mariner guided his laden vessel "by the divine light of the church itself."