



EARLY EASTERN
CHRISTIANITY
ST. MARGARET'S LECTURES

1904





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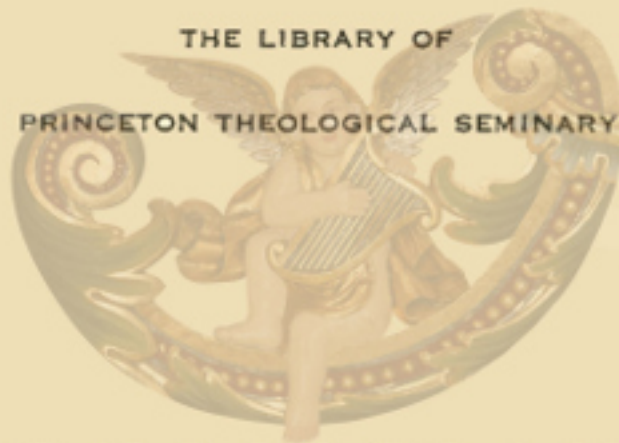
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THE TWO GREAT COLUMNS ON THE CITADEL OF EDESSA.

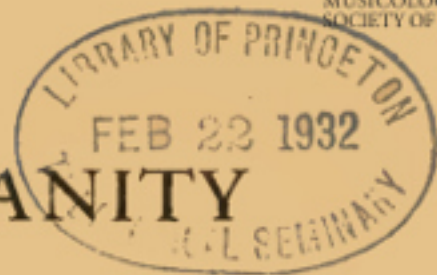
The view taken very nearly N.E.

Frontispiece.



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EARLY
EASTERN CHRISTIANITY



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1904

ON THE SYRIAC-SPEAKING
CHURCH

BY F. CRAWFORD BURKITT

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CHRISTIAN
MUSICOLOGICAL
SOCIETY OF INDIA

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PREFACE

“EARLY EASTERN CHRISTIANITY,” the title which I have given to these six Lectures, may possibly be held to be a misleading name. My Lectures are an attempt to sketch the leading characteristics of the ancient Church of Edessa and the Euphrates Valley from the earliest times to the Council of Chalcedon. The “Eastern Church” in popular usage generally means something geographically wider. We think of Greeks and of Russians, of Alexandria and Constantinople. But compared with the Church about which I have written these names belong to the West, to the great Church within the Roman Empire. It is the unique distinction of the Church of the Euphrates Valley, that alone among the developments of Christianity in the ante-Nicene age it had some of its roots in a realm outside the Roman Empire, and that the language of its learning and its aspirations was a tongue akin to that of Palestine.

It would have been possible to trace out some



of those elements in the Græco-Roman Church which were most akin to the ideas and practices which flourished at Edessa. To name but one notable example, it would be extremely interesting to compare in detail the theological and ethical standpoint of the newly discovered *Acts of Paul* with that of Serapion of Antioch and his disciple Palût. But apart from considerations of space it seemed to me better to let Syriac Christianity speak for itself. It is a far-away tale of a vanished civilisation, but an excursion into this remote region may give us a new point of view from which to look at our own ideals and beliefs.

It only remains to say that the photographs of Edessa in this volume were very kindly taken for me by Fr. Raphael of the Capuchin Mission at Urfa. The two great Columns in the Frontispiece were set up in the days of paganism, and fragments of their Dedication Inscription are still legible upon one of them. Below this may be seen a few letters containing the Moslem profession of faith cut in an early Arabic character. Between the period covered by these two Inscriptions must be placed the rise of Christianity in Edessa and its slow decline.



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TO THE MEMORY OF
WILLIAM CURETON, D.D.,
CANON OF WESTMINSTER FROM 1849 TO 1864
AND RECTOR OF S. MARGARET'S
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

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