

New inscriptions, amulets and history of the early Christianity: the Antonine age

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The article discusses two finds related to the history of Early Christianity, which were published in recent years. The first is an inscription found in 2013 in Ephesus. This is the epistle of Antoninus Pius to magistrates, council and inhabitants of Ephesus, sent in 157/8 or 160/1, which referred to stop the unrest caused by a series of earthquakes. Christopher Jones compared this inscription with the so-called rescript of Antoninus Pius, saved as an appendix to «First Apology» of Justin Martyr (cod. Paris. gr. 450) and in Eusebius of Caesarea's «Church History» (HE, IV, 13). Jones believes that the recently discovered inscription is the original version of the Antoninus' rescript, which forbade persecuting Christians without all legal procedures. The second find is an amulet, discovered in 1989 in London. It's a long narrow strip of tin with 30 lines of Greek text containing a spell against the plague. This amulet was made in the time of the Antonine plague, which began in 165. Jones noted that this spell contained an oracle that was given in the sanctuary of Glykon — New Asclepius (Luc. Alex., 36). Apollo played an important role against the plague. Perhaps the god ordered people to refrain from kissing during an epidemic. These natural disasters — earthquakes and the plague epidemic — could have caused Christian persecution. At the time when all Romans had to pray to the gods for salvation, the demonstrative unwillingness of a group of renegades to follow a common path could cause particular resentment and hatred and lead with spontaneous anti-Christian actions.



Key words: [Roman Empire](#), [Antoninus Pius](#), [Marcus Aurelius](#), [Eusebius of Caesarea](#), [Lucian](#), [Glykon — New Asclepius](#)

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