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EDITED BY
JAMES HASTINGS, M.A., D.D.
FELLOW OF THE ROYAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE
MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF THE PALESTINE EXPLORATION FUND
EDITOR OF 'DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE' AND 'DICTIONARY OF CHRIST AND THE GOSPELS'

WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF
JOHN A. SELBIE, M.A., D.D.
AND OTHER SCHOLARS

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A—ART

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ALMSGIVING—ALTAR

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In the most general sense of the term, an altar may be defined as a surface, usually elevated, but occasionally level with the ground, or even depressed beneath it, prepared or adapted to receive a sacrifice. It is thus, by implication, intimately connected with sacrifice (q.v.), and has seemingly been developed as a ritual adjunct to the oblation. Sacrifices are, however, not uncommonly made to natural objects by casting the offering into them. Thus, amongst the Nicaraguans, the human sacrifices to the volcano Masaya or Fopolgatespe were cast into the crater of the mountain, and amongst the Hurons tobacco was thrust into the crevice of a rock in which a spirit was believed to dwell (Tylor, Pr. Cult. ii. 207-208); while, in similar fashion, pua and other tributes are dropped into holy wells in Cornwall and Armenia; and in Swabia, the Tyrol, and the Upper Palatinate, meal is flung into the face of the gale to placate the storm-demon (ib. pp. 214, 269; cf. also pp. 210-211; and Abeghian, Armen. Volksglaube, Leipzig, 1899, p. 58). The common Greek practice of making offerings to water deities, even to Poseidon himself, by permitting the blood of the sacrifice to flow immediately from the victim into the water, is too well known to require more than an allusion, and it is again exemplified both in Guinea and North America; while, in like fashion, offerings are made to the earth by burying the sacrifice, as amongst the Khonds of Oriaas (a mode of sacrifice which also occurs elsewhere in offerings to the dead), and to the fire by casting the blood into it, as amongst the Yakuts and the Carinthians (Tylor, op. cit. ii. 377-378, 407-408). Sacrifice to the dead may be made simply by casting the offering away at random, as in Malaisia (Cordington, Melanesians, Oxford, 1891, p. 128).

Sacrifices may also be offered either by placing the offering simply on the ground, as amongst the Indians of Brazil and the African negroes (cf. Jevons, Introd. to Hist. of Rel., London, 1896, pp. 134-135); or by hanging the oblation on trees or poles, as amongst the ancient Sveas and the modern Semites, Armenians, Hindus, and some of the African tribes (cf. Tylor, op. cit. ii. 228; Curtius, Prim. Semit. Rel. To-day, New York, 1902, pp. 91-92); Abeghian, op. cit. p. 59; Crooke, Pop. Rel. and Folklore of N. India, London, 1896, ii. 90-100, 102; Ellis, Euro.-Speaking Peoples, London, 1890, p. 42).

In considering the primitive purpose of the altar, it is necessary to discuss the etymology of the words denoting it in Semitic and Indic languages. In the former group the term 'altar' is represented by the Hebrew *mishkab* (Arab. *asrr, *iddb, *rababah, etc.), 'to slaughter,' thus clearly indicating that the Semitic altar was for the slaughtered victim or its blood, not for the burnt-offering; the burnt-offering (of later development amongst the Semites; cf. W. R. Smith, pp. 350 ff.) and this is curiously confirmed by the fact that amongst the modern Semites there are no burnt-offerings, but only the slaughter of victims without burning (Curtius, op. cit. p. 229).

But if we turn to the Indo-Germanic words for 'altar,' a striking diversity of terms awaits us. First and foremost is the Latin *altare*, borrowed in many languages (e.g. Old High German *altir*, Old Pruss. *altet*, Old Church Slav. *olitari*, Lith. *altoris*, Russ. *altari*), and defined by Festus as follows: 'an altar is in quibus incubatur, ' to burn a sacrifice, thus clearly indicating that the Semitic altar was for the slaughtered victim or its blood, not for the burnt-offering; the burnt-offering (of later development amongst the Semites; cf. W. R. Smith, pp. 350 ff.) and this is curiously confirmed by the fact that amongst the modern Semites there are no burnt-offerings, but only the slaughter of victims without burning (Curtius, op. cit. p. 229).

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sacrifices to Poseidon were hurled into its depths; for there seems to be no differentiation of kind between the besmearing of the sacred stone and the casting of an oblation into the ocean or into a crater.

The evolution of the altar will be considered more fully in the following sections devoted to the several individual peoples, but a brief allusion must be made to two forms of altar not always recognized as such. In the opening sentence it has been stated that the altar may sometimes be 'level with the ground, or even depressed beneath it.' In the former case we have a very primitive type indeed—but a step removed from the mere placing of offerings on the ground by interposing a layer of sand which serves as an altar. The typical example of this form is the Hopi altar, which is discussed in ALTAR (American), though an analogy may be traced in the Semitic use of the threshold as an altar (see Trumbull, *The Threshold Covenant*, London, 1896, *passim*), or in the mat-altars of the ancient Egyptians; as well as in the herbs on which the flesh of slaughtered victims was laid by the Persians (Herodotus, i. 122; Strabo, p. 729 f.).

The altar depressed below the ground is more than the mere trench which often surrounds the altar to receive the blood which flows from the sacrifice slaughter upon it (cf. 1 K 19:28; Wetzstein, *Beite des arab. Heidentums*, Berlin, 1887, p. 105), even as the altar itself frequently has hollows artificially made or modified in its upper surface to receive or carry off the blood (cf. Curtius, op. cit. pp. 235-238). This form of depressed altar was particularly appropriate in sacrificing to *manc* and is admirably exemplified in the sacrifice made by Odysseus in order to enter Hades (Odys. xi. 24-47; cf. Lucian, *Charon*, 22; Pausanias, x. 4-10); or again in the ancient Persian form of sacrifice to water (Strabo, *loc. cit.*), where, as in the Indian *sacrifice* (see above), we find the trench combined with the *yama-mat* (for further instances of the Indo-Germanic trench-altar see art. AYRAN RELIGION). With all this may be compared the distinction in Chinese ritual between the victims sacrificed to earth and those offered to Heaven, the former being buried and the latter burnt.

The trench-altar is interestingly combined with the more usual form in the round altar with a hollow centre, through which the blood might flow immediately into the earth, found at Mycenae, and corresponding with the hollow, round *ēkēos*, 'hearth,' level with the ground, *ἐφ' ἐν τοῖς σπαραγμοσισι*, Polyn. *Onomastikon*, l. 8; see Schuchhardt, *Schriften*, tr. Sellers, London, 1891, pp. 156-167); while the connecting bond between the two forms seems to be given by an altar discovered by Schliemann at Tyrins, consisting of a quadrangular block of masonry laid on the ground, with a round hole in the centre, lined with masonry to a depth of three feet, beneath being a rough earthen pit (Schuchhardt, op. cit. p. 107).

The probable general development of the altar may, in the light of what has been said, be sketched briefly as follows. Offerings were originally set upon the ground before the divinity, or placed upon the object in which he was believed to dwell, but as yet there was no altar. With the further evolution of the concept of sacrifice as a meal, either exclusively for the divinity or shared by him with his worshippers (for full details see art. SACRIFICE), and with the development of the idol-concept (see art. IMAGES AND IDOLS), natural objects, chiefly poles and stones of appropriate shape were placed before the idol in which the divinity was held to reside, and there received the offerings; or a thin substance was placed upon the ground to remove the offering from direct contact with the ground—thus giving the most primitive forms of the altar, which
might also be made of a pile of stones, or even of earth. As the shrine or temple (q.v.) was evolved, the altar was placed at first outside it because of the small dimensions of the primitive shrine; but later it resumed its original place in front of the object in which the divinity was believed to dwell, or which symbolized the deity, to whom sacrifice was made. With the development of art, the altar, which had long ceased to be left in its natural shape, despite the conservative character of religious ritual (cf. Ex. 30:26), became varied in form, and was ornamented in accord with the best abilities of those who constructed it. The theory of the altar, however, is unchanged, whether victims be slaughtered on it, or whether it be used for burnt-offerings, or to receive and bear animal, vegetable, or other oblations (as in the Roman lictorismus, the Jewish table of shewbread, or many Polynesian altars), these distinctions belonging properly to the subject of sacrifice (q.v.).

The human body has been used in at least two cults as an altar. In the Astarte Ochpazizli, or broom feast, the woman who was to be sacrificed by decapitation was held by a priest on his back; he thus constituting an altar (Bulletin 28 BE, p. 174); while in Satanism (q.v.) the body of a nude woman forms the altar on which the Mass is parodied.

**LETTER-SATR—**Jevons, Pref. to Hist. of Rel. (London, 1890) pp. 190-191; and see at end of following article.

**LOUIS H. GRAY.**

**ALTAR (African).—**Nowhere, except in South America, is there so general a lack of the altar as in Africa—a phenomenon which closely corresponds to, and is in part indicative of, the primitive religious conditions of that continent, and also finds a partial explanation in the simplicity characterizing fetishism (q.v.), the prevailing type of religion there; though temples, or 'fetish huts,' are by no means unknown, even amongst tribes which have no altars, such as the Bantu Basagons (cf. Waizt, Anthropol. der Naturwelt, ii. Leipzig, 1890, pp. 184-185; Johnston, Uganda Protectorate, London, 1902, pp. 717-718). Thus, amongst the Hotentotes, and even the Hovas of Madagascar, we find no trace of the altar (Waizt, op. cit. pp. 342, 440); while amongst the tribes of the West Coast, whose religion has been perhaps the most carefully studied, this feature of the cult plays relatively a very minor rôle. Attention should here be directed, however, to the sacrifices which are made by the Ewe-speaking peoples to Legba, the phallic deity, to whom on every occasion Ironman women and when they offered the victim, the dismembered, the entrails placed in a dish or calabash before the image, and the body suspended on a stake or post in front of the house, where it is suffered to remain till it rots and falls to pieces (Ellis, Ewe-speaking Peoples, London, 1890, p. 62). Here both the dish and the stake (or post) represents a primitive form of altar, and in like manner we may regard the post on which a girl was impaled at Lagos to secure fertility for the ensuing year (Waizt, op. cit. p. 295) as a crude altar.

On the other hand, in the 'customs' of Dahomey (cf. Ellis, op. cit. pp. 120-138), the sacrificial victims were merely slaughtered on the ground; nor can the usage of burying living human beings when houses or villages were set up in Grand Bassam, Yarriba, and Dahomey (cf. the same custom in Polynesia), or the practice of staking out a victim in the path of a threatened invasion, where he was left to starve to death to deter the foe, be cited as referring in any way to the altar. Nevertheless, in Dahomey a rude form of altar is found in the small piles of earth placed at the foot of trees, the turning of roads, the entrance to houses or villages, and in open spaces, on which are set mimioke, maize, palm-oil, and the like, as offerings to the spirits (cf. the same custom in Dahomey. Naturwelt, Münster, 1891, p. 115).

Amongst the Tahí-speaking peoples of the Guinea Coast the country stool (epoca) of the god, 'which is neutral, in which one is washed with the blood of human victims sacrificed in honour of the deity,' whose own image receives a similar ablation, this being expressly recorded of the divinities Bolovisi, Ihitú, Bonaba, Behnya, and Prah (Ellis, Tahí-speaking Peoples, London, 1887, pp. 23, 51-53, 86). But neither the stool nor the image can properly be termed an altar, any more than the elevations on which the idols are set in Dahomey temples, where 'the images of the gods are placed inside, usually on a raised rectangular platform of clay; and before them are the earthen pots and vessels, smeared with the blood, eggs, and palm-oil of countless offerings' (Ellis, Ewe-speaking Peoples, p. 81).

Against this rather negative material may be set at least one African altar of a degree of development approximating to that found, for instance, in Polynesia. This is the one in the 'ju-ju house' at Bonny, thus described by de Corbi (in Mary Kingsley's West African Studies, London, 1896, p. 518): 'The altar looked very much like an ordinary kitchen plate rack with the edges chopped off, and shelves placed on the great skulls. There were three rows of these, and on the plate shelf a row of grinning human skulls; underneath the hollow shelf, and between it and the top of which would be in a kitchen, the dresses, were nightgowns garnished with rows of goats' skins; then a row of goats' heads; a third row; below the top of the dresser, which was garnished with a board painted blue and white, was arranged the clumping of blankets of palm fronds, drawn up under from the centre, exposing a round hole with a raised rim of clay surrounding it, ostensibly to receive the blood of the victims and libations of palm wine. To one side, and near the altar, was a kind of roughly made table fixed on four straight legs; upon this was displayed a number of human bones and several skulls; leaning against this table was a frame looking very much as if they walk on to the table; this also was garnished with horizontal rows of human skulls—here and there were to be seen human skulls lying about; outside the ju-ju house, upon a kind of trash, work, were a number of shrivelled portions of human flesh.'

**LOUIS H. GRAY.**

**ALTAR (American).—**1. Among the Indians of N. America the altar played an important part, although, curiously enough, the Jesuit missionaries in New France make no mention of this adjunct of religious cult. This silence may be explained, at least in part, not only by the fact that these heroic and devoted souls were not trained observers, but also by the circumstance that the Algon- guian and Iroquoian Indians generally were essentially nomadic, and thus had neither temples nor altars sufficiently strikingly to attract the missionary's attention. Now, however, that the Indians of Virginia had 'altars, which they call Pascowances, placed in their fields, where they sacrifice blood and fat of savage beasts, and offer them the first products of their labor, before entering the chase' (de Laste, L'Hist. du Nouveau Monde, Leyden, 1640, iii. ch. 18). The Natchez, moreover, had a large temple, in the centre of which was an altar with a perpetual fire, while the Caddoan Assinaii temples contained a wooden altar, on which stood leather coffers, filled with leather dishes and musical instruments (Waizt, Anthropol. der Naturwelt, iii. 204, 205-221). The perpetual fire, it may be noted, was also maintained in Louisiana and amongst the Muskogees (ib. pp. 203, 206).

Altar-mounds, found in connexion with many of the structures of the 'mound-builders,' contain altars of clay or, more rarely, of stone. They vary greatly in size and shape, but are seldom in the ordinary sense over twenty inches high, and are near the ground in the centre of the mound; while in their top
A basin-shaped hollow, usually filled with ashes (Bancroft, Nat. Races of the Pacif. States, iv, 774; cf. Thomas, 595-597; Holmes, ib. xx. pp. 38-39). Here, again, numerous variations from the general type are known. Thus, on the top of a mound near Sterling, Ill., was found a stone basin. It was composed of flat pieces of limestone which had been burned red, some portions having been almost converted into lime. On and about this altar I found abundances of charcoal. At the sides of the altar were fragments of human bones, some of which had been charred (Holbrook, quoted by Yarrow, Introd. to Study of Mortuary Customs among the N. Amer. Indians, Washington, 1880, p. 28).

In his Musée des sauvages amérindiens (Paris, 1774, ii, 287) the Asht was described as having five different places, or 'pipe of peace,' was an altar. This statement, perhaps surprising at first, is not as absurd as it may appear, for the cabinet certainly contains, in some instances, a burnt-offering in honour of a deity. Among the Southern Taipacunches and Alibamans the head priest went in each morning before sunrise with the calumet and blew the first puff of smoke towards the east. The Natchez custom was very similar, except that the head priest thrice protruded himself to the east, and honored not only that quarter, but also the three others with whiffs of smoke. Like customs are found amongst many N. American Indian tribes, such as the Kutenakis, Sioux, Shoshones, Omahas, Piankashaws, Potawatomis, and the Hurons ('Our American Aboriginal Pipe and Smoking Customs' in Report of the United States National Museum, 1887, pp. 461-464, especially pp. 505-571).

By far the most elaborate modern N. American Indian altars, however, are those of the Hopi and kindred Pueblo tribes, whose snake, antelope, and flutu altares have been carefully described by Fewkes (REWW xv. p. 270; ib. xvi. pp. 278-279, 287-289, 290-292; xix. pp. 965-966, 969-996, 1001-1002). These altares are of special interest in that, unlike any other known, they embody primarily the principle of sympathetic magic, especially as at present the ritual is performed for the purpose of bringing abundant rain and successful crops' (Fewkes, ib. xix. p. 965, cf. pp. 1009-1111). The Hopi altar, which, of course, presents many variations in different places and ceremonies, is composed of sand, the square interior white, with bordering strips of yellow, green, red, and white, symbolizing the four cardinal points. At the top of the central square are four symbolic figures of each of the four rain-clouds, from which depend four serpents, typifying lightning, while on the top outer white sand border are lines of black squares representing rain. At the bottom of the altar are four water-gourds (the number again typifying the four quarters of the sky), separated by ears of maize, and at the top is a vase with maize-corn and bales and bull-roarers, symbolizing thunder, are scattered around the edges of the altar, and a pouch of tobacco (the smoke typifying the rain-cloud), a water-gourd, and a 'medicine-bowl,' as an asp is supposed to symbolize the falling rain, are also prominent features. The lines of meal drawn across the sand seem to represent the fertilization proceeding from the rain-clouds to the external world; while tiponos, or totemistic emblems of the clans celebrating the ritual, form the most sacred objects of the altar. Figures of aquatic animals are also found frequently, together with other objects whose precise significance is not yet fully known.

Many of these Hopi-Zuni altares, it should be noted, have a more or less elaborate reredos, that of the Kayakwacha ('Blue Flute' society) at the Tusayan pueblo of Mimbrosongori, for example, being described by Fewkes (REWW xix. pp. 601-607) as consisting of uprights and transverse slats of wood, the former decorated with two rain-cloud pictures, five on each side, one for each quarter. These symbolize the outlines, each angle decorated with a figure of a feather, and depending from these, in front, is a rain-cloud figure; when these slats, and the falling rain, were painted. The transverse slats bore a row of nine rain-clouds, of semicircular form. Four cigar sticks, representing lightning, hang from the transverse slats between the vertical or lateral slats of the reredos. Two supplementary uprights were fastened to the main reredos, one on either side. These were decorated at their bases with symbolic pictures representing maize, surrounded by rain-clouds. The ridge of sand between the uprights of the altar supported many smaller rods and slats, one in the middle being decorated with a picture of an ear of corn. Despite these elaborate character of these reredoses, however, they are obviously subordinate to the sand-altar places and the altar, and of which they are palpable imitations; even though, as in some of the Zuni altares described by Mrs. Stevenson, the reredos is quasi-permanent, while the sand-altar must be renewed for each ceremony.

Amongst the Zuni, as already intimated, we likewise find elaborate altares showing the same general type as their Hopi congers. In all of them the principle of sympathetic magic seems to be present, as is clear from Mrs. Stevenson's detailed description of them (REW xxi. pp. 245-246, 438, 432-434, 454, 491, 522, 543, 590, 591).

2. Turn to Mexico and Central America. The altar in the great temple at the City of Mexico in honour of Huitzilopochtli, the god of war and the chief Aztec deity, was a green block, probably of jasper, 5 ft. long by 3 broad and high, curved convexly on the top, so that the human sacrifice slaughtered upon it might be in the best position for the excision of the heart (Bancroft, Nat. Races of the Pacif. States, ii, 389-393). The Aztec altar, moreover, had an adjacent, not found elsewhere, in the sacrificial yoke, a heavy stone of green jasper, curved in a f- shape, and placed over the neck of the human sacrifice at the time of his immolation, to assist the priests who held his arms and legs, to keep him in proper position for the chief celebrant. Our general knowledge of the details of the Aztec altar must, however, be drawn from the sacrificial stones of neighbouring peoples, which may be inferred to have been analogous. The Maya altares, as found in the ruins of Copan, Honduras, and of Quirigua, Guatemalas, are 6 or 7 ft. square and about 4 ft. high, taking a variety of forms and being covered with sculpture somewhat less elaborate than the statues of the divinities themselves (Bancroft, op. cit. ii. 689, iv. 94). As in many Semitic altares, their tops were intersected with grooves to receive the blood of the sacrifices offered upon them (ib. iv. 94-95, 111-114, 541). Besides formal altares, the ancient Mexicans, Maya, and Guatemalan also had braziers and small altars in which copal, which here corresponded to the Oriental incense, was burnt in honour of the gods, one of these smaller structures, found at Palenque in the Mexican State of Chiapas, being 16 in. high and 4 ft. in circumference (ib. i. 697, ii. 584, 600, iii. 336, iv. 345-346). Like the 'mount-builders' of N. America, the Mayas erected altares on the graves of the dead (ib. ii. 720), and in Nicaragua, flat stones have been discovered which apparently served as altares (ib. iv. 32, 61-62).

Both in Mexico and in Central America generally, the altar, like the temple itself, was placed on the summit of the teocalli, or 'god-house,' a pyramid of considerable elevation; so that it has been not improperly said that 'a Mexican temple was essentially a gigantic altar, of pyramidal form, built in several stages, contracting as they approached the summit' (Revéle, Native Religions of Mexico and Peru, London, 1884, pp. 41-43). In places, however, as at Quemada, in the Mexican State of Zacatecas, a small structure, 5 ft. high and with a base 7 ft. square, was set in front of a pyramid, apparently as an altar (Bancroft, op. cit. iii. 587-588).

3. In South America the altar seems to be unknown, thus giving yet another proof of the cultic inferiority of the South American Indians to those of North and Central America. Even the archaeological remains of Peru present no example of the
altar, so seeming to confirm the words of Garcilasso de la Vega (Royal Commentaries of the Incas, ii. 291. p. 157. London, 1855), that ‘these Indians did not know anything of building an altar, etc. Nevertheless, there are not infrequent  

LITERATURE.—Hough in Handbook of American Indians, i. 167 (Washington, 1897); Waite, Anthropology der Naturvölker, iii. (Leipzig, 1862) ; Bancroft, Native Races of the Pacific States, iv. (San Francisco, 1886).

LOUIS H. GRAY.

ALTAR (Celtic).—The data concerning the altars of the Roman period, and are modelled upon Roman originals. The chief sources, then, for a knowledge of the altar, as of other portions of Celtic cult, are a few early classical authors. Caesar, in his brief account of Druidism (de Bello Gallico, vi. 13-18), makes no mention of any altar, and is followed in this silence, which may not be without significance, by Strabo (i. 4-5). On the other hand, Tacitus (Annales, xiv. 30) distinctly states that the Druids of Mone ‘held it right to beseech the altar with captive blood;’ and this practice is extended to the whole of Gaul by Pomponius Mela (i. 18). By far the most famous passage, however, in this connexion, is found in Lucretius’s Phaenomena (i. 449-445):

Et quibus immolit placatam saeclinae dieron
Teutoni, hornecepe feris altissimos Hostus;
Et Turannis Scythiorum non minor a Dio.

(On the identification of these divinities, see Eryan, Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as illustrated by Celtic Heathendom, pp. 44-47, 61-73). The same poem contains a brief description of a Druid temple (iii. 290-422) at Marseilles, which was destroyed by Caesar. It seems to have consisted simply of a gloomy wood, the oak being mentioned as one of the trees, which contained ‘altar, built with offerings to the dead’ (strea sacris feribus auro) and rude, artless images of the gods, roughly hewn from logs. Although Caesar expressly states that the Gauls differed widely from the Germans in cult (de Bello Gallico, vi. 21), Lucan’s description of the temple of Marsellas recalls involuntarily the statement of Tacitus (germanica, 9), that the ancient Teutons made altars, while those offered for the gods, but worshipped them in groves. A large number of Celtino altars of the Roman period have been preserved, but are practically valueless, as being modelled entirely on classical prototypes. It was supposed by older archaeologists that the dolmens or cromlechs, formed by laying a flat stone across two or three others which had been placed erect, were Druidical altars, a hypothesis now abandoned, since these structures are rather sepulchral chambers which were frequently covered to a greater or less extent with earth. It is probable, however, that the dolmens date from the neolithic period, and it is impossible, therefore, to state that they are specifically Celtic. The only conclusion which can be reached, in the light of the data now available, concerning Celtic altars is that the Druids probably had simple structures placed in their sacred groves and used for sacrifice, although the altar was not indispensable, since the wooden and osier cages filled with men and other victims and burned as a holocaust (Caesar, de Bello Gallico, vi. 18; Strabo, iv. 4. 5). could scarcely have been offered on any but a special structure or on the ground.


LOUIS H. GRAY.

ALTAR (Chinese).—The Chinese sacred books inform us that burnt-offerings were made to Shang-ti, the Supreme Ruler, upon mountain-tops from time immemorial; and that at present, the worship of Heaven or Shang-ti is conducted upon a circular mound would seem to be a reminiscence of this ancient practice. As early as the days of the Emperor Shun (b.c. 2300), a distinction appears to have been made between the ‘round’ altar upon which the sacrifices—arranged in a circle, and hence called the ‘round sacrifice’—were offered to God, i.e. Shang-ti, and the spread-out sacrifice, and others, which were associated with the worship of subordinate deities or spirits, and which, as the names imply, were arranged in other ways. The distinction between the shape of the altar of heaven and that of earth is observable even now in China, and may serve to illustrate the early methods as represented in the classical books.

The celebrated ‘Altar of Heaven,’ in the Chinese quarter of Peking, stands in a beautiful grove, some 3 miles in circuit, and is a magnificent structure of white marble, 27 feet high, composed of 3 circular terraces, the lowest of which is 210 feet in diameter, the middle 120, and the upper 90 feet, and is approached by 4 flights of steps, corresponding to the 4 points of the compass. Each terrace is protected by a marble balustrade. The top is paved with marble slabs arranged in concentric circles, the innermost slab being round in shape, corresponding to the shape of heaven, around which is arranged a circle of slabs, 9 in number, and, outside of this, other circles in multiples of 9 until the square of 9 is reached in the outermost ring. Five marble stands support the altar furniture, consisting of censers, candlesticks, and vases. Close to the altar there is a furnace of green tiles, 9 feet high by 7 feet wide, approached by steps on three sides, intended for the reception of the sacrificial offerings which are here burned on the great occasions when the Emperor represents the whole nation in his high-priestly capacity. In the chapels adjoining, where the tablets of Shang-ti and the Imperial ancestors are preserved, this circular arrangement is also maintained.

The ‘Altar of Earth,’ as described in the Law of Sacrifices, was a square mound in which the victims were hung about the circumference, were burned. The passage reads as follows: ‘With a blazing pile of wood on the grand altar they sacrificed to Heaven; by burying in the grand mound they sacrificed to Earth. The Altar of the Earth, in the Chinese quarter of the city of Peking, consists of 2 terraces of marble, each 6 feet high. The lower terrace is 100 feet square, and the upper one 60 feet. The altar is situated in a park on the north side of that which contains the ‘Altar of Heaven’ above described. The coping of the wall which encloses the park is of yellow tiling, corresponding to the colour of earth.

The ‘Altar of Prayer for Grain,’ popularly known as the ‘Temple of Heaven,’ is separated by a low wall from the ‘Altar of Heaven.’ It is also circular in shape, but is protected by a triple roof of blue tiling, 100 feet in height.

The local altars on which sacrifices to Earth are periodically offered consist of low mounds of earth, about 5 feet square, and perhaps a foot high. They

* An engraving of the altar, from a photograph, is given in Bibles in the World, March 1907, p. 79.

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ALTAR (Christian).

— 1. Nomenclature. — (a) GREEK.—St. Paul, in a passage dealing with the Eucharist, uses the phrase τράπεζας ἑορτῆς [cf. 1 Cor. 11:20],—a term frequently employed by the Greek Fathers after the 3rd cent., and consisting of two parts: τραπέζας, from τράπεζα, table, and ἑορτή, feast, sacrifice, offering. The word θυσιαστήρας—was frequently used in the literature of the period after LXX for this subject, and by Ignatius at Eph. vii. 13; but only with reference to the altar of the old dispensation. The writer, however, of the Epistle to the Hebrews may refer to the Eucharist when he says, 'We have an altar [θυσιαστήρας], whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle' (Heb. 10:21); but most commentators explain this passage otherwise (cf. Rev. 8:11). There is no other reference to the Christian altar in the NT.

[See Probst, Liturgie der drei ersten christlichen Jahrhunderte, pp. 20, 21, 27, 38; F. E. Warren, Liturgy and Ritual of the Anti-Nicean Church, pp. 78-82; Westcott, SLG, 465-82.)

In the sub-Apostolic age it is difficult to find any direct reference to the altar. The Didache is silent on the point, but in the letters of Ignatius the word θυσιαστήρας occurs in passages dealing with the Eucharist; and this writer in at least one passage (ad Philad. 4) appears definitely to apply this word to the Eucharistic altar.

[See ad Philad. 4, ad Magnes. 7; cf. also ad Ephes. 5, ad Trall. 7 (in these latter passages θυσιαστήρας is applied figuratively to the Christian community: see Lightfoot, Philo, p. 252).]

Later in the same century, Irenæus (c. Hær. iv. 18, 6) writes that the sacrifice of bread and wine should be frequently offered on the altar. Eusebius also mentions the altar of the basilicas at Tyre, dedicated in the year A.D. 314, as ἑορτὴν θυσιαστήρας (EH x. 444), and speaks in the same place of the altars (θυσιαστήρας) erected throughout the world after the Peace of the Church. The word ἑορτὴς also is defined by pseudo-Athanasius as θυσιαστήρας (Disput. cont. Arian. xviii.).

τράπεζα, not θυσιαστήρας, is the term usually employed in the liturgies; it is also common in many of the Greek Fathers. Sometimes the word stands alone—τράπεζα, 'the table' par excellence (e.g. Chrys. Hom. iii. in Epist. ad Ephes.). Sometimes, as in 1 Cor. 10:21, it is τράπεζα ἑορτῆς (cf. Orig. c. Celsus, viii. 24). But very often adjectives are added, such as λεπτ., ἱδρυμα, πολυτρέχον, and the like. θυσιαστήρας, as contrasted with θυσιαστήρας, is used in the OT for heathen altars: e.g. 1 Sam. 15:2: οἱ βυσσοὶ ἡ ἐξ ἐριωθέως θυσιαστήρας (note the use of the word in Az 17:3—the only place in which it occurs in the NT). This usage is generally followed by Christian writers. Exceptions, however, are found in the case of certain Eastern Churches, and in some cases a conflict with, e.g., in Synesius (Katastasia, 19 [Migne, PG xvi. coll. 1572, 1573]), who speaks of βυσσοὶ διὰ διάκονος. Clement of Alexandria and Origen also use the word βυσσοῖς, but in a figurative sense, when they say that the soul of the faithful is the true Christian altar.

[Ch. Allel. Strom. vii. 11-25; Orig. c. Celsus, viii. 17; for τράπεζα see Dionys. Alex. Ep., ep. Eusebius, H.E. vii. 9.)

In the passage just quoted from Origen he expressly admits the charge of Celsus that Christians had no material altars. This admission, coupled with the fact that so few references to the altar are to be found in early Christian literature, might suggest that the altar was not in early times an adjunct of Christian worship. Nor is Origen alone in his admission; other writers say practically the same thing. But the prevalence of the Disciplinae Rerum, which first appeared in the 3d cent., is a strong argument for the retention of ecclesiastical writers on this as on all other subjects connected with Christian worship and the administration of the sacraments. Further, it must be remembered that the same writers, who appear to deny the existence of altars, also deny the existence of temples, stating that God can be worshipped in any place, and that His best temple is in the heart of man. It would appear, then, that the same arguments could be used to disprove the existence of churches in the period now under discussion, and we have no positive evidence in disproof of any such statement (see Duchesme, Christian Worship [Eng. tr.], ch. xii.). The object of these writers, no doubt, was to differentiate between the pagan sacrifices and the 'unholy sacrifice' of the Church. In the pagan sense, it is true, Christians had neither temples nor altars.

With the passage cited from Orig. may be compared Minucius Felix, Octavius, s. x.; Arnobius, adv. Gent. viii. 5.)

The word καθήκων is employed by the Syriacs, both Jacobites and Nestorians, maneroskondi by the Copts, and khoron by the Armenians, to designate the altar (see Brightman, Lit. p. 566).

(b) LATTIN.—The term usually employed by the Latin Fathers and Western liturgical documents to designate the altar is altare. This word is used already by Tertullian, who describes the Lord's Table as altare (de Exhort. Consecr. ch. 10). Cyprian also frequently uses this term, and applies to it an exclusively Christian significance, contrasting 'orac Diaboli' with 'altare Dei' (Ep. 64 [65]); nevertheless, in one passage of his writings we find the phrase 'Diaboli altarum' (Ep. 59 [64]). Altar is also commonly used by Ambrose (e.g. de Virgine, ch. 18) and Augustine (e.g. Sermo 159, par. 1). The appellation Mensa Dominii or Mensa Dominici is also employed by Augustine (e.g. Sermo 90, par. 5) and other Latin Fathers.

ARA, the Vulg. rendering of βυσσοῖς, is not applied to the altar by any Christian writer except Tertullian, who uses the phrase 'ara Dei' (de Orat. 14 [19]). The word arca is, however, used occasionally in inscriptions: e.g. in one generally supposed to be of Christian origin and of early date—ARUM DEO SACRUM ETERNUM (CIL, vol. viii. n. 9704). Minucius Felix, in a well-known passage, writes: 'Delubra et arca non habemus' (Oct. ch. 34). Prudentius uses arca as the designation of the base of the altar: 'Altaris aram funditus pessundare' (ep. Zephyram, x. 49); and in
this usage he is followed by other writers. The plural altar is sometimes used with the signifi-
cance of a singular. The singular altarium is used
sometimes by late writers for altar. Altar is also
used as a designation of the free space around
the altar.

The word mensa came to be applied to the slab
itself on which the Elements were placed.

Altar occurs, e.g., in Cassius of Arles, Hist. v.: the
Elements to be consecrated 'nec horum altarii imposuntur.'

Frontals (altar plates) are used in this way by Ambrose (Ep. 137, 149).

The relationship of the model altar is used in a passage which has been quoted to
prove that his church contained more than one altar (see below, I. 6).

For altar, cf. Council of Auxerre (A.D. 578), can. 16: Mass is not to be said more than once a day, 'super uno altarii.'

For the use of altarium to designate the space around the altar,

cf. Greg. Tav. (Hist. II. 14), who speaks of a church having

fenestrae in altarii trinporte dure; cf. also Mose, Mem. p. 6.

Material and form of the altar. — Altars were

constructed of wood, stone, or metal.

1. Altar of wood. — It is generally agreed that
the earliest altars were made of wood. This would
appear from the following considerations.

The earliest churches were, no doubt, ordinary dwell-

ing-houses adapted to the special requirements of Christi-

an worship (see Duchesne, op. cit. ch. xii. p. 390 ff.), and

and it would seem probable that in the beginning
the Eucharist was celebrated at the tables usually

to be found in such houses. It is also known that

at the beginning of this era such tables were usually

made of wood, either square or round in shape.

This view is supported by certain very early fres-

coes which have survived, and which have for their

subject the consecration of the Eucharist. One of

these, known as the Fractio Panis, is attributed to

the first half of the 2nd cent.; and another, dis-

covered in the cemetery of Callixtus, belongs to

the latter half of the same century.

(Reproductions of both these frescoes will be found in vol. I.

of LACL. The Fractio Panis is reproduced as Fig. 175, the

testo from the cemetery of Callixtus as Fig. 1123.)

From both these frescoes it would appear that in

very early times the Eucharist was conserved at

a small three-legged table, similar in form to those in

use at the period for purposes of repast.

No doubt, at a comparatively early date, special tables

were reserved for the Eucharist, and their form was

differentiated from that of those ordinarily in use;

but for this period of transition we have no definite

evidence. That these tables were made of wood

is further attested by certain relics preserved at

Rome in the churches of St. John Lateran and St.

Pudenziana. These are alleged to be the table used

at the Last Supper, and altars used by St. Peter.

For a table, but the only point which deserves here

attention is that these relics are of wood, thus

evidencing the traditional belief that the earliest

altars were of that material. A number of pas-

sages of an incidental character in the writings of

both Greek and Latin Fathers give the ultimate

confirmation of this view. Oplatus, Augustine1,

and Athenasius all mention altars of wood.

(See Optat. de Scholam, Domatiat. v. 1, where he says that

the Donatists used the altars of the Catholic as freewill; also

Aug. Ep. 186, p. 57, who states that the orthodox bishop

Maximianus was beaten with the wood of the altar.

Athena-

sius, de Monach. expressly states of the altar destroyed at

Alexandria by the Count Herculis, that it was of wood (Ep. 147,

v. 6); these words, however, may imply that he was familiar

with altars made of other materials.

It will, then, seem fair to conclude that in the

earliest period altars were of wood, round or square

in shape, and resembling the ordinary tables used

domestic purposes, from which they were gradu-

ally differentiated.

It was not till after a considerable period that

wooden altars were altogether superseded by those of

stone or metal. Although condemned by the

local Council of Epaona (A.D. 517), they continued

in some places to be used for several centuries later.

In England it is related that the ancient wooden

altars were demolished by the order of St. Wilfrid,

bishop of Worcester (A.D. 1065-1095), and there is
evidence of their occasional retention in France and

Spain at a later period.

In the East the material of the altar does not

seem to have been regarded as of great importance;

it is, however, stated that the use of altars of wood

was forbidden by the Nestorian Patriarch, John

Barabos, in the 9th century.

(See Council of Epaona, can. 18—the earliest decree on the

subject; also Capitulures of Charlesmaur (A.D. 748), c. 14 [Migne,

PL. cxxvii. 1950]; and of Zacharias, bishop of Barbalissos,

de Gesta Polii, Angl., who relates the demolition by St. Wilfrid

of ‘altera signum jam era quae praeva dabatur in Anglia.’ For

France, see the anonymous author of the Monstrum, who quoted

below, p. 242, and the case of the altar of the monas-


tery of St. Corentin quoted by Dom M. in Antiqu. Eclesiastiques, p. 111.

For Spain, Hardouin, Compend. v. s. ed. 1546. For the East, Ammianus, Biblia, Orient. III. 183.)

2. Altar of stone. — It is certain that from

a very early date stone altars were in use, and it is

seriously to be doubted that there is a very close

connexion between them and the tombs of martyrs.

It would seem that probably, during the same

period at which the Eucharist was celebrated at

the wooden tables described above, in the houses

which served in early times for the purposes of

Christian worship, it was also celebrated on the

stone slab (mensa) which covered the relics of

martyrs and formed part of their tombs (arcosolia).

That the celebration of the Eucharist in the

cemeteries was a custom of great antiquity is indisputable;

it is expressly ordered in the Apostolic Constitu-
tions, where (iv. 17) the faithful are commanded to

assemble in the cemeteries for the reading of Scrip-

ture and recitation of Psalms (i.e. for the observance

of the nocturnal vigil) for the martyrs, saints, and all

the faithful departed, and also to offer the Eucharis-
tic sacrifices in churches and cemeteries. It is

possible that the same custom is referred to as

early as A.D. 155 in the Letter of the Smyrneans

relating the martyrdom of St. Polycarp.

After men seem to have placed over the places of the

martyr in a suitable place, they pray that they may

be permitted to gather themselves together in

that place, and to celebrate the anniversary of

his martyrdom (Martyr. Polyocarp. c. 15). In the

Liber Pontificum it is stated of Pope Felix I.

(A.D. 269-275): 'Hic constituit supra memorias

(is. sepulcros) martyrum missas celebrari. It

seems, however, probable that this means only

that he regulated an already existing practice.

(See Lib. Pontif., ed. Duchesne, i. p. 156.)

The cemeteries themselves afford abundant evidence of the

existence of altars, but it is impossible to enter into any discussion of the many disputed

points arising from the investigation of these monuments.

It is certain that not all the arcosolia (arcosolia) now existing were used for the cele-

bration of the Eucharist, but it is agreed on all

hands that many were used for this purpose;

and instances occur of the slab covering the tomb being

provided with rings, which would enable it to be

drawn out for the purpose of the Eucharist. The

intimate connexion between altars and the relics

of martyrs is evidenced by such passages as the

words of the author of the treatise de Aelistori-

bus, who writes: 'Martyribus presentibus supra

mensam Dominicum' (CIL i. pt. 3, p. 105); or of

Augustine, who thus writes of the altar ered

on the site of the martyrdom of Cyprian: 'Menas

Deo constructus est: et tamens mensam dicurrit Cypri-

nian . . . quis ipsa immolatione sus purae curavit

mensan, non in qua passae vivi passaretur, sed in

qua sacrificium Deo, cui et ipsa oblatus est, offere-


In this connexion it may also be quoted the famous lines of

Prudentius on the altar and tomb of the martyr Hipolytus:

'Tabulis Hippolyti corpus mandat spiritus.

Propter illum adjutum est sine doubtis.'
During the era of persecution, while the churches were for the most part in private houses, it was necessary for the faithful to take refuge in the catacombs for the purpose of celebrating the Eucharist at the time of internment, or on the anniversaries of the martyrdoms. But after the Peace of the Church the custom arose of building churches immediately over the sites of the martyrdom of famous saints, or of translating their relics to churches prepared for their reception; as also, at a somewhat later period, of burying ecclesiastical personages beneath or in proximity to the altar in already existing churches. It was not considered necessary to possess the entire body of a saint or martyr; fragments of it would suffice, or even a piece of linen soaked in his blood. These relics were placed within the altar, so that its tomb-like character was for the most part preserved. In later times it was considered unlawful to consecrate an altar without relics; and if these could not be obtained, a leaf of the Gospels, or even a consecrated Host, was placed within the altar. The tomb was constructed of marble, or sometimes of wood, and was surmounted by a canopy (confessio) to contain the relics of a saint. It became customary from an early date for the altar to be covered by a canopy, usually dome-shaped and supported on pillars, called the ciborium (ciboria). It was made of metal or stone, and richly ornamented. It served a double purpose. Firstly, being provided with curtains hanging between the pillars, it served to veil the altar at certain points in the service. Secondly, it did honour to the altar, providing it with a canopy or umbraculum, as in that period was customary with the seats of great personages. The date of the introduction of the ciborium is uncertain; it must, however, have been considerably earlier than the 5th century. A distinction must be made between the ciborium of the East and the West. In the East it was used, and for the most part, to custom to allow the altar to stand well in view of the people. In the East, at least from the 4th century onwards, the reverse has been the case. The ciborium with its veils is found in the West probably from about the 5th century onwards, and possibly owing to Byzantine influence. Among other reasons which tended to cause its disuse was the change in the shape of the altar, and the custom of placing a shrine containing relics upon it. The ciborium was well suited to the original cube-like altars, which, as we have seen, were in use in early times, but quite unsuited to the oblong altars evolved in the Middle Ages in the West. The monastars, or heavy screen, hiding the bema from the rest of the church, and in general use in the East at the present day, represents to some extent the veil of the ciborium.

In early times nothing was placed upon the altar except the clothes and sacred vessels necessary for the Eucharist, and the book of the Gospels. Not even relics or the reserved Sacrament might be placed upon it. This custom appears to have prevailed in the West for some centuries, but in the 9th cent. a humility or pastoral charge, dedicated to Leo IV. (A.D. 855), permits a shrine containing relics, the book of the Gospels, and a pyx or tabernacle containing the Lord's body, for purposes of the vilificium. From this period onwards, in the West, the ornaments which had formerly decorated the ciborium were transferred to the altar. At first these appear to have been a case of metal or of wax which was the celebration of covered with metal. These notices occur in the Liber Pontificalis, and date probably from the latter half of the 5th century. Especially worthy of mention in this connexion is the altar of St. Ambrose at Milan, probably erected before the year A.D. 383. It is 7 ft. 3 in. in length, 4 ft. 1 in. in height, and the mesa is 4 ft. 4 in. wide. The front is of gold, marbled and sides of silver, and it is decorated with panels containing subjects of the Eucharist, and on the relief with enamelled work. It is probably the most elaborate specimen of its kind which has survived.

(For a reproduction see LaC. fig. 1180; and for the extensive literature connected with this altar see the same work, vol. i. col. 517, n. 50.)

3. Sites and accessories of the altar.—The earliest Christian churches were of the form of a basilica, and the altar was usually placed on the chond of the apace. Around the apace were arranged the seats for the clergy, the bishop's throne being placed in the centre, behind the altar. Sometimes, however, it was placed more forward, nearer the centre of the church; but this was not common. Usually it was raised on steps, and separated from the body of the church by a low screen or railing, not of sufficient height to hide it from the view of the congregation. In later times, beneath the altar, a little chapel was placed within a small vault, called the confessio to contain the relics of a saint. It became customary from an early date for the altar to be covered by a canopy, usually dome-shaped and supported on pillars, called the ciborium (ciboria). The ciborium was made of metal or stone, and richly ornamented. It served a dual purpose. Firstly, being provided with curtains hanging between the pillars, it served to veil the altar at certain points in the service. Secondly, it did honour to the altar, providing it with a canopy or umbraculum, as in that period was customary with the seats of great personages. The date of the introduction of the ciborium is uncertain; it must, however, have been considerably earlier than the 5th century. A distinction must be made between the ciborium of the East and the West. In the East it was used, and for the most part, to custom to allow the altar to stand well in view of the people. In the East, at least from the 4th century onwards, the reverse has been the case. The ciborium with its veils is found in the West probably from about the 5th century onwards, and possibly owing to Byzantine influence. Among other reasons which tended to cause its disuse was the change in the shape of the altar, and the custom of placing a shrine containing relics upon it. The ciborium was well suited to the original cube-like altars, which, as we have seen, were in use in early times, but quite unsuited to the oblong altars evolved in the Middle Ages in the West. The monastars, or heavy screen, hiding the bema from the rest of the church, and in general use in the East at the present day, represents to some extent the veil of the ciborium.

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3. Sites and accessories of the altar.—The earliest Christian churches were of the form of a basilica, and the altar was usually placed on the chond of the apace. Around the apace were arranged the seats for the clergy, the bishop's throne being placed in the centre, behind the altar. Sometimes, however, it was placed more forward, nearer the centre of the church; but this was not common. Usually it was raised on steps, and separated from the body of the church by a low screen or railing, not of sufficient height to hide it from the view of the congregation. In later times, beneath the altar, a little chapel was placed within a small vault, called the confessio to contain the relics of a saint. It became customary from an early date for the altar to be covered by a canopy, usually dome-shaped and supported on pillars, called the ciborium (ciboria). The ciborium was made of metal or stone, and richly ornamented. It served a dual purpose. Firstly, being provided with curtains hanging between the pillars, it served to veil the altar at certain points in the service. Secondly, it did honour to the altar, providing it with a canopy or umbraculum, as in that period was customary with the seats of great personages. The date of the introduction of the ciborium is uncertain; it must, however, have been considerably earlier than the 5th century. A distinction must be made between the ciborium of the East and the West. In the East it was used, and for the most part, to custom to allow the altar to stand well in view of the people. In the East, at least from the 4th century onwards, the reverse has been the case. The ciborium with its veils is found in the West probably from about the 5th century onwards, and possibly owing to Byzantine influence. Among other reasons which tended to cause its disuse was the change in the shape of the altar, and the custom of placing a shrine containing relics upon it. The ciborium was well suited to the original cube-like altars, which, as we have seen, were in use in early times, but quite unsuited to the oblong altars evolved in the Middle Ages in the West. The monastars, or heavy screen, hiding the bema from the rest of the church, and in general use in the East at the present day, represents to some extent the veil of the ciborium.

In early times nothing was placed upon the altar except the clothes and sacred vessels necessary for the Eucharist, and the book of the Gospels. Not even relics or the reserved Sacrament might be placed upon it. This custom appears to have prevailed in the West for some centuries, but in the 9th cent. a humility or pastoral charge, dedicated to Leo IV. (A.D. 855), permits a shrine containing relics, the book of the Gospels, and a pyx or tabernacle containing the Lord's body, for purposes of the vilificium. From this period onwards, in the West, the ornaments which had formerly decorated the ciborium were transferred to the altar. At first these appear to have been a case of metal or of wax which was the celebration of covered with metal. These notices occur in the Liber Pontificalis, and date probably from the latter half of the 5th century. Especially worthy of mention in this connexion is the altar of St. Ambrose at Milan, probably erected before the year A.D. 383. It is 7 ft. 3 in. in length, 4 ft. 1 in. in height, and the mesa is 4 ft. 4 in. wide. The front is of gold, marbled and sides of silver, and it is decorated with panels containing subjects of the Eucharist, and on the relief with enamelled work. It is probably the most elaborate specimen of its kind which has survived.

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which had surmounted the dome of the ciborium and had depended from it, was placed on the altar itself. In the same way with lights, first a single candlestick was placed on one side of the altar opposite to the cross, later two candlesticks are found, one on either side of it. All this had been accomplished by the 13th century. Meantime, the ciborium having practically disappeared in the West, and the altar becoming more and more loaded with tabernacle reliquaries, candles, etc., and having generally been placed as far back as possible against the east wall, the reredos begins to make its appearance,—as also the small canopy now generally in use,—which may be regarded as directly descended from the ciborium and altar, but now have to represent i. 447, 450; also G. M. Nash, introd. to the History of the Holy Church, p. 388.

4. Number of altars.—The primitive custom appears to have been that each church should have only one altar. This custom has prevailed in the East to the present day, although altars are found in some churches, or side-chapels—these being regarded as separate buildings. In the West the multiplication of altars has been common from a comparatively early date.

[Ed. n. x.—The passage from Augustine, sometimes quoted in this connexion, proves nothing. He speaks of the existence of two churches in one town (Victorinus: 9. 1524, etc.), which is no sign of the existence of the same number of altars. The Church records in Tyre (Ep. 9, 3), besides, mention only one altar in his description of the great basilica at Tyre. E. B. (ibid. xiii. 3), however, quotes a passage from Ambrose, which speaks of the existence of two churches in one town. For Eastern custom, cf. J. M. Neale, introd. to the History of the Holy Church, p. 388.

It has been suggested that the multiplication of altars in a single church originated in the cemetery chapels, in some of which several arcosolia, or alta-tombs, are to be found. But it is dangerous to draw any inference from this fact, because it is generally agreed that many of these arcosolia were never used for the purpose of celebrating the Eucharist. More probably the reason is to be sought on the one hand, in the growth of the Christian population subsequent to the Peace of the Church, and on the other hand, in the increasing desire of the clergy to celebrate, rather than to only to communicate, as often as possible. It is, however, difficult to find passages which imply the existence of more than one altar in a single church earlier than the middle of the 6th century. It is not till the time of St. Gregory the Great that we have definite evidence; but it is clear that by that time the custom was well established, because at the request of a correspondent, Palladius, bishop of Saintonge, the pope sent relics for the consecration of four of the thirteen altars which Palladius had set up in his church (Greg. Magn. Epist. vi. 49). From this we can draw the conclusion that the multiplication of altars in a single church is abundant.

The passage from St. Ambrose, cited above, p. 329, is in contradiction with the practice in altars, as well as with other passages in the same Epistle (Ep. 23).; also St. Paulinus of Nola, Ep. xxii. par. 5. For later evidence see Greg. Toz. de Gloria Martyrum, i. 33; Bede (HE v. 50), who states that Acoa, bishop of Icbernam, (dead a.d. 732), having collected a number of relics of saints and martyrs, exposed them for veneration, altar, distinctia porticulli in hoc ipso inter se multis ejusdem sanctae; in the 8th century, the plan of the church of St. Gall, in Switzerland, provided for the erection of seventeen altars. See also Council of Aachen, art. 10, quoted above; Walchred, de Reb. Rel. c. xxii.; Capellan. Republ. Pragensium, ed. Balduin, l. 425.

5. Portable altars and 'antimenes.'—The oldest example of a portable altar which has survived is that which was found with the bones of St. Cuthbert, and is now preserved in the Cathedral Library at Durham. It measures 6 in. x 6 1/2 in., and is made of wood covered with velvet. On the wood are found two crosses and part of an inscription, IN HONOR . . . PETR. The earliest writer who certainly refers to portable altars is Bede, who relates (HE iii. 10) that, in the year 692, two English missionaries to the Saxons on the Continent carried with them an altar stone ('tablum altarii vice dedicatum'). The following description is given of the portable altar of St. Willebrord: 'Hoc altare Willebrordus in honor Domini Salvatoris consecravit, supra quod in illo Missarum oblatae Deo offerec munera, in quo et confitemur de ligno crucis Christi, et de eodem capitis ejus' (Brower, Annu. Trierens., an. 718, p. 384). From this and other passages it appears that portable altars contained also relics. Portable altars are designated altaria portatilia, gestatoria, eratica. Sometimes over is used for a portable altar.

[It has been suggested that portable altars were in use in the time of St. Cyrilus, but this passage cannot be regarded as authentic (Ep. iv. 9), in which he makes provision for celebration in the prison, is incoherent. A portable altar is also mentioned by St. Augustine in the church of St. Maria, in Campidigoli, as having been brought to that church at an early date, as that of St. Ultrasound (Ep. 745), the apostle of Frisia (Dura, Pace Sancorion, l. 304) and of the missionary, St. Bavon. Mention is also made of a wooden board, covered with a linen cloth, used as an altar by the abbots of Ripon and of Charlemagne in his campaign against the Saxons (Munus. St. Dominii, l. 20; Acta SS., ed. Paris, 1732, vol. iv. p. 805).

In the East, in a place of a portable altar, the antimenes (Gr. artemene, a waist of somewhat doubtful origin) is used. It consists of a piece of cloth consecrated, with various ceremonies, at the time of a consecration of a church. It is to be used apparently in oratories which do not possess a propely consecrated altar, and in other places where it is doubtful if the altar has received consecration.

See BONI, de Reb. Edit. l. xx. 2 (ed.); Nash, op. cit. p. 181; Gray, Syneclogia, p. 641. See also Ricor, Theoria et, and the authorities there cited; also Remondi, op. cit. i. 185.

6. Consecration of altars.—It would appear that prior to the 6th cent. the dedication of a church was accomplished simply by the solemn celebration of the Eucharist in it. No special form of consecration existed. But in the case of churches destined to contain relics, or in the latter part of this period nearly all churches possessed them,—these had to be solemnly enclosed in the altar before the celebration of the first mass in the church. Indeed it is possible that in later forms of dedication originated to a great extent in the ceremonial accompanying this depositio of the relics (pipers) of saints and, as these rites illustrate the history of the altar, they may be briefly mentioned here. A study of the earliest liturgical documents, dealing with the consecration of churches with their altars, reveals the fact that in the West two types of service existed side by side—the Roman and the Gallican; the latter, as might be expected, closely resembling the Byzantine formula of dedication. Briefly it may be said, with regard to the ceremonies of the consecration of the altar, that the Roman rite is of a funerary character, while the Gallican and Eastern rites resemble the ceremonies of Christian initiation. In the latter the altar is first consecrated by lustration with holy water and anointing with chrism, these corresponding to the rites of baptism and confirmation. These ceren
which had surmounted the dome of the ciborium and had depended from it, was placed on the altar itself. In the same way with lights, first a single candlestick was placed on one side of the altar opposite to the cross, later two candlesticks are found, one on either side of it. All this had been accomplished by the 15th century. Meantime, the ciborium having practically disappeared in the West, and the altar becoming more and more loaded with tabernacle reliquaries, candles, etc., and having generally been placed as far back as possible against the east wall, the reredos begins to make its appearance—as also the small canopy now generally in use,—which may be regarded as directly descended from the ciborium and which we now have to represent it.

The earliest description of the interior of a Christian church is a passage in the Didascalia Apostolorum, incorporated in the Apostolical Constitutions, bk. ii. c. 97. For the ancient custom with regard to relics, cf. St. Ambrose (Ep. xxii. 13); S. Hieronymus (Ep. xxx. 24); S. Augustine (Ep. xlvii. 30). The custom introduced by Leo iv. is probably a document of Gallic origin, and is the groundwork of the actus rescriptus in the Ordines of Synods of the pre-Conciliar period. It will be found in Migne, Pat. cxv. 677. For this section see especially Edmund Bishop, On the History of the Christian Altar.

4. Number of altars,—The primitive custom appears to have been that each church should have only one altar. This custom has prevailed in the East to the present day, although altars are found in some churches, or side-chapels—these being regarded as separate buildings. In the West the multiplication of altars has been common from a comparatively early date.

(Cf. Ignat. ad Phil. ii. 9, cited above: oamxwvov apm . apks aqcrjylojv, tov skivpy, ouv tais xpis tiv tin crow kuadticwtv. The passage from Augustine, sometimes quoted in this connection, proves nothing. He speaks of the existence of two churches in one town (civitas) as a visible sign of the schism. (Ep. li. 43; Did. Pat., Tert. iii. 4), but his words obviously refer to schismatic worship in general. Contrast St. Basil (Ire. xvi.), who speaks of more than one altar in a single town. For Eastern custom, cf. Benedict, Leg. Reg. Can., 1. i. 187, 411, 477, 490; also G. M. Nolst, Intro. to the Hist. of the Holy Church, p. 158.)

It has been suggested that the multiplication of altars in a single church originated in the cemetery chapels, in some of which several arcocelia, or altar-tombs, are to be found. But it is dangerous to draw any inference from this fact, because it is generally agreed that many of these arcocelia were never used for the purpose of celebrating the Eucharist. More probably the reason is to be sought, on the one hand, in the growth of the Christian population subsequent to the Peace of the Church, and an attempt to meet their increasing needs; and, on the other hand, in the increasing desire of the clergy to celebrate, rather than only to communicate, as often as possible. It is, however, difficult to find passages which imply the existence of more than one altar in a single church early in the 6th century. It is not till the time of St. Gregory the Great that we have definite evidence; but it is clear that by that time the custom was well established, because at the request of a correspondent, Palladius, bishop of Saintonge, the pope sent relics for the consecration of four of the thirteen altars which Palladius had set up in his church (Greg. Magn. Epist. vi. 46). From this time onward the evidence for the multiplication of altars in a single church is abundant.

(For passage from St. Ambrose, cited above, p. 239, see In consccdrum: mitiit inter se in altaria, pecunias significatae partis insignis (Ep. 20); cf. also St. Paulinus of Nola, Ep. xxvi. par. 6. For later evidence see Greg. Decr. de Gloria Martyrum, i. 33; Beati (HE v. 30), who states that Acac. bishop of Hexham (died ap. a. 260), having collected a number of relics of confessors and martyrs, exposed them for veneration, altari, distinta porcella in hoc ipso inter mores ejusdem consuetudinem. In the 5th cent. the plan of the church of St. Gall, in Switzerland, provided for the erection of seventeen altars. See also Council of Arles, svn. 16, quoted above; Walther Strabo, de Reh. Hist. c. xxi. ; Capitularia Regum Francorum, ed. Balzani, t. 432.)

5. Portable altars and 'antemumenu.'—The oldest example of a portable altar which has survived is that which was found with the bones of St. Cuthbert, and is now preserved in the Cathedral Library at Durham. It measures 8 in. x 6½ in., and is made of wood covered with velum and silver. On the wood are found two crosses and part of an inscription, IN HONOR... S... PETRVS. The earliest writer who certainly refers to portable altars is Bede, who relates (HE iii. 10) that, in the year 692, two English missionaries to the Saxons on the Continent carried with them an altar stone ("tabulam altariae vice dedicatum"). The following description is given of the portable altar of St. Willebrord: "Hoc altare Willebrordi in honore Domini Salvatoris consecravit, supra quod in finiture Missarum oblationes Deo offerere consuetum, in quo et confiteor de ligne crucis Christi, et de endore capitis ejus" (Brower, Annal. Transilen., an. 715, p. 384). From this and other passages it would appear that portable altars contained also relics. Portable altars are designated altaria portabila, gestatoria, vaticana. Sometimes orus is used for a portable altar.

(See also P 序, L. 26; Zest s. S. E., ed. Paris, 1072, vol. iv. p. 180.)

In the East, in a place of a portable altar, the antemumenu (Gr. archetype, a word of somewhat doubtful origin) is used. It consists of a piece of cloth consecrated, with various ceremonies, at the time of the consecration of a church. It is to be used apparently in oratories which do not possess a properly consecrated altar, and in other places where it is doubtful if the altar has received consecration.

(See Beca, de Reh. L. iv. 26; Nolst, op. cit. p. 181; Grar, Sacralurgia, p. 648. See also Bucer, Theologica a., and the authorities there cited; also Remondt, op. cit. i. 155.)

6. Consecration of altars.—It would appear that prior to the 6th cent., the dedication of a church was accomplished simply by the solemn celebration of the Eucharist in it. No special form of consecration existed. But in the case of churches destined to contain relics which was in the latter part of this period nearly all churches possessed them,—these had to be solemnly enclosed in the altar before the celebration of the first mass in the church. Indeed it is possible that all later forms of dedication originated to a great extent in the ceremonial accompanying this depositio of the relics (pomorum) of saints, and, as these rites illustrate the history of the altar, they may be briefly mentioned here. A study of the earliest liturgical documents, dealing with the consecration of churches with their altars, reveals the fact that in the West two types of service existed side by side—the Roman and the Gallican; the latter, as might be expected, closely resembling the Byzantine formula of dedication. Briefly it may be said, with regard to the ceremonies of the consecration of the altar, that the Roman rite is of a funerary character, while the Gallican and Eastern rites resemble the ceremonies of Christian initiation. In the latter the altar is first consecrated by lustration with holy water and anointing with chrism, these corresponding to the rites of baptism and confirmation. These ceremo
monies having been performed by the bishop in the presence of the people, he leaves the church and proceeds to the spot where the relics are awaiting him. Having brought them to the church, he takes them to the altar. But before the depositio a veil is let down, so that the concluding ceremony of enclosing the relics within the altar is not witnessed by the people—who meanwhile chant the Psalm, Cantate Domino canticum novum with the Antiphon Exultabit sancti in gloria. In the Roman rite, which is of a funerary character, the bishop first enters the church and washes the altar once with water, then, returning to the door of the church, receives the pignora, and, accompanied by the people, proceeds to the altar, where he performs the ceremonies of the depositio in a far more elaborate fashion, these constituting the main feature of the consecration.

[See Duchesne, op. cit. p. 292.] (cf. the letter from Pope Vigilius to Probaudus of Braga cited in p. 97.) The earliest Ordines of consecration are: (1) that published by F. Bianchini, Annali. Biblioth. iii. p. xiii.; and (2) the Ordine of S. Ambrose, published by Duchesne, op. cit. p. 478; cf. also the German Sacramentum Mortis, i. p. 365; see also Monumenta Lib. Ambr. vol. I; and for the Eastern rites, Gour, Buchach, p. 493.


H. LEONARD PASI.

ALTAR (Egyptian).—According to the sculptures, offerings were laid on or near the stands. A common form of the latter was a pillar-shaped upright of wood or stone, on which a bowl, censor, or tray could rest, and sometimes the bowl or tray was made in one piece with the upright. In tombs and temples the typical scene of offering shows a tray or stand covered with sliced loaves of bread, or with meat, vegetables, and other food, placed before the deceased man or the god; such stands are often accompanied by a variety of food on masts. At al-Amarna the stands of provisions to which the sun-god Aton stretches his radiating hands are often surrounded by flaming bowls, perhaps censers, perhaps lamps. The food, drink, incense, and water were provided for the god or the deceased, as they would have been for the banquet of a living man; most flesh and vegetables seem to have been eaten raw, but in the standard lists of offerings roast meat was included. Amongst the varieties of the symbol khéni, "altar," in the New Kingdom, is the picture of a stand with a flaming vessel upon it; and in the scenes of that age the offering sometimes presents such a stand in his hand, with a plucked goose in the midst of the flames. Possibly this represents a kind of burnt sacrifice rather than a summary kind of cooking. The root of the name khéni is spelt by the figure of a bivalve shell, which suggests that a shell may sometimes have replaced the bowl as the receptacle for the offering. Another kind of stand for offerings—a wooden frame to hold jars of liquid—was named setek, this name being equally applied to those used at banquets.

In early tombs a flat slab for offerings, commonly called a "tablet of offerings," was placed before the niche containing a statue of the deceased, or in some other place corresponding. The tablet was oblong, with a projection like a spout in front. It was generally sculptured with ašep, a leaf upon a man, and often with a number of offerings in detail. The special name for this type was probably hopte. Such tablets are also found in the ruins of temples, where they may have been placed for the service of the dedicatee's statue rather than for that of the god. The type persisted down to the Roman period; it is rare during the New Kingdom, but was revived after its fall.

Temple altars on a large scale are very rare in Egypt. Down to the present time only four examples have been discovered, and none have survived in the Ptolemaic temples. The earliest is of the Fifth Dynasty, in the temple of the Sun at Abydos (Borchardt, Das Be-Bisamhthum des Königs Ne-Woser-Re, i. pp. 14, 43). It is formed of five great blocks of alabaster; in the middle is a slightly raised circular slab, with four around it, oriented precisely to the cardinal points. Its extreme measures are some 15 ft. each way. Most of the surroundings are now destroyed to the level of the floor. The altar stood in a court before the great obelisk—shaped monument, and was raised only a few inches above the level of the floor. Besides it was an area specially prepared for the slaughter and cutting up of victims. At Karnak, in an upper chamber close to the Festal Hall of Thothmes III., is a great oblong rectangular altar, or altar-base of white felspar, bearing the name of Ramses III. (Dyn. xx.), having each side shaped as a hopte. Thothmes himself is recorded to have dedicated a similar one.

A different type of temple altar is a raised rectangular platform, reached by a flight of steps. There is a well-preserved example in the temple of Hadeshbent at Deir el-Bahari (Naville, Deir el-Bahari, i. Pl. 8; see also plan of temple in Archaeological Report, 1894-95, or in Babelders' Egypt). It measures about 16 by 13 ft., and stands in the centre of a small court about 5 ft. above the floor. The usual Egyptian cavetto cornice runs round it, and the top is flat except for some slight coping or cresting near the edge. Built of white limestone, it is dedicated to the sun-god, and is called a khéni in the inscription, like the stands of offering. Another raised altar is at Karnak, dedicated by Tuthmosis III.; and a third is stated to be in the largest temple of Gebel Barkal, dating from the early Egyptian Kingdom in the 8th or 7th cent. B.C. (Borchardt, l.c.). These are all that are known to exist. The sculptures in the tombs of al-Amarna show the chief altar of Aton to have been of this form (Lepinon, Denkmäler iii. 96, 102; Davia, El Amarna, i. Pl. 19, 25, 28; ii. Pl. 18, iii. Pl. 5, 10). It seems as if the sun-gods in particular (Re, Amun, Amen-Re) were honoured by great altars.

F. Ll. GRIFFITH.

ALTAR (Greek).—The altar, in Greek religion, is a raised place, usually an artificial structure, which is used for the purpose of making offerings to a god or gods. It is thus to be distinguished on the one hand, from a sacrificial trench or pit, such as was often used for offerings to the dead, to heroes, or to the infernal deities; and, on the other, from a table for offerings, such as was often placed in a temple or before a god at a ceremonial banquet.
But there is no very strict line of demarcation in either case. The distinction sometimes made between eleusin as an altar for the Olympian gods and é República for offerings to heroes, though laid down by Polus (p. 5) and others, is not strictly observed by classical authors. And, on the other hand, a portable altar, such as that used for incense or offering offerings, is not easy to distinguish from a sacred table.

A more essential distinction, at first sight, might seem to depend on the nature of the offerings for which an altar was used. Whether, for example, it was only for bloodless libations, for incense, and for gifts of fruit and flowers, or for the slaughter of victims, of which portions were burnt upon it. The ritual and offerings admissible in each case were prescribed by the nature of the deity worshipped and by the sacred regulations of the local cult, and the shape and construction of the altar must have depended upon these. But, apart from purely practical considerations, there does not seem to be any essential distinction observed in the form of the altar according to the various purposes for which it was intended.

Some confusion of thought is found in the case of sacred stones or other objects that were anointed with offerings of blood, oil, or other liquids, bound with sacred woolen fillets, and otherwise treated in much the same way as altars. This fact has led some writers to assert that an altar was sometimes used not merely as the symbol of the presence of the life of god, but as having him imminent in it. These sacred stones, which are a survival from primitive religious beliefs, are not, however, properly to be regarded as altars, though they may at times be found in places sometimes thought of when religious thought had advanced to less crude conceptions of the deity.

Apart from these, an altar seems to derive its sanctity merely from its association with a god, or its dedication to him. There was nothing in Greek religion to prevent a sacrifice being made to a god on any occasion or in any place; and, in such cases, the convenience of the sacrifice would suggest the use of any outstanding rock or natural mound, or, in the absence of such help, the piling together of stones or sods to make an improvised altar (ἀνατελεῖ, ἀνατέλεσθαι). The most primitive form, or often heaped together out of the ashes of victims, was retained by many of the most famous altars, such as those of Zeus at Olympia and Hera at Samos. This, however, implies the repetition of sacrifices at the same place; and the selection of such places was determined by various causes. These may be best classified, according to Hermann's well-known division, as natural, social, and historical; but before we examine the causes of these three classes, it is often useful, in a circular building called a tholos; and the Prytaneum, where public hospitality was dispensed, was associated with it. The original character of the public hearth as an altar of Hestia was not, however, lost sight of; the Prytaneum at Athens regularly offered sacrifice there. On the sacred heartland in the Prytaneum, the fire was always kept burning day and night. It was also customary to set up altars in a market-place (agora), a gateway, or other places of concourse; and the sacrifices which took place in a temple or any assembly for political or other purposes implied the provision of an altar for offering them. Such altars frequently stood by themselves, without being attached to any particular temple or precinct.

This summary of the relation of altars to other appliances or conditions of religious or social life suffices, to a great extent, as a comment on the classification of the reasons that led to the choice of various places for altars. We may assign to natural causes the erection of altars on mountains, on mountaintops or in groves, beneath sacred trees, in caves, beside springs, or in other situations distinguished
by their natural surroundings; to the same category may be assigned altars dedicated to Zeus, where lightning had struck, and altars in commemoration of extraordinary phenomena; e.g. the altar to Phosphorus—perhaps an epithet of Artemis—dedicated by Thraexius in honour of the luminous light that led his adventuress from Phyle to Mancyhia. Examples of altars whose origin to social causes have already been given, especially those of the house and of the agora. In addition to the usual gods of the marketplace (τέχνοι ευελπίδας) we sometimes find altars of more abstract ethical significance, such as the altars of θεία (πίθυν) and of θεία (sine of honour) at Athens. Many of the altars attached to temples or in precincts would belong to this class. Altars that owe their origin to historical causes are not so common; a good example is the altar dedicated by the Greeks to Zeus Eleutherus at Platea, after their victory over the Persians. This class might be indefinitely enlarged if we include in it all altars that were set up for a special sacrifice and left as a memorial of it. Such were especially common in later times; a familiar example is offered by the 'Tanurobic' altars of Roman date.

The form and size of altars vary very greatly, from a small portable block or table to a structure a stadium in length, and from a mere mound of earth to an elaborate combination of architecture and sculpture like the great altar at Pergamum. The form of a round or oval mound, with the addition probably, in larger examples, of a retaining wall of some sort to hold it together, was to be found in many of the oldest and most sacred altars. That of Zeus at Olympia, which was constructed of the ashes of victims, including those brought from the sacrifices on the sacred hearth at the Pythianum, had a circumference, on its lower platform, of 105 ft., and of 33 on its upper portion, and a total height of 22 feet. The altar of Apollo at Delos, which was counted one of the seven wonders of the world, was said to be constructed of the horns of victims (ἐπειδήρων ἄγαλμα). The other form of altar which may be regarded as primitive is an upstanding mass of rock, either in its rough state or cut to a rectangular form. The great altar of Athens on the Acropolis at Athens was a tract of natural rock, quite uneven on the top, but cut to a more or less square shape at the sides; it was about 90 or 100 feet square. Another rock-cut altar, of a more regular shape, with a platform and steps, is that in the middle of the Pnyx from which the sacrators addressed the people. Altars were, however, more frequently made of stone or marble, cut from a single block if they were small, or built up like any other structure if they were large. Some altars might be either round or rectangular; there does not seem to be any ritual distinction between the two, except that the altar (εὐελπίδας) was usually circular; and so, perhaps, were the low altars suitable to heroes, and called by later authorities τεχνοί; but rectangular altars to heroes were not unusual, e.g. that in the Heroum at Olympia.

With the altar was of any size and importance, the rectangular form prevailed; and the altar was usually mounted on a basis which projected on one side, and so provided a platform (πόδιον) on which the sacrificer stood. This was usually so placed that he faced towards the east; thus, in the normal positions of altar and temple, he would turn his back on the image of the deity in the temple,—a fact which alone would suffice to prove that the altar was the most primitive and most essential object in religious rites. This platform was of considerable extent in great altars, and was the place where the animals were slaughtered, the portions that were selected to be burnt being consumed on the altar itself. Altars intended for the sacrifice of many victims at once, or for hecatombes, were provided with subsidiary altars or styes. The dimensions of the great altar built by Hieron II. of Syracuse (which is about 215 yards in length and about 25 yards in width), of the altars of Zeus at Olympia, and of the altar at Delphi, have already been mentioned; another example, of medium size, is an altar near the theatre at Megapollis, which measures about 36 ft. by 6 ft. 6 inches.

When stone was not readily available, an altar might be constructed of other materials; thus at Naukratis the altar, with its steps and προδύτα, in the precinct of Aphrodite, is built, like the temple, of unbaked brick and faced with stucco. Altars of any considerable size usually consisted of a mere outer shell of masonry, the inside being filled with rubble or with the ashes from sacrifice; they thus offered a convenient surface on which to kindle the sacrificial fire. In the case of small stone altars which were used for burnt-offerings, some special arrangement was necessary to place the fire on the top. As a rule, small stone altars are flat on the top. Sometimes they are hollowed into basins, as if to hold libations or drink-offerings; occasionally we find a draught to let the liquid run away, as in the altar found at Paphos (ΟΙΑ 1. 299). Sometimes an altar had the form of a table supported upon stone legs. A good early example of this type is found in the early Dorian temple of the Acropolis at Athens. The Boeotians used to build an altar of wood on the summit of Mount Citharon, and to let it be consumed together with the victim.

It was usual to give some architectural form to an altar, if only in the step or steps on which it was raised and the moulding that ornamented it at top and bottom. Where something more elaborate was attempted, it often took the form of Ionic volutes at each end of the top moulding; these were often joined at the sides by rolls such as we see on the capitals of Ionic columns. Large built altars are sometimes ornamented by a Doric frieze of triglyphs and metopes, occupying the whole height of the structure; an example of this occurs in the large altar already mentioned at Megapollis. Often in later times the decoration of an altar, in architecture and sculpture, became more elaborate. The altar of Athens at Priene was decorated with an attached Ionic colonnade, and with figures in relief between the columns. The altar of Artemis of Ephesus is said to have been full of the work of the artists of the time. The altar of Asklepios at Cos was an elaborate structure; but the chief example of this kind was the great altar of Zeus at Pergamum. This consisted of a great basis, as is usually found in the early Dorian style, and a known frieze of the gigantomachy. A broad flight of steps on the west side led up to the top of this basis, which was surrounded by a colonnade; in front of this stood a statue of the god, with a heaped up ashes. An even larger altar than this is said to have existed at Parium on the Propontis. A remarkable architectural development of the circular altar is to be seen in the 'Thermæ' (its official name) at Epidaurus; it has the form of a circular temple, with colonnades inside and outside.

Inscriptions are not usually found on altars in Greece. An early example is the altar with ίπτερον or ιπτερον painted on its stucco face in the Heraion at Olympia. The chief altar attached to a temple in ancient Greece would not require any such means of identification, though, where it was a special dedication, this might be recorded, e.g. the great altar of Apollo at Delphi states that it was dedicated by the Corintians, and a smaller inscription on its corner adds that the Chians received the privilege
of *vamsavriya* for their gift. In the case of altars to other gods than the one to whom the precinct belonged, inscriptions would be useful, but were by no means universal. They would be recorded also on altars in public places; e.g. the inscribed altar in the Dipylon gateway at Athens, dedicated to Zeus Herkeios, Hermes, and Acastus. Where the objective of an altar was commemorative rather than for practical use, the inscription would of course be essential. But ritual ordinances as to sacrifices were usually inscribed, not on the altar itself, but on a stele or slab set up beside it, or on some other convenient place in its immediate vicinity.

For the ritual of sacrifice, and the manner in which altars were used in connexion with it, see SACRIFICE. But it should be added here that an altar was usually dedicated to the service of a particular god, and was not used for offerings to any other. A good example of this is seen in the sixty-nine altars of Olympia, each of which had its proper destination, and was visited in its proper turn in the monthly order of sacrifices. This rule did not, however, preclude a common dedication to several gods of one altar (κοινός εστάς, κοινός θεός). There existed altars of all the gods, or of the twelve gods; an interesting example, probably to ensure the worship of some powers that might otherwise be overlooked, is offered by the altar of 'the unknown gods' at Olympia. The example of this title quoted by St. Paul at Athens (Acts 17) was mentioned as was, however, in the singular. Frequently two gods were worshipped at the same altar; a classical instance is provided by the six twin altars mentioned at Indrapur in the second century B.C. (see above, and a hermaphrodite altar. In Athens, Poseidon and Erechtæus shared a common altar in the Erechtheum, and in the Amphitheatre at Oropus the altar has been enlarged so as to accommodate several deities (Herodotus, *Hist.* 4, 91, p. 91).

In addition to their use for the ritual of sacrifice, altars were also sought by suppliants, who often sat upon the steps, and especially by those seeking sanctuary. The altar in a house, whether the *hekastos* or that of Zeus Herkeios, often served this purpose; and in a temple a suppliant would naturally place himself under the protection of the god either by clasping his image or by seating himself on the altar or beside it. It does not, however, appear that in Greek religion there was any peculiar power in this connexion that belonged to the altar more than to any other part of a temple or precinct. The right of sanctuary usually had clearly defined limits within which it was inviolable. It is worthy of notice that when Cylon's suppliants had to go outside these limits, it was to the early image, not to the altar, that they attached the rope to which they trusted for protection.

**LETTERFRITIA.—See end of ALTAR (Roman).**

**ERNST A. GARDNER.**

**ALTAR (Hindu).—Altars, or raised platforms, play an important part in the Hindu ceremonies.**

The Sanskrit for a Hindu altar is *veda*, which is defined as 'an altar or raised place made of Kusha, grass, or strawed with it, and prepared for an offering, for placing the vessels used at a sacrifice, a place or ground prepared for sacrifice' (Monier-Williams, s.v.). The original *veda* was a trench of varied shape, in which the sacrificial fires were kept, dug in the sacrificial ground. In early times in India, when the gods were worshipped by each man at his own fireplace, it was a duty incumbent on every householder to keep the sacred fire in the altar, from the very day on which the ceremony of the Agnyadhana, or the setting up of sacrificial fires, had been performed. On that important occasion the sacrificer chose his four priests, and erected sheds or fire-houses for the Gārhapatyas and the Āhavanyas fires respectively. A circle was marked for the Gārhapatyas fire, and a square for the Āhavanyas fire; a semicircular area in front of the altar was where the northern inscription is usually placed. The outside of the Āhavanyas fire was enclosed by a ring of the Gārhapatyas inscription, he laid down the fire thereon, and in the evening handed two pieces of wood, called *arma*, to the sacrificer and his wife, for the purpose of producing by attrition the Āhavanyas fire the next morning.

There were different *vedas* for different kinds of offering, as, e.g., the large Soma altar (madidvēś) and the *pākāyās veda*, used for animal sacrifices, which resembled the *ātārāyā veda*, or 'northern altar'; the latter was an altar raised with earth excavated in forming what is called a *chala*, or hole. The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa compares the shape of an altar to that of a woman: 'The altar should be broad on the western side, contracted in the middle, and broad again on the eastern side; for thus shaped they praise a woman.' The shape of sacrificial altars was considered a matter of so much importance that there were special manuals in Sanskrit, called *Subbasstrīs*, which form part of the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, and give the measurements necessary for the construction of the altars. The different shapes in which brick altars can be constructed are mentioned as early as in the Tattiriya Sānkhāy. Thus there is a falcon-shaped altar built of square bricks, or an altar of the shape of a falcon with curved wings. The altar usually had two steps, with two feet; one of the shape of the forepart of the poles of a chariot, an equalilateral triangle; another of the form of two such triangles joined at their bases; several wheel-shaped or circular altars, tortoise-shaped, etc. The area of the earliest species of altars was to be 7½ square parasang, the term *parasang* denoting the height of a man with uplifted arms. The area remained the same when a different shape of altar was required. This and other changes could not be effected without a considerable knowledge of geometry. As stated by Thibaut, 'squares had to be found which would be equal to two or more given squares, or equal to the difference of two given squares; oblongs had to be turned into squares and squares into oblongs . . .; the last task, and not the least, was that of finding a circle the area of which might equal as closely as possible that of a given square.' The result of all these considerations is a set of geometrical rules which are contained in the above mentioned *Subbasstrīs*.

A lively controversy has been going on as to whether these geometrical rules are of Indian growth, or due to Greek influence, the numerous coincidences between the Sanskrit texts and the writings of Heron favouring the latter view, whereas the apparent antiquity of the *Subbasstrīs*, and their close connexion with the *Brāhmaṇa* hymns would seem to render their native origin the more probable alternative.

Though offerings in the ancient Vedic fashion have become very rare in India, various kinds of altars continue in common use for religious purposes. Thus the present writer saw a square *veda* made of earth or clay, on which an open fire for oblations of butter had been kindled, at the consecration of a new dwelling. Hindu altars are also erected at some of the *Sanskars* or family celebrations of the Brāhmaṇa. Thus among the Deshnath Brāhmaṇas in Dharwar, it is customary, a few days before the ceremony of thread-girding, to raise a porch in front of the house, on the western side of which an altar is set up facing east. On the day of the ceremony the boy is bathed and is seated on a low wooden
stool which is placed upon the altar, and his father and mother sit on either side. The chief priest
kneels on the altar a sacred fire, into which he
throws offerings. On the occasion of a marriage
in the same caste, an altar about six feet square
and one foot high is raised. The bride and bride-
groom are led to the marriage altar, and two men
hold a cloth between them. At the lucky moment
the cloth is drawn aside, and each for the first time
time sees the other’s face. Afterwards the priest
kneels a sacred fire on the altar, and clarified
butter and parched grain are thrown in. The
married couple walk thrice round the fire. Seven
heaps of rice are made on the altar, and a betel-
nut is placed on each of the heaps. The bridegroom
lifting the bride’s right foot places it on each of
the seven heaps successively. Among the Dhesnath
Brahmans of Bijnor, boys on their initiation are
led to an altar called bhule, where the priest
rides them with the sacred thread, to which a
small piece of deerskin is tied.

LITERATURE.—Ewing’s transl. of the Śatapatha Brahmana
in JEE, vol. xi. xxvii. 1-1095, 1096; with plan of sacrificial
ground with notes); R. C. Dutt, History of Civilization in
Ancient India, vols. i. ii. iii. iv., Calcutta, 1889-1891; J. Thibaut, tis
Sūtra-sūtra’s in J. As. So., vol. xxiv. 1-1095, 1096; A. Hume’s Life
of Arhat, 3rd ed., 1877; A. B. P. Joly, The Altars and
Shrines of India, 2nd ed., 1912; W. G. Aston, Brahmanism
and Buddhism, London, 1891, p. 304.

The same custom was observed in the cult of
certain Persian divinities even in Strabo’s time.

ALTAR (Japanese).—In Japan little distinction is
made between the table and the altar. No special
sanctity attaches to the latter. In Bud-
dhist temples there is a stand on which incense
is burnt, called kōdan or kōzukute (‘incense-
table’). Shinto offerings are placed on small tables of
untainted wood. The old ritual prescribed that
the sacred meal should be placed on tables (or altars); in the case of lesser Shrines, on mats spread on the
earth.

Each house may have its Buddhist domestic
altar, or rather shrine (butedana)—a miniature cup-
board or shelf where an image of a Buddha is
deposited, or a Shinto altar (kami-dana) where
Shinto tokens, pictures, or other objects of devotion
are kept.

W. G. Aston.

ALTAR (Persian).—1. In none of the ancient
Persian records, whether literary or inscriptions, do
we find a generic term for ‘altar.’ Nevertheless, to
infer from the absence of such a term in the extant
records that no kind of altar was employed in the
Zoroastrian ritual during the period represented
by the Inscriptions and the Avesta, would be to
press the argument from negative evidence too far.
Moreover, if the limited vocabulary of the Inscrip-
tions contains no word for ‘altar,’ yet the royal
sculptor has left an unequivocal witness of the
existence of altars in the Mazdaism of the early
Achaemenians, in the representation of the altar itself in bas-relief over the entrance of the tomb of
Darius Hystaspis on the rocks at Naqsh-i Rustam.

The statements of Greek and Roman authors as
to the absence of altars, and of temples and images,
in early Persian worship, would seem, on the first
view, more difficult of a satisfactory explanation;
the Persians, claiming to speak from personal ob-
servation and research, states (I. 131 ff.) that the
Persians ‘think it unlawful to build temples on
altars, imputing folly to those who do so.’ There-
fore, ‘when about to sacrifice, they neither erect
altars nor kindle fire.’ Strabo (born c. 62 B.C.,
writing some four hundred and fifty years later,
with the memory of Herodotocthough, in regard to the phenomena of his own time,
his account is expressions modified its application (see loc. cit. §§ 14–15). It is generally agreed, however, by this time,
that the kind of altar with which Herodotus, as a
Greek, was familiar—a raised platform in masonry,
with steps to ascend, erected in front of the temple
with the shadow of the sculptured statues of the
deity to whom the temple was dedicated, and
upon which animal sacrifices were immolated—was
quite unknown amongst the Persians for a long
period after Herodotus wrote his History. This
is not intended to imply that animal sacrifices as
well were foreign to the Persian worship of the
6th cent. B.C. For, in the same passage, Herodotus
describes the customs observed in such sacrifices:
‘If any intends to sacrifice to a god, he leads the
animal to a consecrated place.’ Then dividing
the victim into parts, he boils the flesh, and lays
it upon the most tender herbs, especially trefoil.
The herbs must certainly be regarded as serving
the purpose of an altar upon which the flesh in
order upon myrtle or laurel branches’ (loc. cit. § 14).

Here we meet with an Iranian substitute for the
Greek θυατήριον, or raised altar for immolating the
victim, namely, the trench, which, indeed, is highly
suggestive of the antiquity of the method of sacri-
fice to some of these natural divinities. We have
before us what is, probably, a relic of an ancient
method of sacrificing which goes back to the Indo-
Iranian period, the trench being the Zoroastrian
counterpart of the sās of the Vedic rite.

There is another fact in connection with ancient
Persian substitutes for altars mentioned by
Herodotus, which is interesting, and not, it would
appear, without its significance: ‘The consecrated
places in the open air whither the victims for
some of their sacrifices were led for slaughter,
were on the tops of the highest mountains.’ Re-
membering this and the fact that the chief god
in the Avesta was a sky-god, do we not here per-
cieve their true reason, or, at least, an additional
reason on their part for reproaching with folly, as
they did, those who erected artificial platforms for
sacrificing? In these mountains the pious Zoro-
sattians saw the altars which their God had pro-
vided, which dwarfed and rendered superfluous all
other altars, and upon which He seemed ever to
dwell as they gazed upon them from their distant
homes.

On the other hand, the bas-relief sculpture over
the royal tomb at Naqsh-i Rustam does not rep-
sent a sacrificial altar, or indicate any substitute
whatever for the Greek θυατήριον, such as the trench
was. Its purpose and significance are entirely
different. If we wish to find amongst another
people anything like a parallel to it, we must turn,
not to the Greeks, but to the ancient Hebrews. Like
the Ark of the Covenant amongst the Israelites, it
was not an instrument for presenting anything to
the deity, but the resting-place of the most perfect

*See ‘Das Apa-tambha-Sūtra-Sūtra: Uebersetzung von Börk’; Die altindischen Altäre und das geometrische Wissen
ihrer Konstruktion voraussetzt,”JER, v. 1, p. 94, 95; Pernick, in Ind. and Pers. Ant., p. 302; and
by the same author.

† See H. W. Jones, L’Archeologia de Saba, p. 395.

†† See art. Avesta.
symbol and most visible manifestation of the presence of that divinity, namely, the sacred fire. The figure on the rock is, therefore, a Fire-altar, attesting the use of such altars amongst the Persians long before the death of Darius.

Of the fact that the Persian reverence for fire goes back to a very early period, there can be no doubt. The prominence of the Aryan cult amongst the Indians, as well as the Indo-Aryan is shown conclusively that it was part of that common heritage which the Indo-Iranian period bequeathed to them. And the reform of Zoroaster, no doubt, as one of its results, the intensification and extension of the reverence for that element.

When we remember that the divine flame had to be preserved with the most scrupulous care from all possibility of contamination, as well as maintained ever unextinguished, it is natural to conclude not only that from early times there must have been a protection from climatic and atmospheric dangers, in the form of roofed and walled edifices (see Temples), but that it would be equally necessary to circumscribe it in some vessel, and raise it sufficiently high from the floor, so as to guard it from being polluted by dust or insects. And in the representation on the rock these conditions are fulfilled.

In formation, judging from the bas-relief altar, the Achaemenian Fire-altar seems to have consisted of (a) a massive plinth or pedestal, with (b) what appears like a stone slab, of some inches in depth, resting upon it, and which may vary naturally or be regarded as the prototype of what is now so well known as the Altar. (c) (c) crowning all, the sacred urn, now called the Altar-dān, the 'fire-container,' wherein the divine and eternal fire burned. Even in those early days, probably, just as in the time of Strabo (c. 180 A.D.), and in modern fire-temples, this sacred vessel was set in the utmost care with the ashes of preceding days, and upon these the sacred flame was kept burning day and night with incense and sandalwood.

Moreover, from the days of Cyrus onwards the divine fire burned, not only in the sacred vase concealed in the seclusion of the Altar-dān, but, it or at least an inferior form of it, invariably formed part of the religious processions and royal progresses of the Persian kings. Xenophon, in describing these processions (Cyr. v. VIII. 11-13), tells us that 'after the third chariot men followed the Fire-altar, carrying a fire on a large altar.' This (έξωκρατος μετάχεω) was

| In what respect, if at all, the éξωκρατος differed in form from the altar of the Altar-dān, we are unable to say. The word éξωκρατος, which Xenophon employs, is variously translated in passages where it occurs as 'hearth,' 'unraised altar,' 'brazier.'


‡ See Jackson, Zoroaster, the Prophet of Ancient Iran, pp. 98-100.

§ See Dicquets, L'Évocation de Dān, p. 802, n. 1.

| There is no reason to think that the two large real Fire-altars hewn out of the rock at Naqsh-i Rustam were typical of those in use in the regular worship at any period in the later history of the Zoroastrian religion. (See Jackson, Persia and Present, p. 308, and illustration, p. 356, a true cutout of the Altar, vol. I, p. 1, xii, note 12.)


| In the middle of these (the fire-temples) is an altar, on which was placed the vase of ashes (Strabo, loc. cit. 411).

| In the temples of the Persians there is a room where ashes of a colour other than that of ordinary ashes are found. . . . The pots dry wood upon the altar . . . the wood is to be ignited on the ashes without fire (Pamphilius, p. 27, 28).


| Amsterdam, 1901.

would scarcely think that this portable altar was the massive support which seems to have characterized the temple altar. * (but see on Sasanian altars, below, § 32.)

SEKHMET (Persian) c. 660-675 A.D.) states that the portable altar was less elaborate than that in use in the Altar-dān. * Quintus Curtius (c. 64 A.D.), however, asserts that these royal altars were made of silver. The latter statement may refer only to the Altar-dān. Tabari, the Arabic historian (6. 850 A.D.), relates how Yazdijird III., the last of the Sasanian kings, carefully deposited with him the sacred fire, in its fit receptacle, from place to place in his hurried flight before the conquering Arabs.

From the representations on the coins of the period, we learn that the sacred fire was not extinguished upon the altar during the Parthian domination (B.C. 250-1 A.D.). Unfortunately, these coins do not assist us very materially in ascertaining the conformation of the altar at this time. Although the Fire-altar is a common type on the reverse of the pieces of the period, they contain only the Altar-dān, having as support the lower part of the Fire-altar or Altar-dān; that is, it is only a convention. Still they serve sufficiently to show that in its main element, the Altar-dān, the Fire-altar of the Achaemenians had persisted and survived the shock given to Zoroastrian ritual by the conquest of Alexander and the rule of the Arsacids. It is possible, though this is by no means certain, that it is only a convention. But that the sacred places on the high mountains, under the influence of foreign cults, gave room to temples, in the classical sense (topos), and consequently there arose the accompanying altar (Bauk) for the sacred sacrifices (cf. Strabo, loc. cit. § 15, also XI. viii. 4; Pausanias, loc. cit.).

Other high authorities are strongly inclined to assign what are, admittedly, the extant remains of one of these temples, the famous temple at Kangavar, to the time of Artaxerxes II. (Mnemon) (404-358 B.C.), when, as we learn from several sources, there was a serious decadence from chresto-dox Zoroastrianism, and a recrudescence of ancient cults (cf. J. H. Moulton, Thinker, 1895, vii. pp. 496-499). The last word on this matter is yet to be written.

On any theory, we are certain that in the first century before our era two classes of altars, at least, were in use: the Altar-dān, the royal altar of the Altar-dān, and the sacrificial altar attached to the temples erected to specific Persian divinities.

Was there not another altar in use at this period? Certain statements in the late account which Strabo gives (loc. cit.) of the religious practices of the Persians would seem to justify the inference.

We know that the temples of those Persian * Outre les comptes pyrènes construits dans les villes, il existait encore des pyres ambulants pour lesquels on disposait une tente spéciale, et le roi n'y entrait jamais se compaigne autant qu'accompagné de magie et de pyres (Journal Asiatique, 1859, pp. 113 (Sebeok, p. 60)). For a somewhat different version of this passage, see B. Heinrich Hübnermann, Zur Geschichte der Armeniern und dem ersten Kriege der Araber (aus dem Armenischen der Salbates), Leipzig, 1874, p. 7, n. 1.

† Our word 'fire-altar' is derived from Greek ἔξωκρατος, from which we get accresc. accresc. in artem vocabul. argenteis altáribus frequently. Magi professed to have a sacred fire in their temple. As, the priests of the ancient Greeks are called ἔξωκρατος (Plato. 21 D. E. 62). Hence in Greek ἔξωκρατος, ἔξωκρατος, ἔξωκρατος.

§ These coins were not part of the national coinage, but belonged, probably, to the semi-independent kings of Persia-Persis in the narrower sense. See Nommocia Graecina, 'Parsian Coins,' by Percy Gardner, p. 23; Num. Chron. vol. VIII, pp. 237, 247, 248; and separate, (Curtius, Græcia, græci, sl. ii. p. 356; 357; 358), Cornells Antiquities, Oxford, 1806, Studie zur Nommocia der Perser, pp. 66-68, Pl. III. by Allinante di Lero: Dem, Collectio monachum monasticum de fide et materia-compactum, p. 248, 249, 250. See also G. Jacobi, L'Évocation de Dān, p. 7-8, 10-11, 127.

† See Jackson, Persia Past and Present, pp. 295-297.
divinities were separate and distinct from the Fire-temples or \textit{Ašaš-
ghā}: (Strabo, loc. cit. § 15). But Strabo adds that to whatever divinity the Persians sacrificed, they first addressed a prayer to fire, all their devotions then, as now, being performed in the presence of the sacred element. Further, in describing the sacrifice to water as mentioned above, he adds that they took great care lest any of the blood should spurt into the fire. The fire, in this case, cannot have been that of the \textit{Ašaš-
ghā}, but a fire on some kind of altar or brazier present at the place of sacrifice (§ 14). This fire would naturally be of an inferior grade to that used in the \textit{Ašaš-
ghā}, and consequently it is quite conceivable that it may have served both for boiling the flesh and for representing the fire of the \textit{Ašaš-
ghā} as the symbol of the nature and presence of the deity. (See below, § 3).

If the inference is correct, we have here the parent, so to speak, of the Fire-altar employed at the present day in the \textit{Ishahsh-
ghā}, or place where the religious rites are performed.

2. On Sassanian coins of all periods, the Fire-altar is a constant type, modified, as it is, from time to time. On some of the earlier pieces we observe that there are, attached to the sides of the altar, metal feet in the form of lions' paws, which seem to have been placed upon the points intended for handles whereby to carry the altar. It is, however, conceivable that these were a feature of only the movable altar already described, but were not characteristic of the altar of the \textit{Ašaš-
ghā}. However, the later coins of the period this feature disappears, and we have merely the central support in the form of a short column with a base, and crowned, as in the older coins, by the \textit{Adāšt}, which, in turn, supports the \textit{Ašaš-
ghā}.

Whether it was the great reformation of Zoroastrianism inaugurated and developed by the Sassanian kings that abolished the practice of animal sacrifice, or whether it had fallen into disuse before the rise of that dynasty (cf. Dieulafoy, \textit{L'Arcope de Susa}, p. 402, Note 2), there can be no doubt that from Sassanian times onwards no places for real sacrifices are to be counted among Zoroastrian altars.

The \textit{dāsta-gātā} was no doubt more extensive than the mere shrine for the \textit{Ašaš-
ghā} of the Bahram Fire, but its remaining part was the shelter of another, only inferior, Fire-altar, already conjectured to exist in earlier times, namely, the small Fire-altar of the \textit{Jāmūk-
ghā} (as witness of this, see the elaborate ritual of Avesta, \textit{Vend.}, v. 39, etc.). These are the two classes of altars in use among the Zoroastrians of Persia and the Parsees of India to this present day.

3. Modern Fire-altars, while always retaining the two most essential out of the three parts of which Sassanian and, probably, earlier altars consisted, namely, the \textit{Adāšt} and the \textit{Ašaš-
ghā}, vary somewhat in the form of the latter from those found on the coins and sculptures.

The \textit{Ašaš-
ghā} seen by Anquetil du Perron at Surat (see \textit{Zend Avesta}, ii. pl. x.; Darmesteter, \textit{Le Zend Avesta}, i. pl. iii.), consisted of large round vases of metal, much like our garden flower-vases, with a seat like a goblet and widening upwards, the larger one measuring three and a half feet in height, and three in diameter at the brim. Each stood upon its \textit{Adāšt}, about six inches in height. The size and degree of elaboration which characterize the \textit{Ašaš-
ghā} depend in the first place upon the wealth of the community worshipping it at its shrine, and especially upon the quality of the fire it contains: whether it is the Bahram Fire, the purest and most sacred of all earthly fires, or the \textit{Ašaš-
ghā} of Adur, the fire of the second grade, or the \textit{Ašaš-
ghā} of Jāmūk.

The larger of the two fire-altars which Anquetil saw was that of an \textit{Ašaš-
ghā} of Adur, placed, of course, in the \textit{Ašaš-
ghā}; the smaller one was in the \textit{Ašaš-
ghā} of Jāmūk. The latter contains the lowest grade of the hierarchy of sacred fires; it is the representative, though not the equal, of the fires of the \textit{Ašaš-
ghā} of Darmesteter, \textit{Le Zend Avesta}, i. p. 143. In front of this altar the priestly rites and religious ceremonies are performed (see \textit{Sacrifice} and \textit{Offerings}).

In large temples, such as that at Kolaba, described by Darmesteter (op. cit.), there are as many as six of these small altars, where as many pairs of priests are able, simultaneously, to perform their ministrations. This is the class of altar found in the numerous \textit{dēlādāhā}, or small chapels, which have no \textit{Ašaš-
ghā} attached.

Unlike the sacred fire on the altars of the \textit{Ašaš-
ghā}, the fire of these altars may be allowed to go out, and be kindled again whenever the faithful Zoroastrians assemble to perform their devotions and ceremonies. A small altar of this class is found in each Zoroastrian home (see Dieulafoy, \textit{L'Arcope de Susa}, Pl. xvi.).

\textbf{LITERATURE.}—The principal works already referred to in connexion with the \textit{Ašaš-
ghā} are (1) Dieulafoy, \textit{L'Arcope de Susa}, p. 860 E. (Paris, 1890–92), the only work which treats, with anything like fairness, of ancient as well as modern altars. Scattered references in Greek and Roman authors have been collected and translated by (i) Wilson, \textit{Persian Religion}, p. 182 E., Bombay, 1845; (ii)前期, \textit{Essays on the Sacred Language... and Religion of the Parsees}, p. 177, London, 1884. These two works contain other relevant matter.


\textbf{E. EDWARDS.}

\textbf{AL'\textit{TAR}} (Polynesian).—The Polynesian altar, or \textit{fafa}, was essentially a table for the gods, and was constructed of wood, thus forming a striking contrast to the stone altars found in practically all other parts of the world. In Tahiti, the altar was situated either before or in the main cr temple (Moerenhout, \textit{Voyage aux îles du Grand Océan}, Paris, 1835, i. 470–471); while in Hawaii, where the pyramidal altar was replaced by the \textit{acua}, the face of the god was put in the inner apartment to the left of the door, with the altar immediately in front of it (Eliss, \textit{Polynesian Researches}, 2nd ed. London, 1832–1836, iv. 89). The usual type of the Polynesian altar is admirably described by the missionary William Ellis, as follows (i. 344–345; cf. Cook, \textit{Third Voyage}, Paris, 1785, ii. 152–153, 350, 351). As we have seen, earlier altars near the corpse of a departed friend, were small wicker structures; those in the public temples were large, and usually eight or ten feet high. The surface of the altar was supported by a number of wooden posts or pillars, often curiously carved and polished. The altars were covered with sacred boughs, and ornamented with a border or fringe of yellow grass. Besides these, there were smaller altars connected with the temples; some resembling a small round table, supported by a single post fixed in the ground. Occasionally, the carved god was represented in sacrifice was placed on the large altar, while the heart and some other internal parts were laid on this smaller altar, which was called a \textit{fafa} altar. Offerings and sacrifices of all kinds, whether dressed or not, were placed upon the altar, and remained there till decomposed. A Tahitian altar is described and pictured by Wilson (\textit{Missionary Voyages to the Southern...}
more varied in Italy than in Greece, that of the altar varies also. Roman temples are generally raised upon a high substructure approached by steps; and the altars at Pompeii are usually placed either in the open area in front of the steps or on a platform. In Roman temples, from the position of the altars, to have stood, in some cases, with his side to the temple, in some cases with his back to it. Here, as in Greece, the usage seems to show that sacrifices offered to a god on his altar were not directly offered to the image which symbolized his presence,—that, in short, we have not cases of genuine 'idolatry.' But, in the scenes of sacrifice frequently represented on Roman reliefs, it is common for either a recognizable temple or a small statue of a god to be indicated behind the altar, probably as an artistic device to show to whom the sacrifice is offered.

3. There were also altars in Roman houses. It appears that, in primitive houses in Italy, the hearth served both for sacrifices to the domestic gods and for cooking purposes; this must have been in the atrium or central living-room. In farmhouses, where the kitchen with its hearth was still the principal room, we find a survival of this arrangement in the shrine for the household gods affixed to the wall close by the hearth: an example occurs in the villa at Doseo Rosalia. In Pompeii, altars were also placed in the atrium or kitchen, for practical purposes, from the altar to the kitchen; and that its religious functions accompanied it is shown by the fact that here also a shrine or painted images of the gods are often found in the kitchen near the hearth. More frequently, however, the household worship was more conveniently carried on at a small shrine provided for the purpose, either in a special room or in various positions in the atrium, peristyle, or garden. Such shrines usually consisted of a niche, with either statuettes or painted images of the domestic gods, the larres and penetras, the genius of the house, and serpents; and in front was placed a small altar of a usual type. In one case a small fixed altar was found in a dining-room; probably portable altars were generally employed for the offerings which usually accompanied all meals, when they were no longer held in the common living-room or kitchen.

4. Of the common hearth of a city we have the most familiar example in that of Vesta at Rome, where the undying fire was tended by the Vestal Virgins. This was, doubtless, circular, as was the temple that sheltered it, and it was commonly placed in the streets, usually with a niche, or at least a painting on the wall, to indicate the god to whom the altar was dedicated—sometimes this was in a compluvium or street god, sometimes other deities.

5. As regards the form of altars in early Italian religion, we have not much information. The Ara Pudens, which excavated by the Forum, was an oblong mass of natural rock, with its sides scarped away; it was restored with stone and covered with stucco after some damage in quite early times, possibly at the Gallic invasion. Among the primitive objects of cult found under the famous black stone was a rectangular block, which was probably an altar. Roman altars were probably of a rectangular form; they are found in Etruscan custom, which seems, from vase paintings and other evidence, to have favour ed some curious and fantastic shapes. But we have little evidence of this in Roman monuments. From Imperial times the evidence is abundant; the forms are in their origin dependent upon those of Greece, though they soon enter on an independent development of their own. The magnificent architectural structures of Hellenistic times found a counterpart in the Ara Pacis Augustae, which was surrounded by
reliefs with allegorized and ceremonial scenes, and is perhaps the most characteristic example of the sculptures of the Augustan age. Smaller altars, both round and square, are provided with artistic decoration in the naturalistic garlands carved in the marble, where the Greeks would have hung real ones, and in the reliefs, frequently representing sacrifices, but including many other appropriate subjects. In these it is possible to trace a development which, however, concerns the history of sculpture rather than that of religion. Simpler architectural decorations follow the Greek models; raised rolls at each end, faced by Ionic volutes, and bands of triglyph ornamentation, are very common. We also find sometimes on reliefs an ornamental canopy built on the top of an altar. In Roman custom, altars were far more frequently than in Greece erected merely in commemoration of a sacrifice, whether actually made upon them or not; in such cases the inscription was the essential thing, the altar form being little more than a convention. On the other hand, altars for actual use were frequently supplied with arrangements convenient in practice, such as basins to receive libations, and ducts to carry away the liquids.

6. Portable altars, either for incense or for minor offerings, were frequently used; some have been found at Pompeii and elsewhere, but they are not easy to distinguish from tripods or other tables. It is doubtful whether beercalum or marble table, frequently found behind the impluvium in the atrium of Pompeian houses, should be considered as an altar in origin. If, as has been suggested, it originally stood beside the hearth, it may have served this purpose, though it may have been merely a dresser. A peculiar interest attaches to this table in the matter of religious evolution, if we accept the sacred significance; for it plays an important part in the theory of the development of the plan of the primitive Christian church from the atrium of the dwelling-house.

7. The association of altars with tombs in Roman custom is somewhat confusing. Tombs frequently take a form resembling an altar (cippus); and it is natural to associate this with offerings to the dead, even if the altars be merely commemorative and not intended for actual use; the word ara is even applied to tombstones in inscriptions. On the other hand, Vergil describes a funeral pyre as 'ara sepulcri' ('En, vi, 177). This altar, on which offerings to the dead were consumed together with his body, may be symbolically represented by the altar-tomb.

LITERATURE.—The fullest and most recent account of altars, Greek and Roman, is that by Reisch in Pauly-Wissowa, s. v. 'Altar,' where references to earlier authorities are given. An article with illustration is in Durenmager-Saule, Deut. des Assyrielle, s. v. 'Ara.' For Pompeian altars see Mau, Pompeii, 1909; for the decoration of Roman altars, Mrs. Stroum, Roman Sculpture, 1907. See also the Handbooks of Antiquities, such as Hermann, Labusch, D. 'Gottesholische Alterthümer'; Iwan Müller, Handbuch der klass. Alterthümer bezw. v. 2 'Griech. Sakralabtheit' (Stengel, pp. 10-12); v. 4 'Religion und Cultus der Römer' (Wissowa), and Index of these works. Also see A. de Molen, De Ara apud Graecos (Berlin, 1894).

E. A. GARDNER.

ALTAR (Semitic).—1. Primitive conditions. —The primitive Semites regarded trees, crags or rocks, and springs as deities, and in the earliest times brought their gifts into direct contact with the god by hanging them on the tree, rubbing them on the rock, or throwing them into the spring or well. Evidences of the survival of these customs in Arabia, the primitive Semitic home, are known, and some of them survive even before the time that trees, crags, and springs are found hung with the relics of such offerings.* Gifts were thrown into the Zemzem at Mecca,† and into other springs.‡ That they were thus offered to the gods appears from the ritual of the masqebah described below. The simplest altar was a natural rock, the top of which contained a channel by which the blood was conveyed to a sacred cave below, as was the case with the sacred rock in the Mosque of Omar at Jerusalem. Such rocks are still used by the Arabs as places of sacrifice (see Curtius, Bibl. World, xxx. 255, 259). Sometimes the blood was conveyed by a rivulet to a sacred well. Such a rivulet was the Ghabah at Mecca, which flowed into the Zemzem.|| No doubt in the earliest times the deity was supposed to dwell in or be identical with a crag, a part of which was taken as an altar because of its natural formation. Out of these primitive conditions there were two lines of development, one of which produced the altars of later times, and the other the masqebah.

2. Stone altars.—The earliest altar of artificial construction was apparently a rough heap of stones, which represented a mountain-top or a crag in which the god had been thought to dwell. Such altars were made of unhewn stones, and were placed in natural trenches (1 K. 3, 5; 2 K. 18, 26). Traces of such altars are found among the Israelites and the Arameans (cf. 2 K. 18, 26, Ezk 43, 18, and 1 Mac 4, 41). They were probably at first associated with the mountain peak. The remains of such cairns may still be seen at Suf and on Mount Nebo, as well as in many other parts of the East (see Conder, Bath and Moab, 181 E.); and Barton, A Year's Wandering, 143).

3. Altars of earth.—In lieu of such an altar as this, it was possible in early times to make an altar of earth. Such an altar is permitted in the 'Book of the Covenant,' Ex 20, 26 (E), though we have no description of one in the OT. Possibly Macalister is right in thinking that he discovered an altar of this type at Gezer, for in connexion with the high place there he found a bank of earth about 11 ft. in length, which was baked so hard that it was exceedingly difficult for the workmen to cut through it. Underneath this bank were a number of human skulls. As human sacrifice formed a part of early Semitic worship, it is possible that this bank once served as such an altar. Though by no means certain, this is a suggestive possibility. Light on the altar of earth may possibly be obtained from the Samaritans. The writer in 1903 saw their preparations on Mt. Gerizim for the Passover, and when he asked if they had an altar, they said 'yes,' and showed him a hole dug in the ground—perhaps 18 in. in diameter and 10 in. deep. From this a conduit of oblong shape led off. Over the hole the sheep were killed, and the blood flowed into the conduit to be soaked up by the earth. Analogous with the rock-cut altar at Petra described below shows, however, that this is not a complete altar, but only the slaughter-place. The complete earthen altar was a mound of earth, plus one of these earthen slaughter-places.

4. Masqebahs.—Another development from the primitive crag was the Arabic masq ab or Hebrew masqebah. This was a stone pillar of conical shape, frequently resembling in a rough way a phallic symbol, in which the god was supposed to dwell. The fat and oil of sacrifices were smeared on this

* See Doughty, Arabia Deserta, 1, 446 E.; and Barton, A Year's Wandering in Bible Lands, 162.
† See Barton, Semitic Origins, 358.
‡ Cf. W. B. Smith, Beth. of Sam. 177.
§ See Wallis-Budge, Gods and Rituels in Egyptian Mythology, 126 E.
|| See Bibl. Bibl. from the 7th Century B.C.
stone, so that it served at once as an emblem of the deity himself in the altar. It was a bedeth (Gen 28:18). Sometimes such a pillar stood alone, sometimes one or two honorific stones were placed by it, sometimes the number of stones was made seven, and at Gezer the whole number of these standing pillars was ten. High places adorned with such stones have in recent years been discovered at Tell es-Safa,* at Petra,§ at Megiddo,* and at Gezer.§ When the number of stones is more than one, it is usually easy to identify the bedeth, as it is worn smooth from the contact of offerings. These pillars were common to both the Hamitic and the Semitic world,* and developed in course of time into the Egyptian obelisk.

5. Meat cooked in a pot hung on three sticks.—At this early time probably the larger part of each sacrificial meal was cooked and eaten by the worshipper, as in 1 S 14:22-23. Probably in the earliest period the flesh was boiled in a pot, as described in Samuel, and as represented on some early Bab. seals and in an early hieroglyphic Bab. inscription.** The Bab. pictures represent the pot as resting in the crotch of crossed sticks, as in course of time the position of roasting the meat instead of boiling it came in. The transition in Israel is noted in 1 S 28:1-7. It is quite probable that this transition marked a stage of culture which was attained at different periods in different parts of the Semitic world, and that one of its consequences was the institution of burnt-offerings—or offerings consumed by fire, of which the deity was supposed to inhale the smoke. This transition led to the creation of fire-altars. These were ultimately of several kinds, and the evolution of them proceeded along two lines.

6. Arseis.—One way of making a fire-altar was to add a fire-hearth to a massebath. This was actually done at Aksum in Abyssinia, where such structures have been found.† Perhaps the 'arise of Mosah, mentioned in 2 S 23:14 and on the Moabitic Stone (lines 12 and 17), were structures of this nature. They were structures which could be dragged away, and were connected with the shrines of Jahweh, as well as with those of other deities. This is evident from line 17 of the Moabitic Stone, and from Is 29:1-3, where the name is figuratively applied to Jerusalem.

W. J. Smith supposed that the pillars of Jachin and Boaz, which stood before the temple of Solomon at Jerusalem, were such structures also.†† Herodotus (iv. 44) tells us of two similar pillars at Tyre, one of emerald and the other of gold, which shone brightly at night. This latter fact was possibly due to some sort of fire, fed either by burning fat or some similar substance, connected with them. Possibly all these pillars were developed, like the altar-massaphath of Aksum, out of the primitive pillar.

7. Rock-cut altars.—Another development from the primitive mountain cairn was the rock-cut altar. This represents a later stage of culture than the altar of unhewn stones. That was an artificial imitation of a mountain cairn, but it was built of stones on which man had lashed up no tool. Human labour had placed the stones one upon another, but was confined to that alone. Rock-cut altars, on the other hand, are projections of native rock which human hands have fashioned into a form better suited to the purposes of sacrifice. One such was unearthed by Sellin at

22. See Herzfeld, iii. 8, who says the Arabs had seven.
23. Macalister, op. cit. 57.
26. See the fifth Dynasty temple restored in Eran's Egypt, Sal. 45.
27. See Scholl, Deutonere von Pera, ii. 390, and compare Baron in JASOS, xxi. 32 ff., and 1575, 9. A similar scene is figured on a seal in the writer's possession.
28. See Wilcken, op. cit. The 'Paste of the Scythians, 1900.
29. J. E. S. and Robinson; see Blumen and Domaszewski, Processus arabiace, i. 341, 342; and Nielsen, Arab. Mondreligion, 173-177.
30. See the reference in note 1.
31. See Whiston and Robinson; see Blumen and Domaszewski, op. cit. p. 242.
is the great altar at Petra, described above (§ 7). That rock-cut altar may, however, be an Edomite or Nabatean work, and indicative of their civiliza-
tions rather than of the civilization of the Arabs. Indeed, the use of tools upon it makes it probable that it was constructed by people who had lost the primitive simplicity and poverty of thought which attached to all things Arabian in early times.

The purely Arabian altars were, as they still are, spurs of natural or, stones containing hollows to receive the blood (see Curtius, Bibl. World, xxi. 255, 256). From South Arabia a very interesting altar of incense has come, which is now in the Berlin Museum. It is a little over 2 ft. high. It tapers slightly as it rises, until within about 1 ft. from the top. At this point a slight shoulder projects, above which the stone broadens again. On one side, in an ornamental framework carved in stone, rises a pyramid, the blunt apex of which is surmounted by the thin crescent of the moon. The horns of the crescent are turned upward, and a star or representation of the sun-disc occupies its centre.

Petrus discovered three such altars of incense in the temple at Serabit el-Chadem in Sinai. It is true that this was ostensibly an Egyptian temple, but there can be little doubt that Semitic customs and practices found their way into it. Of the altars found here, the highest was 22 inches. It had on the top a cup hollow, 3 in. wide and 1 in. deep. One of these altars presented on the top a burnished surface 20 in. deep, and its sides were blackened. All of them were cut so as roughly to resemble an hour-glass in shape, though one of them continued to taper well up to the top.

11. Aramean altars. — In 2 K 16:10 we are told of an altar in Damascus which the Judean king Ahaz saw, and which so pleased him that he had one made like it and placed in the Temple at Jerusalem. Probably the altar described by Ezekiel (43:17) is a description of it. If so, it was built of stones, and consisted of a base 27 ft. square and 18 in. high, along the top of which ran a moulding 9 in. wide. On this arose a square of 24 ft., which was 3 ft. high; on this a square of 21 ft., which was 6 ft. in height; and above this arose the heart of the altar, 16 ft. square and 6 ft. high. It was approached by steps on the east side. The whole structure was about 17 ft. high, and at its corners were projections of some kind called 'horns.' It is only by inference that we carry these dimensions back to the altar at Damascus. Of course, between Ahaz and Ezekiel there may have been modifications, but when the influence of religious conservatism is taken into account, our inference seems to be justified.

As noted above (§ 10), the altar at Petra was perhaps a Nabatean structure. If so, it should be counted an Aramean altar. A few smaller Nabatean altars, of the kind called altars of incense above, have been discovered. One such was found at Khafsah, and bears a Nabatean inscription. On one side of a bull's head is carved in a rather primitive type of art. Another Nabatean altar of similar type from Palmyra has two hands carved on its side below an inscription. A fragment of a basaltic altar found at Khafsah, carved with the head of a bul-

* See Mordtmann, Himyar. Inschriften und Alterthümer, Pl. 3 and Nielsen, Altarbau, Mardeligion, 135.
1 See Petrie, Researches in Sinai, 133-135.
2 See Petrie, EnABL, p. 103 in Haw Psyche, 2397.
3 See Sohau, SHdW (1886) 1056 and PL L.; Clermont-Ganneau, Recueil d'archéologie orientale, II. 75 and Pl. 1.; also ibid., 101, 108, Littmann, Semitic Inscriptiones, p. 83.
4 Of. Clermont-Ganneau, op. cit. i. 117 and Pl. 1.
excavator found a structure built of sun-dried bricks, 13 ft. long and 8 ft. wide. A ridge of bitumen 7 in. high ran around the top. The structure was covered with a layer of white ashes several inches deep, and was separated from the surrounding space by a low wall or curb. Nearly at the same time was a bin containing several hundreds of seeds. Dr. Haynes rightly regarded this as an altar. He found it 3 ft. below the pavement of Naram-Sin, so that it belongs to the Early Sargonid period. Herodotus (1:183) bears witness to the fact that two kinds of altars stood in the temple at Babylon. He says the smaller altar was of gold, but it silent as to the material of which the larger altar was constructed. These correspond to the ‘altar of burnt-offering’ and the ‘altar of incense.’

The stone altars are of three forms. The oldest is from the time of Adad-nirari III (B.C. 812-783), and is in the British Museum. It consists of a oblong stone 55 cm. long and of the same height, so curved that the top presents the appearance of a sofa without a back. The lower part is ornamented by a few horizontal symmetrical lines. The second type is made of a block of stone so curbed that its base is triangular, and is ornamented by two horizontal ledges. At the corners between these ledges a lion’s head is carved. The base is surmounted by a circular top. The third altar is shaped much like the Nabatean altars, but with a castellated top. Both these last are from the palace of Sargon (B.C. 722-705), and are in the Louvre.

The Assyrian bronze altar is pictured for us on the bronze gates of Balawat, on a sculpture of Ashurbanipal, and on other sculptures. These altars, in spite of variations in detail, were built on the same pattern. Each was a table-like structure, sometimes half the height of a man, sometimes a little higher. The legs at each corner were moulded, somewhat like the legs of a modern piano. The legs were joined to one another by horizontal bars. Sometimes there was one, sometimes two, and sometimes three of these, and their distance from the ground was determined by the fancy of the maker. From the middle of the side of the altar (or from the centre of it, as the spectator is so imperfect that it might be either) a leg descended to the lowest of these cross-bars. The top of the table was slightly hollowed and formed an oblong basin. One of the representations shows the sacrifice burning on it. Such an altar could be taken with the army on a campaign, as is shown by the bronze gates of Balawat.

Canaanite altars.—In ancient Canaan the altars of burnt-offering were sometimes of native rock, as at Taanach (see § 7), sometimes structures of unhewn stone (§ 2), and sometimes heaps of earth (§ 3). These have already been sufficiently described (§§ 2, 3). A Canaanite altar of incense was, however, found at Taanach, which is unique. It was made of earth moulded into a rounded trunk, broad at the base tapering considerably toward the top. It was ornamented by many heads—both human and animal—in relief.

15. Phoenician altars.—The Phoenician altars which have survived are all 14 altars of incense. They present a variety of forms. Sometimes they are square with a large base and top, the central portion, though smaller, being of the same size all the way up. There are other altars in the same general shape except that they are round, and the base and top join the central portion in an abrupt projection of boulder instead of being tapered down to it. Such is an altar found at Malatia. Another altar found at the same place has its central portion carved into a panelled facing in which a vine is cut for ornamentation. Still others are variations of the hour-glass form.

Bronze altars are mentioned in Phoenician inscriptions as having been erected at Gebal, Kiton, Larnax, Lapethos, at the Piramus, and in Sidon, but we have no knowledge of their form. Perhaps they were made on the pattern of Assyrian bronze altars. We know that in many ways the Phoenicians copied Assyrian art.

16. Hebrew altars.—According to Ex 20:24-26, the early Israelite altars were constructed either of earth or stone. These have been described in §§ 2, 3. Solomon, when he erected his temple, introduced a brazen altar after Phoenician fashion. The description of this has been omitted by redactors from 1 K 6, because it was not made of orthodox materials (Baal, El, and Yahweh). Its presence is vouched for by the story of 2 K 18:15, and by the late and confused insertion (so Kittel), 1 K 8:19. The Chronicles (2 Ch 4:4) makes it a gigantic structure of stone and gold, and modern scholars have often followed his statements. As the altar had perished long before the Chronicler’s time, and as it was smaller than the large stone altar which Ahaz built near it (2 K 16:14), and which was but 27 ft. square at the base, we may conclude that the Chronicler’s measurements are unhistorical. It is much more likely that Solomon’s brazen altar was of the Assyrian pattern. If it was, we can better understand why King Ahaz was so eager to supplant it with a stone altar which would be better adapted to the offering of large sacrifices. This bronze altar had disappeared by the time of the Exile. The stone altar of Ahaz is described above (§ 11). Such an altar, built of unhewn stones, continued to exist down to the destruction of the Temple by Titus (cf. 1 Mac 4:44-47 and Jos. B.J. v. v. 6).

According to 1 K 7:34, a golden altar, apparently for offerings before the Ark of the Lord in Solomon’s temple, but we have no description of its form.

The altars described in the Priestly document as made for the Tabernacle were the altar of burnt-offerings (Ex 40) made of acacia wood and overlaid with bronze, and the altar of incense (Ex 30) made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. Modern scholars regard both of these as fictions of priestly writers, and it is clear that neither of them would stand a sacrificial fire. The altar of incense of this passage was possibly patterned on that of the Temple. If so, it gives us its dimensions. It was 18 in. square and 3 ft. high.

17. Horns of the altar.—Various explanations have been offered for the ‘horns of the altar.’ Stade suggested that they arose in an attempt to curve the altar into the form of an ox. W. R. Smith believed that they were substituted for the horns of real victims, which at an earlier time had been hung upon the altar. Josephus (B.J. v. 6) says of the altar of Herod’s temple that it

* See Clav. Light on the Off from Isaiah, 110.
* See Birch and Passmore. Bronze Statues and Stone Statues from the Palace of Gudea at Ur, pl. 12 and 2; also Ball. Light from the East, 164; Perrot and Chipiez. Op. cit. 429 f.
* See Sellin. Tell Ta‘anaz. 74.

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* See Rameau, Mission de Phénicie, 163.
* J. H. E. 275.
* J. H. E. 275 (fig. 101); Rameau, op. cit. 220.
* See CIS. No. 1, 10, 95, 115, 143.
* L. Benezinger. Hub. Arch. 188.

Greek. 1:450.

14 Ed. of Sem. 1:438.
had corners like horns," suggesting that the term was figuratively applied to some ornamentation which surmounted the corners. As no horns appear upon any Semitic altar yet discovered, but the altar frequently appears surmounted with ornaments, it is probable that, as in Jer 17, the word 'horns' is figurative.

The Hebrew 'table of shewbread,' a counterpart to which is figured in Assyrian reliefs, might in one sense be called an altar, but, strictly speaking, it is an altar only in a secondary sense. ALTAR (Slavonic).—There is a considerable number of texts relating to the temples of the Baltic Slavs, but they do not furnish any details about altars. The words denoting 'altar' among the Slavonic nations are borrowed, through the Old High German altea, from the Latin altare. The Old Church Slavic trubča, 'sacrifice' (cf. Sveča, 'sacrifice, priest'), compared with its Russian derivative zertseč, which is employed in the sense of 'altar' in the Biblical texts, seems to indicate that the altar was the place in the temple where the victims were sacrificed. Perhaps it is simply the translation of the Greek θυσιαστήρ, to which the entire group of words was connected with 'ego'. The term is figured in the form of trubča, 'sacrifice', 'altar', 'sacrifice', 'sacrament'; and krtad, 'rags, foreign'.

LITERATURE.—Miklosh, DAWM, 24, 12.

L. LEGGE.

ALTAR (Teutonic).—There seems to be no doubt that in heathen times the Teutonic peoples made use of altars; but our information with regard to these is very meagre, since the majority of the references give no details.

The bulk of the evidence is obtained from the Icelandic sagas. In these sagas the term for a regular term for an altar within a temple: we are told that the stalli was set up in the centre of the sanctuary (the ofu—see TEMPLES (Teutonic)); and it is described by the Christian writer of the Eyribyggja Saga as 'like unto an altar.' The materials of its construction are nowhere stated, and there is practically no indication as to whether it was built of stone, wood, or wood with stone. The references in the sagas to a custom among the Icelandic settlers of carrying with them from Norway the earth under the altar; and in the Klakavins Saga, the stalli is a natural, because, in fact identical with both, 'ego' and 'altar.' On such a view, the 'ego' as a conscious content is identical in its matter and also, in consequence, in its attitude, with the 'ego-alter.' The self-thought is one, a normal growth in the interplay of the influences of the social milieu; and the individual is not a social entity into social relationships, but an 'outcome' of the social forces working to differentiate and organize common material. The altruistic or 'other-seeking' impulses are on this view, with the 'ego-seeking'; both are differentiations of the common group of less specialized movements in the process that constitutes personal consciousness in general. Recent work in Social Psychology has shown the place of imitative and other processes whereby the 'ego-alter' or 'socius' meaning is developed.

LITERATURE.—Rogers, Social contr. of the State (1892); Baldwin, Social and Political Interpretations (1897), and Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology, in loco.

J. M. BILDERUP.

ALTRUISM.—The use of the term 'Altruism' is due to Comte, who adopted it to describe those dispositions, tendencies, and actions which have the good of others as their object. He contrasted it with 'Egoism' (wh. see), which has self-interest.