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978-1-108-00755-9 - *The Christian Ecclesia: A Course of Lectures on the Early History and Early Conceptions of the Ecclesia, and Four Sermons*

Fenton John Anthony Hort

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The Christian Ecclesia

This is one of the best-known works of Fenton Hort (1828–1892), Professor of Divinity at Cambridge. Compiled in 1897, it is a posthumous collection of a series of lectures delivered by Hort in 1888 and 1889, covering the origins and development of the early Church. Starting with a discussion on the meaning of ‘ecclesia’, Hort traces church history from the New Testament accounts of the Last Supper and the Resurrection to the problems Christianity faced in the second century. Hort conveys his meaning with absolute clarity, taking a scrupulous, almost scientific approach in his consideration of literary evidence. Four of his sermons are also included, and the book itself stands as a record of the last words spoken in public by Hort. *The Christian Ecclesia* provides a fascinating account of the beginnings of Christianity and is one of the most significant works by this prolific nineteenth-century theologian.

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Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108007559

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2009

This edition first published 1897

This digitally printed version 2009

ISBN 978-1-108-00755-9 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

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A COURSE OF LECTURES
ON THE EARLY HISTORY AND EARLY
CONCEPTIONS OF THE ECCLESIA
AND FOUR SERMONS

BY

FENTON JOHN ANTHONY HORT D.D.

LADY MARGARET'S READER IN DIVINITY IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

London

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1897

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PREFACE.

THIS book consists in the first place of a course of lectures delivered by Dr Hort as Lady Margaret Professor in the Michaelmas Terms of 1888 and 1889 on 'The Early History and the Early Conceptions of the Christian Ecclesia'. The plan of the lectures is the same as that of the Lectures on Judaistic Christianity.

They contain a careful survey of the evidence to be derived from the literature of the Apostolic age for the solution of a fundamental problem.

The title 'Ecclesia' was chosen, as the opening lecture explains, expressly for its freedom from the distracting associations which have gathered round its more familiar synonyms. It is in itself a sufficient indication of the spirit of genuine historical enquiry in which the study was undertaken.

The original scheme included an investigation into the evidence of the early Christian centuries, and the book is therefore in one sense no doubt incomplete. On

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the other hand it is no mere fragment. The lectures as they stand practically exhaust the evidence of the New Testament, at least as far as the Early History of Christian institutions is concerned. And Dr Hort's conclusions on the vexed questions with regard to the 'Origines' of the different Orders in the Christian Ministry will no doubt be scanned with peculiar interest. It is however by no means too much to say that it was the other side of his subject, 'the Early Conceptions of the Ecclesia', that gave it its chief attraction for Dr Hort. And on this side unfortunately the limitations of lecturing compelled him to leave many things unsaid to which he attached the greatest importance.

An effort has been made to supply this deficiency by including in the volume four Sermons dealing with different applications of the fundamental conception preached on different occasions during the last twenty years of his life. Two of these Dr Hort at one time intended to incorporate in the same volume with his Hulsean Lectures '*The Way, The Truth, The Life*'. The other two were printed by request directly after they had been delivered. The last has a special interest as the last public utterance of its author. It is the expression in a concentrated form of the thought of a lifetime on the vital conditions of Church life in special relation to the pressing needs of to-day.

The course in 1889 began with a somewhat full

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recapitulation of the course delivered in 1888. I have not thought it worth while to print this recapitulation at length. A few modifications have however been introduced from it into the text of the original lectures, and a few additions appended as footnotes. Otherwise the Lectures are printed, with a few necessary verbal alterations, as they stand in the Author's MSS. I am further responsible for the divisions of the text, for the titles of the Lectures, and for the headings of the separate paragraphs.

My best thanks are due to the Rev. F. G. Masters, formerly scholar of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, for much help in revising the proof-sheets and for the compilation of the index.

J. O. F. MURRAY.

EMMANUEL COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

March 12th, 1897.

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