Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics

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

VOLUME I

A—ART

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

account those of Dinlleu in Arvon and Dinlle in the Wrekin district of Shropshire, also the places where the Lugnassad were celebrated in Ireland, and you will readily admit that the name Lugus, Lug, or Lleu was that of a divinity whose cult was practised by all probably of the Celts both on the Continent and in these islands' (*Hib. Lect.* p. 420).

Such a cult would almost of necessity involve a Spring Festival in which Llew would be associated with Arianrhod and his brother Dylan. And it may be noted that it is within sight of the Wrekin that the North Staffordshire rhyme runs:

'March is gone, and April come;
You're a fool, and I'm none.'

The lines point to the triumph of Llew and the discomfiture or fooling of Dylan.

LITERATURE.—Murray, *New Eng. Dict.* s.v.; Larousse, *Nouv. Dict. Illust.*; Brockhaus, *Konv. Lexikon*; Brewer, *Dict. of Phrase and Fable*; Chambers, *Book of Days*; Rhys, 'Celtic Heathendom,' *Hib. Lect.*, 1886; Guest, *Mabinogion*[2] (1904).

THOMAS BARNS.

ALMSGIVING.—See CHARITY.

ALTAR.

Introduction (L. H. GRAY), p. 333.
African, American (L. H. GRAY), p. 335.
Arabian.—See Semitic, p. 351.
Aramæan.—See Semitic, p. 352.
Assyrian.—See Semitic, p. 353.
Babylonian.—See Semitic, p. 352.
Canaanite.—See Semitic, p. 353.
Celtic (L. H. GRAY), p. 337.
Chinese (W. G. WALSHE), p. 337.
Christian (H. L. PASS), p. 338.
Egyptian (F. Ll. GRIFFITH), p. 342.
Greek (E. A. GARDNER), p. 342.
Hebrew.—See Semitic, p. 353.
Hindu (J. JOLLY), p. 345.
Japanese (W. G. ASTON), p. 346.
Persian (E. EDWARDS), p. 346.
Phœnician.—See Semitic, p. 353.
Polynesian (L. H. GRAY), p. 348.
Roman (E. A. GARDNER), p. 349.
Semitic (G. A. BARTON), p. 350.
Slavonic (L. LEGER), p. 354.
Teutonic (C. J. GASKELL), p. 354.

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 Popogatepec 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.*[3] ii. 207–208); while, in similar fashion, pins and other trifles 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 manner, offerings are made to the earth by burying the sacrifice, as amongst the Khonds of Orissa (a mode of sacrifice which also occurs elsewhere in offerings to the dead), and to the fire by casting the offering 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 Melanesia (Codrington, *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 Swedes and the modern Semites, Armenians, Hindus, and some of the African tribes (cf. Tylor, *op. cit.* ii. 228; Curtiss, *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. 99–100, 102; Ellis, *Ewe-Speaking Peoples*, London, 1890, p. 42).

In considering the primitive purpose of the altar, it will be amiss to discuss the etymology of the words denoting it in Semitic and Indo-Germanic. In the former group of languages 'altar' is represented by the Hebrew *mizbēaḥ* (Arab. *madhbaḥ*), a derivative of זבח (Assyr. *zibû*, Arab. *dhabaḥa*, 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 being 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 (Curtiss, *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 *altāre*, borrowed in many languages (*e.g.* Old High German *altāri*, Old Pruss. *altars*, Old Church Slav. *oltarĭ*, Lith. *altõrius*, Russ. *altarĭ*), and defined by Festus as follows: 'altaria sunt in quibus igne adoletur.' The word is commonly derived from *altus*, 'high'; but this must be rejected, since not only is the meaning unsatisfactory, but linguistic evidence is against it, *-āris* (*-ālis*) being used in Latin only to form an adjectival or nominal derivative from a noun (cf. *limināris* for an inferred *limināl is*, 'relating to the threshold,' from *limen*). It should plainly be connected with *ad-oleo*, 'to burn a sacrifice,' unaccented Lat. *a* in post-tonic syllables (the primitive form of *adoleo* being *ddaleo*) becoming *o* before *l* and labials, and probably stands, by dissimilation, for an inferred *altālis*, 'fiery' (cf. for this etymology and other Indo-Germanic cognates, Walde, *Lat. etymol. Wörterbuch*, Heidelberg, 1906, p. 9; the *t*, however, makes the derivation of *altāre* from the root *alē* very difficult, unless one may assume in it the presence of a 'root-determinative' *t* [cf. Persson, *Wurzelerweiterung und Wurzelvariation*, Upsala, 1891, pp. 28–35], though this method of etymologizing is rejected by many scholars). The second Lat. term for 'altar' is *ara*, Oscan *aasa*, Umbrian *asa*, which is most probably connected with *areo*, 'burn' (Walde, *op. cit.* p. 40).

The Greek terms for 'altar' are *βωμός*, *θυμέλη*, and *θυσιαστήριον*. The first of these, which stands in *Ablaut*-relation with Doric *βᾶμα* (Attic *βῆμα*), 'step,' itself occasionally means 'step' (*e.g. Odyss.* vii. 100); while the last two are both connected with *θύω*, 'to sacrifice,' especially by burning (cf. Latin *suf-fio*, 'fumigate,' etc.). Finally, in Germanic we have the Icelandic *stalli*, Anglo-

Saxon *weofod* or *wihbed*, and Gothic *hurslastaþs*, the first being etymologically akin to the Eng. *stall*, 'place,' the second denoting 'idol-table,' and the third 'place of sacrifice, housel-stead.' Finally, it may be noted that a modern Russian term for 'altar,' *žertveniikŭ*, also means 'place of sacrifice,' being a derivative of *žertva*, 'sacrifice'; but it must be borne in mind that this root is ultimately connected with Skr. *gar*, 'to praise,' so that the Slav. group, including Old Church Slav. *žrěti*, 'to sacrifice,' *žrŭtva*, 'sacrifice,' and *žiričŭ*, 'priest,' seems to have regarded the sacrifice primarily as praise (cf. Miklosich, *Etymol. Wörterbuch der slav. Sprachen*, Vienna, 1886, p. 410)—a concept which is, perhaps, borrowed from Christianity.

It is thus evident that amongst the Semites the altar was primarily the place where the victim was slaughtered, and amongst the Indo-Germanic peoples the place where it was burnt.

It is clear from what has already been said that the altar, essentially an adjunct of the sacrifice, has been evolved later than the oblation, for many peoples have sacrificed, or made their offerings, and still do so, without altars; and there are considerable areas, particularly in Africa and South America, where the altar is entirely unknown, while the late development of the altar amongst the Indo-Germanic peoples is a commonplace (cf. Schrader, *RE der indogerm. Altertumskunde*, Strassburg, 1901, pp. 855, 861), and receives a striking exemplification in the relatively late evolution of the Indian *vedi* (see ALTAR [Hindu]). The latter represents, indeed, a curious type of altar, in that it is primarily a fire altar in a trench strewn with grass, evolving later into the common form of a raised altar for burnt-offerings. Its development thus shows all three forms of the altar — depressed below the ground, practically level with the ground, and elevated above the ground (cf. Ludwig, *Der Rigveda*, iii., Prague, 1878, p. 364 f.; Hillebrandt, *Ritual-Litteratur*, Strassburg, 1897, p. 14).

Allusion has already been made to the widespread custom of hanging offerings on sacred trees, and oblations are likewise placed on sacred stones. The best example of the latter phenomenon is perhaps found in the case of the Heb. *maṣṣēbāh*, 'upright stone, pillar' (from נצב, 'to take one's stand'; cf. Arab. *naṣaba*, 'to set up,' *nuṣb*, 'object set up, idol': for other cognates and for literature, cf. *Oxf. Heb. Lex.* pp. 662–663), which was regarded as a Divine abode and anointed with oil (*e.g.* Gn 28^{18}). In like manner the Arab. *anṣāb* (plural of *nuṣb*, 'idol,' which is derived from *naṣaba* = נצב, and is thus linguistically connected with *maṣṣēbāh*) were anointed with blood (W. R. Smith, pp. 184, 321).

It is held by many that the sacred stone or tree and the altar 'originally were identical in use and purpose' (cf. Jevons, *op. cit.* pp. 134–135); but this view seems at least open to question, despite the support given to it by the history of the Semitic altar. Though the distinction may be deemed academic and subtle, the present writer feels that, while the deity is believed to be in the sacred stone or the sacred tree, he is never held to dwell in the altar. The altar is, in other words, from its very inception, the table on which the offering to the god is slaughtered, burnt, or deposited. The oil and blood on the sacred stone please and feed the deity, the rags on the sacred tree adorn him; but the offerings on the altar are taken by him, not placed upon him. In no sense, then, can the sacred tree or stone be considered identical with the altar, unless one is ready to regard the Ægæan Sea as an altar because offerings were cast into it in honour of Poseidon, or the crater of Mauna Loa as an altar since human sacrifices to Pele 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 it amongst individual peoples, but a brief allusion may 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 analogue 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. 132; Strabo, p. 732 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 slaughtered upon it (cf. 1 K 18^{32}; Wellhausen, *Reste des arab. Heidentums*², Berlin, 1897, 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. Curtiss, *op. cit.* pp. 235–236). This form of depressed altar was particularly appropriate in sacrificing to the *manes*, and is admirably exemplified in the sacrifice made by Odysseus in order to enter Hades (*Odyss.* 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 *vedi* (see above), we find the trench combined with the *quasi*-mat (for further instances of the Indo-Germanic trench-altar see art. ARYAN 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 Mycenæ, and corresponding with the hollow; round ἐσχάρα, 'hearth,' level with the ground, ἐφ' ἧς τοῖς ἥρωσιν ἀποθύομεν (Pollux, *Onomasticon*, i. 8; see Schuchhardt, *Schliemann's Excavations*, tr. Sellers, London, 1891, pp. 156–157); while the connecting bond between the two forms seems to be given by an altar discovered by Schliemann at Tiryns, 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 to be 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 deity 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 20[25]), 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 *lectisternium*, 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 Aztec Ochpaniztli, 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.

LITERATURE.—Jevons, *Introd. to Hist. of Rel.* (London, 1896) pp. 130–143; and see at end of following articles.

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 Basogas (cf. Waitz, *Anthropol. der Naturvölker*, ii., Leipzig, 1860, pp. 184–185; Johnston, *Uganda Protectorate*, London, 1902, pp. 717–718). Thus, amongst the Hottentots, and even the Hovas of Madagascar, we find no traces of the altar (Waitz, *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 extraordinary occasions a human sacrifice is offered, the victim is disembowelled, the entrails placed in a dish or calabash before the image, and the body suspended on a tree or post in front of the shrine, where it is suffered to remain till it rots and falls to pieces' (Ellis, *Ewe-Speaking Peoples*, London, 1890, p. 42). Here both the dish and the tree (or post) represent 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 (Waitz, *op. cit.* p. 197) 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 manioc, maize, palm-oil, and the like, as offerings to the spirits (Schneider, *Rel. der afrikan. Naturvölker*, Münster, 1891, p. 115).

Amongst the Tshi-speaking peoples of the Guinea Coast the country stool (*egwah*) of the god, 'which is the local symbol of authority,' is washed with the blood of human victims sacrificed in honour of the deity, whose own image receives a similar ablution, this being expressly recorded of the divinities Bobowissi, Ihtúri, Bons'ahnu, Behnya, and Prah (Ellis, *Tshi-Speaking Peoples*, London, 1887, pp. 23, 51–53, 65). 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 Cardi (in Mary Kingsley's *West African Studies*, London, 1899, p. 515):

'The altar looked very much like an ordinary kitchen plate rack with the edges of the plate shelves picked out with goat skulls. There were three rows of these, and on the three plate shelves a row of grinning human skulls; under the bottom shelf, and between it and the top of what would be in a kitchen the dresser, were eight uprights garnished with rows of goats' skulls, the two middle uprights being supplied with a double row; below the top of the dresser, which was garnished with a board painted blue and white, was arranged a kind of drapery of filaments of palm fronds, drawn asunder 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 like a chicken 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 trellis 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 Algonquian and Iroquoian stocks among whom they laboured were essentially nomadic, and thus had neither temples nor altars sufficiently striking to attract the missionaries' attention. We know, however, that the Indians of Virginia had 'altars, which they call Pawcorances, placed in their fields, where they sacrifice blood and fat of savage beasts, and offer tobacco when they return from war or the chase' (de Laet, *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 Cadoan Assinai temples contained a wooden altar, on which stood leathern coffers, filled with leather dishes and musical instruments (Waitz, *Anthropol. der Naturvölker*, iii. 204, 220–221). The perpetual fire, it may be noted, was also maintained in Louisiana and amongst the Muskhogees (*ib.* pp. 203, 208).

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 over twenty inches high, and are near the ground in the centre of the mound; while in their top is

a basin-shaped hollow, usually filled with ashes (Bancroft, *Nat. Races of the Pacif. States*, iv. 774; cf. Thomas, *RBEW* v. pp. 57–58 [West Virginia]; Holmes, *ib.* xx. pp. 36–37). Here, again, numerous variations from the general type are known. Thus, on the top of a mound near Sterling, Ill., was found 'an oval altar 6 ft. long and 4½ wide. 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 abundance of charcoal. At the sides of the altar were fragments of human bones, some of which had been charred' (Holbrooke, quoted by Yarrow, *Introd. to Study of Mortuary Customs among the N. Amer. Indians*, Washington, 1880, p. 23).

In his *Mœurs des sauvages amériquains* (Paris, 1724, ii. 327) the Jesuit Lafitau advances the theory that the calumet, or 'pipe of peace,' was an altar. This statement, perhaps surprising at first, is not so absurd as it may appear, for the calumet certainly contains, in some instances, a burnt-offering in honour of a deity. Among the Southern Talapouches and Alabamons the head priest went forward 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 prostrated himself to the east, and honoured 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 Kisteneaux, Sioux, Shoshones, Omahas, Poncas, Blackfeet, Pottawatomies, and Hopis (M'Guire, 'American Aboriginal Pipes and Smoking Customs' in *Report of the United States National Museum*, 1897, pp. 351–646, especially pp. 563–571).

By far the most elaborate modern N. American Indian altars, however, are those of the Hopis and kindred Pueblo tribes, whose snake, antelope, and flute altars have been carefully described by Fewkes (*RBEW* xv. p. 270; *ib.* xvi. pp. 278–279, 287–288, 290–292; xix. pp. 966–969, 980–983, 989–996, 1001–1002). These altars are of special interest in that, unlike any others 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. 963, cf. pp. 1009–1111). The Hopi altar, which, of course, presents unessential 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 sand, 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-stalks. Rattles 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,' into which an aspergill is dipped 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 *tipones*, 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-Zuñi altars, it should be noted, have a more or less elaborate reredos, that of the Cakwaleñya ('Blue Flute' society) at the Tusayan pueblo of Mishongnovi, for example, being described by Fewkes (*RBEW* xix. pp. 991–992) as consisting 'of uprights and transverse slats of wood, the former decorated with ten rain-cloud pictures, five on each side, one above the other. These symbols had square outlines, each angle decorated with a figure of a feather, and depending from each rain-cloud figure, parallel lines, representing falling rain, were painted. The transverse slat bore a row of nine rain-cloud figures of semicircular form. Four zigzag sticks, representing lightning, hung from the transverse slat 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, surmounted by rain-cloud figures. The ridge of sand between the uprights of the altar supported many smaller rods and slats, the one in the middle being decorated with a picture of an ear of corn.' Despite the elaborate character of these reredoses, however, they are obviously subordinate to the sand-altars placed before them, and of which they are palpable imitations; even though, as in some of the Zuñi altars described by Mrs. Stevenson, the reredos is *quasi*-permanent, while the sand-altar must be remade for each ceremony.

Amongst the Zuñi, as already intimated, we likewise find elaborate altars showing the same general type as their Hopi congeners. In all of them the principle of sympathetic magic seems to be present, as is clear from Mrs. Stevenson's detailed description of them (*RBEW* xxiii. pp. 245–246, 428, 432–434, 454, 491, 529, 543, 550, 551).

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. 582–583). The Aztec altar, moreover, had an adjunct, not found elsewhere, in the sacrificial yoke, a heavy stone of green jasper, curved in a ∩-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 a 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 altars, as found in the ruins of Copan, Honduras, and of Quirigua, Guatemala, 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 altars, their tops were intersected with grooves to receive the blood of the sacrifices offered upon them (*ib.* iv. 94–99, 111–114, 541). Besides formal altars, the ancient Mexicans, Mayas, and Guatemalans 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, 690, iii. 336, iv. 345–346). Like the 'mound-builders' of N. America, the Mayas erected altars on the graves of the dead (*ib.* ii. 799), and in Nicaragua flat stones have been discovered which apparently served as altars (*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 inaptly said that 'a Mexican temple was essentially a gigantic altar, of pyramidal form, built in several stages, contracting as they approached the summit' (Réville, *Native Religions of Mexico and Peru*, London, 1884, pp. 47–48). 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.* iv. 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 archæological remains of Peru present no example of the

altar, so seeming to confirm the words of Garcilasso de la Vega (*Royal Commentaries of the Yncas*, iii. 20, tr. Markham, London, 1869, i. 271) that 'these Indians did not know anything of building an altar.' Nevertheless, there are not infrequent allusions to sacrifice, in the works of the early Spanish *conquistadores*, both of fruits and animals, so that it would seem, in view of the high civilization of the empire of the Incas, as though the Peruvians may very probably have known of the altar, despite the lack of archæological evidence.

LITERATURE.—Hough in *Handbook of American Indians* (*Bulletin 30 BE*), i. 46–47 (Washington, 1907); Waitz, *Anthropologie der Naturvölker*, iii. (Leipzig, 1862); Bancroft, *Native Races of the Pacific States*, iv. (San Francisco, 1883).

LOUIS H. GRAY.

ALTAR (Celtic).—The data concerning the Celtic altar are extremely scanty, since all native records of the pre-Christian period are lacking, while the altars still preserved date from 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. Cæsar, 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 (iv. 4. 4–5). On the other hand, Tacitus (*Annales*, xiv. 30) distinctly states that the Druids of Mona 'held it right to besmear the altars with captive blood'; and this practice is extended to the whole of Gaul by Pomponius Mela (iii. 18). By far the most famous passage, however, in this connexion, is found in Lucan's *Pharsalia* (i. 443–445):

> 'Et quibus immitis placatur sanguine diro
> Teutates, horrensque feris altaribus Hesus,
> Et Taranis Scythicæ non mitior ara Dianæ.'

(On the identification of these divinities, see Rhys, *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. 399–452) at Marseilles, which was destroyed by Cæsar. 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' (*structæ sacris feralibus aræ*) and rude, artless images of the gods, roughly hewn from logs. Although Cæsar expressly states that the Gauls differed widely from the Germans in cult (*de Bello Gallico*, vi. 21), Lucan's description of the temple of Marseilles recalls involuntarily the statement of Tacitus (*Germania*, 9), that the ancient Teutons made neither images nor temples for the gods, but worshipped them in groves.

A large number of Celtic altars of the Roman period have been preserved, but are practically valueless, as being modelled entirely on classical prototypes. It was supposed by older archæologists 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, moreover, 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, though the altar was not indispensable, since the wooden and osier cages filled with men and other victims and burned as a holocaust (Cæsar, *de Bello Gallico*, vi. 16; Strabo, iv. 4. 5) could scarcely have been offered on any but a special structure or on the ground.

LITERATURE.—De Belloguet, *Ethnogénie gauloise*, iii. (Paris, 1868); D'Arbois de Jubainville, *Introduction à l'étude de la littérature celtique* (Paris, 1883); O'Curry, *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, ii. (London, 1873); Dottin, *Manuel pour servir à l'étude de l'antiquité celtique* (Paris, 1906).

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 the fact that, even to the present day, 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 park 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 150, and the upper 90 feet.* It 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 buried, while those offered to Heaven were burnt. 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 the Earth.' The Great 'Altar of 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 also is 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 *Bible in the World*, March 1907, p. 79.

are not ornamented or distinguished in any way, except at the time of sacrifice, when they are specially prepared for the occasion.

In Chinese temples, whether Confucian or Buddhist, the altar usually consists of a stone table, rectangular in shape, the proportions varying with the size of the building. The altar furniture includes a censer, two candlesticks, and sometimes a pair of vases of bronze, porcelain, or stone. When Ancestor Worship is conducted in private houses, the offerings are laid out upon ordinary dining tables placed close together.

Permanent altars are erected in front of tombs for the half-yearly sacrifice to the spirits of the dead. They consist of a single stone slab supported by two others, thus forming a table. A smaller altar of similar construction is found at grave sides, intended for the sacrifices to the local spirits or demons.

In the majority of Chinese dwellings there are to be seen miniature altars, where incense is burned, and small offerings of food presented, either to the spirits of deceased relatives, or such popular divinities as the 'God of Wealth.'

LITERATURE.—*Chinese Classics*, trans. by J. Legge, vol. iii., 'Shu King, or Book of Historical Documents,' Oxford; also 'Texts of Confucianism,' *SBE*, vols. iii. xvi. xxvii. xxviii.; S. W. Williams, *Middle Kingdom*, revised ed., 2 vols., London, 1883; E. H. Parker, *China and Religion*, London, 1905, and the literature there cited; H. A. Giles, *Religions of Ancient China*, London, 1905, pp. 28 f., 45; G. Owen, 'Confucian Classics' in *Bible in the World*, March 1907, p. 79 ff.; Mrs. Archibald Little, *Intimate China*, London n. d., p. 341 ff. [description of worship at the Temple of Heaven]; P. D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*[3], Tübingen, 1905, vol. i. pp. 60 ff., 83 ff.

W. GILBERT WALSHE.

ALTAR (Christian). — **1. Nomenclature.** — (*a*) *GREEK.*—St. Paul, in a passage dealing with the Eucharist, uses the phrase *τράπεζα Κυρίου* (1 Co 10^{21})—a term frequently employed by the Greek Fathers after the 3rd cent., and constantly by Eastern liturgical documents, as a designation of the Christian altar. The word *θυσιαστήριον*—the ordinary equivalent of LXX for מִזְבֵּחַ—occurs in his writings (1 Co 9^{13} 10^{18}), 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 (*θυσιαστήριον*), whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle' (He 13^{10}); but most commentators explain this passage otherwise (cf. Rev 8^{3-5}). There is no other reference to the Christian altar in the NT.

[See Probst, *Liturgie der drei ersten christlichen Jahrhunderte*, pp. 20, 21, 37, 38; F. E. Warren, *Liturgy and Ritual of the Ante-Nicene Church*, pp. 78–82; Westcott, *Heb.* 455–463].

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 *θυσιαστήριον* 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 *θυσιαστήριον* is applied figuratively to the Christian community; see Lightfoot, *Philippians*, p. 263)].

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 designates the altar of the basilica at Tyre, dedicated in the year A.D. 314, as *ἁγίων ἅγιον θυσιαστήριον* (*HE* x. 444), and speaks in the same place of the altars (*θυσιαστήρια*) erected throughout the world after the Peace of the Church. The word *τράπεζα* also is defined by pseudo-Athanasius as *θυσιαστήριον* (*Disput. cont. Arian* xvii.).

τράπεζα, not *θυσιαστήριον*, is the term usually employed in the liturgies; it is also common in many of the Greek Fathers. Sometimes the word stands alone—*ἡ τράπεζα*, 'the table' *par excellence* (*e.g.* Chrys. *Hom. iii. in Epist. ad Ephes.*). Sometimes, as in 1 Co 10^{21}, it is *τράπεζα Κυρίου* (*e.g.* Orig. *c. Cels.* viii. 24). But very often adjectives are added, such as *ἱερά*, *ἁγία*, *μυστική*, and the like.

βωμός, as contrasted with *θυσιαστήριον*, is used in the OT for heathen altars: *e.g.* 1 Mac 1^{59} *ἐπὶ τὸν βωμὸν ὃς ἦν ἐπὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου* (note the use of the word in Ac 17^{23}—the only place in which it occurs in the NT). This usage is generally followed by Christian writers. Exceptions, however, are met with, *e.g.*, in Synesius (*Katastasis*, 19 [Migne, *PG* lxvi. coll. 1572, 1573]), who speaks of *βωμὸς ὁ ἀναίμακτος*. Clement of Alexandria and Origen also use the word *βωμός*, but in a figurative sense, when they say that the soul of the faithful is the true Christian altar.

[Clem. Alex. *Strom.* vii. 31–32; Orig. *c. Cels.* viii. 17; for *τράπεζα* see Dionys. Alex. *Ep.*, *ap.* Eusebius, *HE* 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 *Disciplina Arcani* during this period sufficiently accounts for the reticence 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, deny also 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 positive evidence in disproof of any such statement (see Duchesne, *Christian Worship* [Eng. tr.], ch. xii.). The object of these writers, no doubt, was to differentiate between the pagan sacrifices and the 'unbloody 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*, c. x.; Arnobius, *adv. Gent.* vii. 8).

The word *madhbḥa* is employed by the Syrians, both Jacobites and Nestorians, *manershōoushi* by the Copts, and *khoran* by the Armenians, to designate the altar (see Brightman, *Lit.* i. 569).

(*b*) *LATIN.*—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. Castit.* ch. 10). Cyprian also frequently uses this term, and applies to it an exclusively Christian significance, contrasting '*aras* Diaboli' with '*altare* Dei' (*Ep.* 64 [65]); nevertheless, in one passage of his writings we find the phrase 'Diaboli altaria' (*Ep.* 59 [65]). *Altare* is also commonly used by Ambrose (e.g. *de Virgin.* ch. 18) and Augustine (e.g. *Sermo* 159, par. 1). The appellation *Mensa Domini* or *Mensa Dominica* is also employed by Augustine (*e.g. Sermo* 90, par. 5) and other Latin Fathers.

Ara, the Vulg. rendering of *βωμός*, is not applied to the Christian altar by any early ecclesiastical writer except Tertullian, who uses the phrase 'ara Dei' (*de Orat.* 14 [19]). The word *ara* is, however, used occasionally in inscriptions: *e.g.* in one generally supposed to be of Christian origin and of early date—ARAM DEO SANCTO ÆTERNO (*CIL*, vol. viii. n. 9704). Minucius Felix, in a well-known passage, writes: 'Delubra et aras non habemus' (*Oct.* ch. 32). Prudentius uses *ara* as the designation of the base of the altar: 'Altaris aram funditus pessumdare' (*περὶ Στεφάνων*, x. 49); and in

this usage he is followed by other writers. The plural *altaria* is sometimes used with the significance of a singular. The singular *altarium* is used sometimes by late writers for *altare*. *Altarium* 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.

Altaria occurs, *e.g.*, in Cæsarius of Arles, *Hom.* vii.: the elements to be consecrated '*sacris altaribus imponuntur.*' Possibly the plural is used in this way by Ambrose [*Ep.* 20, *ad Marcellinam*] in a passage which has been quoted to prove that his church contained more than one altar (see below, § 4). For *altarium*, cf. Council of Auxerre (A.D. 578), *can.* 10: Mass is not to be said more than once a day, '*super uno altario.*' For the use of *altarium* to designate the space around the altar, cf. Greg. Tur. (*Hist.* ii. 14), who speaks of a church having *fenestras in altario triginta duas*; cf. also Mone, *Messen*, p. 6.

2. Material and form of the altar.—Altars were constructed of wood, stone, or metal.

(1) *Altars 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 dwelling-houses adapted to the special requirements of Christian worship (see Duchesne, *op. cit.* ch. xii. p. 399 ff.), 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 frescoes 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, discovered in the cemetery of Calixtus, belongs to the latter half of the same century.

[Reproductions of both these frescoes will be found in vol. i. of *DACL*. The *Fractio Panis* is reproduced as Fig. 172, the fresco from the cemetery of Calixtus as Fig. 1123].

From both these frescoes it would appear that in very early times the Eucharist was consecrated 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 our purpose the only point which deserves attention is that these relics are of wood, thus evidencing the traditional belief that the earliest altars were of that material. A number of passages of an incidental character in the writings of both Greek and Latin Fathers give the ultimate confirmation of this view. Optatus, Augustine, and Athanasius all mention altars of wood.

[See Optat. *de Schism. Donatist.* vi. 1, where he says that the Donatists used the altars of the Catholics as firewood; also Aug. *Ep.* 185, par. 27, who states that the orthodox bishop Maximianus was beaten with the wood of the altar. Athanasius, *ad Monach.*, expressly states of the altar destroyed at Alexandria by the Count Heraclius, that it was of wood (ξυλίνη γὰρ ἦν); 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 for domestic purposes, from which they were gradually 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. Wulstan, bishop of Worcester (A.D. 1062–1095), 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 bar-Algari, at the end of the 9th century.

[See Council of Epaona, *can.* 26—the earliest decree on the subject; also Capitulary of Charlemagne (A.D. 769), c. 14 [Migne, *PL* xcvii. 124]. For England, William of Malmesbury, *de Gestis Pontif. Angl.*, who relates the demolition by St. Wulstan of '*altaria lignea jam inde a priscis diebus in Anglia.*' For France, see the anonymous author of the *Miracula S. Dionysii* quoted below, p. 341b, and the case of the altar of the monastery of St. Cornelius quoted by Dom Martène, *de Antiquis Ecclesiæ Ritibus*, i. p. 111. For Spain, Hardouin, *Concilia*, vi. a col. 1026. For the East, Assemani, *Biblioth. Orient.* iii. p. 288].

(2) *Altars of stone.*—It is certain that from a very early date stone altars were in use, and it is scarcely 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 slabs (*mensæ*) which covered the relics of martyrs and formed part of their tombs (*arcosolia*). That the celebration of the Eucharist in cemeteries was a custom of great antiquity is indisputable; it is expressly ordered in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, where (iv. 17) the faithful are commanded to assemble in the cemeteries for the reading of Scripture 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 Eucharistic sacrifice 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 mentioning that they have placed the relics 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. Polycarp.* c. 18). In the *Liber Pontificalis* it is stated of Pope Felix I. (A.D. 269–275): 'Hic constituit supra memorias (*al.* sepulcra) 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 here to enter into any discussion of the many disputed points arising from the investigation of these monuments. It is certain that not all the tombs (*arcosolia*) now existing were used for the celebration 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 Aleatoribus*, who writes: 'Martyribus præsentibus supra mensam Dominicam' (*CIL* i. pt. 3, p. 103); or of Augustine, who thus writes of the altar erected on the site of the martyrdom of Cyprian: 'Mensa Deo constructa est: et tamen mensa dicitur Cypriani . . . quia ipsa immolatione sua paravit hanc mensam, non in qua pascat sive pascatur, sed in qua sacrificium Deo, cui et ipse oblatus est, offeratur' (Aug. *Sermo* cccx. p. 2, in *Nat. Cyp.* 2). In this connexion may also be quoted the famous lines of Prudentius on the altar and tomb of the martyr Hippolytus:

'Talibus Hippolyti corpus mandatur opertis,
Propter ubi adposita est ara dicata Deo.

Illa sacramenti donatrix mensa eademque
Custos fida sui martyris adposita
Servat ad æterni spem iudicis ossa sepulcro,
Pascit item sanctis Tibricolas dapibus.'
(Prudent. περὶ Στεφάνων, xi. 169–174).

During the era of persecution, while the churches were for the most part in private houses, it was necessary for the faithful to betake themselves to the cemeteries and catacombs for the purpose of celebrating the Eucharist at the time of interment, 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 it. (See Duchesne, *op. cit.* p. 403, and *canon* 2 of Council of Celichyth [Chelsea] quoted there).

Two forms of stone altar appear to have existed in early times—the one square, resembling a table; the other oblong, and resembling a tomb. It appears, however, that from the 4th cent. onwards many forms were in use. We meet with several instances of the table form supported by one or more columns, and sometimes with a combination of tomb and table form. An instance of this latter is the altar of St. Alexander, consisting of a table-like structure, the *mensa* of porphyry supported on columns of marble, having a substructure, in the form of a tomb, containing the relics of the saint. Generally speaking, however, the altar was probably of the form of a cube, and in the East it has retained this form. The present oblong form, common in the West, dates from the period when it was customary to place relics of saints in a sarcophagus situated at right angles to the altar and immediately behind it, having its end looking westward and supported by the altar itself. (See § 3, and Ed. Bishop, *On the History of the Christian Altar*, p. 14 ff.).

[A very full description of large numbers of these altars will be found in the *DACL*. Much information will be found in the art. 'Autel,' but more detailed accounts are given under the names of the localities where the particular altars are preserved. See, *e.g.*, 'Auriol (Autel d'),' i. col. 3151 ff., with its representation of the famous one-legged stone altar preserved there. See also the bibliography at the end of the present article].

(3) *Altars of metal.*—The earliest notice of an altar of metal is probably to be found in Sozomen (*HE* ix. 1), who mentions the altar of gold presented to the Church of St. Sophia at Constantinople, by Pulcheria, daughter of Arcadius, in the early part of the 5th century. In the next century we have a very full account of the magnificent altar presented by Justinian to the new basilica of St. Sophia, constructed by him between the years 532 and 563. We are indebted for this description to Paul the Silentiary, who tells us that the Holy Table was of gold, adorned with precious stones, resting upon pillars of gold, and that it was surmounted by a dome or *ciborium*, supported by pillars of silver gilt, and terminating in a great cross of gold (Paul Silent., *Descript. St. Sophiæ*, ed. Bona, vv. 682 ff.). In the West also, at about the same date, we have mention of altars of precious metal; but it is not clear whether they were constructed of metal or of wood which was 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. 835. It is 7 ft. 3 in. in length, 4 ft. 1 in. in height, and the *mensa* is 4 ft. 4 in. wide. The front is of gold, the back and sides of silver, and it is decorated with panels containing subjects in relief and with enamel work. It is probably the most elaborate specimen of its kind which has survived.

[For a reproduction see *DACL*, fig. 1130; and for the extensive literature connected with this altar see the same work, vol. i. col. 3171, n. 8].

3. Site and accessories of the altar.—The earliest Christian churches were of the form of a basilica, and the altar was usually placed on the chord of the apse. Around the apse 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 steps of the altar, was constructed a small vault (*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* (κιβώριον). The *ciborium* was made of metal or stone, and richly ornamented. It served a double purpose. Firstly, being provided with curtains hung 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 6th century. A distinction must be made between the custom of the East and the West. In the West it had been, and for the most part is, customary to allow the altar to stand well in view of the people. In the East, at least from the 4th cent. onwards, the reverse has been the case. The *ciborium* with its veils is found in the West probably from about the 6th cent. 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 *ikonostasis*, 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 cloths 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 homily or pastoral charge, attributed 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 viaticum. 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 placed on the altar only during the celebration of the liturgy, but gradually it became customary to place them there permanently. Thus the cross,

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 all that 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 *Apostolic Constitutions*, bk. ii. c. 57. For the ancient custom with regard to relics, cf. St. Ambrose (*Ep.* xxii. 13): 'Ilie [Christus] super altare . . . isti [martyres] sub altari.' The homily attributed to Leo IV. is probably a document of Gallic origin, and is the ground-work of the address of the presiding bishop in the *Ordo ad Synodum* of the present Roman pontifical. It will be found in Migne, *PL* 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 παρεκκλησίαι, 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 Philad.* 4, cited above: σπουδάσατε οὖν μιᾷ εὐχαριστίᾳ . . . ἓν θυσιαστήριον ὡς εἷς ἐπίσκοπος . . . Eusebius mentions only one altar in his description of the great basilica at Tyre (*HE* x. 4). The passage from Augustine, sometimes quoted in this connexion, proves nothing. He speaks of the existence of two churches in one town (*civitas*) as a visible sign of the Donatist schism (*in Epist. Joh. ad Parthos*, Tract. iii. 5), but his words obviously refer to schismatic worship in general. Contrast St. Basil (*Hom.* xix.), who speaks of more than one altar in a single town. For Eastern custom, cf. Renaudot, *Lit. Orient. Collect.* i. pp. 164, 311, 477, 499; also G. M. Neale, *Introd. to the Hist. of the Holy Eastern Church*, p. 183].

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 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 *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 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 earlier than 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 time onward the evidence for the multiplication of altars in a single church is abundant.

[The passage from St. Ambrose, cited above, p. 339[a], is inconclusive: 'militis irruentis in altaria, osculis significare pacis insigne' (*Ep.* 20); cf. also St. Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* xxxi. par. 6. For later evidence see Greg. Tur. *de Gloria Martyrum*, i. 33; Bede (*HE* v. 20), who states that Acca, bishop of Hexham (deposed A.D. 732), having collected a number of relics of apostles and martyrs, exposed them for veneration, 'altaria, distinctis porticibus in hoc ipsum intra muros ejusdem ecclesiæ.' In the 9th cent. the plan of the church of St. Gall, in Switzerland, provided for the erection of seventeen altars. See also Council of Auxerre, *can.* 10, quoted above; Walafrid Strabo, *de Reb. Eccl.* c. xxi.; *Capitularia Regum Francorum*, ed. Baluze, i. 422].

5. Portable altars and 'antimensium.'—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. × 5$\frac{3}{4}$ in., and is made of wood covered with very thin silver. On the wood are found two crosses and part of an inscription, IN HONOR . . . S . . . PETRV. 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 altaris vice dedicatam'). The following description is given of the portable altar of St. Willebrord: 'Hoc altare Willebrordus in honore Domini Salvatoris consecravit, supra quod in itinere Missarum oblationes Deo offerre consuevit, in quo et continetur de ligno crucis Christi, et de sudore capitis ejus' (Brower, *Annal. Treviren.*, an. 718, p. 364). From this and other passages it would appear that portable altars contained also relics. Portable altars are designated *altaria portabilia, gestatoria, viatica*. Sometimes *ara* is used for a portable altar.

[It has been suggested that portable altars were in use in the time of St. Cyprian, but the passage quoted from his writings (*Ep.* iv. 2), in which he makes provision for celebration in the prison, is inconclusive. A portable altar is preserved at Rome in the church of St. Maria, in Campitelli, said to have belonged to St. Gregory of Nazianzus; but it is not regarded as authentic. We also find other portable altars mentioned at a fairly early date, as that of St. Wulfran (*circ.* 740), the apostle of Frisia (Surius, *Vitæ Sanctorum*, ii. 294) and of St. Boniface. Mention is also made of a wooden board, covered with a linen cloth, used by the monks of St. Denys, who accompanied Charlemagne in his campaign against the Saxons (*Miracc. St. Dionys.* i. 20; *Acta SS. OSB.*, ed. Paris, 1672, vol. iv. p. 350)].

In the East, in place of a portable altar, the *antimensium* (Gr. ἀντιμήνσιον, 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 Bona, *de Reb. Lit.* i. xx. 2 (end); Neale, *op. cit.* p. 186 f.; Goar, *Euchologia*, p. 648. See also Suicer, *Thesaurus, s.v.*, and the authorities there cited; also Renaudot, *op. cit.* i. 182].

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,—and 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 the later forms of dedication originated to a great extent in the ceremonial accompanying this *depositio* of the relics (*pignora*) 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 formulæ 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 cere-

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 all that 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 *Apostolic Constitutions*, bk. ii. c. 57. For the ancient custom with regard to relics, cf. St. Ambrose (*Ep.* xxii. 13): 'Ilie [Christus] super altare . . . isti [martyres] sub altari.' The homily attributed to Leo IV. is probably a document of Gallic origin, and is the ground-work of the address of the presiding bishop in the *Ordo ad Synodum* of the present Roman pontifical. It will be found in Migne, *PL* 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 παρεκκλησίαι, 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 Philad.* 4, cited above: σπουδάσατε οὖν μιᾷ εὐχαριστίᾳ . . . ἓν θυσιαστήριον ὡς εἷς ἐπίσκοπος . . . Eusebius mentions only one altar in his description of the great basilica at Tyre (*HE* x. 4). The passage from Augustine, sometimes quoted in this connexion, proves nothing. He speaks of the existence of two churches in one town (*civitas*) as a visible sign of the Donatist schism (*in Epist. Joh. ad Parthos*, Tract. iii. 5), but his words obviously refer to schismatic worship in general. Contrast St. Basil (*Hom.* xix.), who speaks of more than one altar in a single town. For Eastern custom, cf. Renaudot, *Lit. Orient. Collect.* i. pp. 164, 311, 477, 499; also G. M. Neale, *Introd. to the Hist. of the Holy Eastern Church*, p. 183].

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 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 *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 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 earlier than 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 time onward the evidence for the multiplication of altars in a single church is abundant.

[The passage from St. Ambrose, cited above, p. 339[a], is inconclusive: 'militis irruentis in altaria, osculis significare pacis insigne' (*Ep.* 20); cf. also St. Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* xxxi. par. 6. For later evidence see Greg. Tur. *de Gloria Martyrum*, i. 33; Bede (*HE* v. 20), who states that Acca, bishop of Hexham (deposed A.D. 732), having collected a number of relics of apostles and martyrs, exposed them for veneration, 'altaria, distinctis porticibus in hoc ipsum intra muros ejusdem ecclesiæ.' In the 9th cent. the plan of the church of St. Gall, in Switzerland, provided for the erection of seventeen altars. See also Council of Auxerre, *can.* 10, quoted above; Walafrid Strabo, *de Reb. Eccl.* c. xxi.; *Capitularia Regum Francorum*, ed. Baluze, i. 422].

5. Portable altars and 'antimensium.'—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. × 5⅜ in., and is made of wood covered with very thin silver. On the wood are found two crosses and part of an inscription, IN HONOR . . . S . . . PETRV. 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 altaris vice dedicatam'). The following description is given of the portable altar of St. Willebrord: 'Hoc altare Willebrordus in honore Domini Salvatoris consecravit, supra quod in itinere Missarum oblationes Deo offerre consuevit, in quo et continetur de ligno crucis Christi, et de sudore capitis ejus' (Brower, *Annal. Treviren.*, an. 718, p. 364). From this and other passages it would appear that portable altars contained also relics. Portable altars are designated *altaria portabilia, gestatoria, viatica*. Sometimes *ara* is used for a portable altar.

[It has been suggested that portable altars were in use in the time of St. Cyprian, but the passage quoted from his writings (*Ep.* iv. 2), in which he makes provision for celebration in the prison, is inconclusive. A portable altar is preserved at Rome in the church of St. Maria, in Campitelli, said to have belonged to St. Gregory of Nazianzus; but it is not regarded as authentic. We also find other portable altars mentioned at a fairly early date, as that of St. Wulfran (*circ.* 740), the apostle of Frisia (Surius, *Vitæ Sanctorum*, ii. 294) and of St. Boniface. Mention is also made of a wooden board, covered with a linen cloth, used by the monks of St. Denys, who accompanied Charlemagne in his campaign against the Saxons (*Miracc. St. Dionys.* i. 20; *Acta SS. OSB.*, ed. Paris, 1672, vol. iv. p. 350)].

In the East, in place of a portable altar, the *antimensium* (Gr. ἀντιμήνσιον, 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 Bona, *de Reb. Lit.* i. xx. 2 (end); Neale, *op. cit.* p. 186 f.; Goar, *Euchologia*, p. 648. See also Suicer, *Thesaurus, s.v.*, and the authorities there cited; also Renaudot, *op. cit.* i. 182].

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,—and 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 the later forms of dedication originated to a great extent in the ceremonial accompanying this *depositio* of the relics (*pignora*) 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 formulæ 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 cere-

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 *Exultabunt 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. 399 ff. (cf. the letter from Pope Vigilius to Profuturus of Braga cited on p. 97). The earliest *Ordines* of consecration are: (1) that published by F. Bianchini, *Anastas. Bibliothec.* iii. p. xlviii; and (2) the *Ordo of S. Amand*, published by Duchesne, *op. cit.* p. 478; cf. also the Gelasian *Sacramenta Muratori*, i. p. 635; see also *Monumenta Liturg.* Ambr. vol. i.; and for the Eastern rites, Goar, *Eucholog.* p. 832].

LITERATURE.—D. Bartolini, *Sopra l'antichissimo altare de legno rinchiuso nell' altare papale della sagrosanta arcibasilica lataranese*, Rome, 1852; E. Bishop, 'On the History of the Christian Altar' in *Downside Review*, n. 71, July 1905 (privately reprinted); J. Blackburne, *A brief Historical Enquiry into the Introduction of Stone Altars into the Christian Church*, Cambridge, 1844; Cardinal Bona, *de Reb. Liturg. Ant.* 1677; J. Corblet, *Hist. dogmat. liturg. et archéol. du Sacrament de l'Eucharistie*, Paris, 1886, ii. pp. 59–220; J. B. de Rossi, *Roma Sotterranea*, Paris, 1877, iii. pp. 488–495; L. Duchesne, *Christian Worship: its Origin and Evolution* [Eng. tr.], London, 1903; J. A. Fabricius, *de Aris veterum Christianorum*, Helmstadt, 1697; A. Heales, *The Archæology of the Christian Altar*, London, 1881; Fr. Laib and F. G. Schwarz, *Studien über Gesch. des Christl. Altars*, Stuttgart, 1858; J. Mede, 'On the name Altar, anciently given to the Holy Table,' *Works*, London, 1864, ii. 486–500; F. Probst, *Liturgie der drei ersten Christl. Jahrhunderte*, Tübingen, 1870; W. E. Scudamore, *Notitia Eucharistica*, 1876; J. B. Thiers, *Dissertation sur les principaux autels, la clôture du chœur et les jubés des églises*, Paris, 1655; F. E. Warren, *The Liturgy and Ritual of the Ante-Nicene Church*, London, 1897.

H. LEONARD PASS.

ALTAR (Egyptian).—According to the sculptures, offerings were laid on mats or stands. A common form of the latter was a pillar-shaped upright of wood or stone, on which a bowl, censer, 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-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 mats. At el-Amarna the stands of provisions to which the sun-god Aton stretches his radiating hands are often surmounted 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 banquets 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 *khêwi*, '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 offerer 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 *khêwi* 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 *uthe*, this name being equally applied to those used at banquets.

In early tombs a flat slab for offerings, commonly called a 'table of offerings,' was placed before the niche containing a statue of the deceased, or in some other place corresponding. The table was oblong, with a projection like a spout in front. It was generally sculptured with  , a loaf upon a mat, and often with a number of offerings in detail. The special name for this type was probably *hotep*. Such tables are also found in the ruins of temples, where they may have been placed for the service of the dedicator'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 Abusir (Borchardt, *Das Re-Heiligthum 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 ground. 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; beside 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 Tethmosis III., is a great oblong rectangular altar or altar-base of white felspar, bearing the name of Rameses III. (Dyn. xx.), having each side shaped as a *hotep*. Tethmosis 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 Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari (Naville, *Deir el-Bahari*, i Pl. 8; see also plan of temple in *Archæological Report*, 1894–95, or in Baedeker's *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 *khêwi* in the inscription, like the stands of offering. Another raised altar is at Karnak, dedicated by Tethmosis III.; and a third is stated to be in the largest temple of Gebel Barkal, dating from the early Ethiopian 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 el-Amarna show the chief altars of Aton to have been of this form (Lepsius, *Denkmäler* iii. 96, 102; Davies, *El Amarna*, i. Pl. 12, 25, 27–28, ii. Pl. 18, iii. Pl. 8, 10). It seems as if the sun-gods in particular (Re, Aton, 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 βωμός as an altar for the Olympian gods and ἐσχάρα for offerings to heroes, though laid down by Pollux (i. 8) and others, is not strictly observed by classical authors. And, on the other hand, a portable altar, such as was often used for incense or minor 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 woollen fillets, and otherwise treated in much the same way as altars. This fact has led some writers to assert that an altar was sometimes regarded not merely as the symbol of the god, but as having him immanent 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 have been sometimes so thought of when religious thought had advanced to less crude conceptions of the deities.

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 (*αὐτοσχεδία ἐσχάρα*, Paus. v. 13. 5); and a similar primitive form, 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 of Hera at Samos. This, however, implies the repetition of sacrifices at the same place; the selection of such places was due to various causes. These may best be classified, according to Hermann's well-known division, as natural, social, and historical; but before we examine instances of these three classes, it is necessary to consider the relation of the altar to other objects connected with worship, especially the precinct, the image, and the temple.

The normal equipment of a sacred place in Greece consisted of a *temple*, an *altar*, and a *precinct*. In later times the temple was the most conspicuous and the most important, and usually contained the image of the god; but even then the altar was the essential thing for ritual purposes. If possible, it was placed in front of the temple, and in its main axis; but so that the person sacrificing faced east, with his back to the temple. Examples of this are numerous; *e.g.* the altars in front of the temples of Aphæa at Ægina, of Apollo at Delphi, and of Aphrodite at Naucratis. Often, however, it was difficult or inconvenient to place the altar in this position, and it was placed elsewhere in the neighbourhood, as in the case of the altar of Zeus at Olympia, and of Athene on the Acropolis at Athens. In addition to the main altar, there might be others in the precinct, whether dedicated to the same god as the main altar or to other deities. An extreme case is offered by Olympia, where as many as 69 other altars are recorded as existing in the sacred *Altis* of Zeus. There was usually, in all probability, a small altar for incense and small offerings within the temple; traces of such altars have rarely been found (an example is in the temple of Sarapis on Delos [*BCH* vi. 299]); but they may often have been small portable ones.

It must always be borne in mind in this connexion that a temple in Greece was not usually intended for the performance of services or ritual acts, much less for congregational use; it served chiefly to house the image of the god and his most precious offerings. Assemblies and services, including sacrifices of all kinds, took place for the most part outside, around the altar which was their real centre; provision was sometimes made close to the altar for the accommodation of worshippers or spectators. Thus at Oropus there are curved steps above the altar in the Amphiaræum, and at Olympia there was accommodation for spectators near the great altar of Zeus. Round the altar of Artemis Orthia at Sparta, where the ceremonial flogging of the Spartan youths took place, a regular amphitheatre was erected in Roman times. An earlier and more important example of the association of an altar with the provision of accommodation for spectators is the *θυμέλη* placed in the orchestra of the theatre. Here the altar was the original centre round which were placed first provisional seats, and afterwards the great buildings which we find as theatres on numerous Greek sites. At Priene, where alone the *thymele* is still extant, it is placed on the side of the orchestra farthest from the stage.

Altars were, however, not always associated with temples. An altar might be set up on any sacred spot, with or without a precinct of some sort around it; and altars were also connected with the life of men, especially in domestic and civil surroundings. It was usual to have an altar of Zeus Ἑρκεῖος, the protector of the enclosure, in the courtyard of every house; traces of such an altar are found even in the palace at Tiryns. Here it was usual for the head of the house to offer sacrifice, especially on festival days. In addition to this there was the *hestia* or hearth, usually circular, and sacred to the goddess of the same name. Such a hearth is usually found in the hall of palaces of the Mycenæan age: its position in the house of historical times is doubtful. We should expect to find it in the *pastas* or open recess opposite the entrance, according to Galen's description of the primitive house; but some suppose it to have been placed in the *ἀνδρών* or dining-room. The hearth was the centre of domestic life, and it was accordingly sought by a suppliant who claimed the right of hospitality; at a wedding, fire from it was carried to the *hestia* in the new home by the bride's mother, thus ensuring the continuity of the domestic worship. The hearth of the royal palace was the centre of the worship and hospitality of the State in monarchical times. It was natural that, with the growth of democratic feeling, this should be transferred to the hearth of the State as the focus of civic life; such a hearth, itself usually circular, was often enclosed 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 Prytanes at Athens regularly offered sacrifice there. On the sacred hearth in the Prytaneum at Olympia 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 preceded 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 mountain-tops 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 Καταιβάτης where lightning had struck, and others in commemoration of extraordinary phenomena; *e.g.* the altar to Phosphorus—perhaps an epithet of Artemis—dedicated by Thrasybulus in honour of the miraculous light that led his adventurous band from Phyle to Munychia. Examples of altars which owe their 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 market-place (ἀγοραῖοι θεοί) we sometimes find altars of more abstract ethical significance, such as the altars of ἔλεος (pity) and of αἰδώς (sense 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 Eleutherius at Platæa 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 'taurobolic' 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 Pergamus. 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 Prytaneum, had a circumference, on its lower platform, of 125 ft., and of 32 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 (κεράτινος βωμός). 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 Athene 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 80 or 90 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 orators 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. Small altars might be either round or rectangular; there does not seem to be any ritual distinction between the two, except that the hearth (ἑστία) was usually circular; and so, perhaps, were the low altars suitable to heroes, and called by later authorities ἐσχάραι; but rectangular altars to heroes were not unusual, *e.g.* that in the Heroum at Olympia.

When 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 (πρόθυσις) 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 victims 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 hecatombs, were necessarily of very large size. 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 Athene at Athens, have already been mentioned; another example, of medium size, is an altar near the theatre at Megalopolis, which measures about 36 ft. by 6 ft. 6 inches.

Where stone was not readily available, an altar might be constructed of other materials; thus at Naucratis the altar, with its steps and *prothysis*, 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 on the top. As a rule, extant small altars are flat on the top. Sometimes they are hollowed into basins, as if to hold libations or drink-offerings; occasionally we find a drain to let the liquid run away, as in the altar found at Paphos (*JHS* ix. 239). Sometimes an altar had the form of a table supported upon stone legs. A good early example of this type was found in the early Dionysion west of the Acropolis at Athens. The Bœotians used to build an altar of wood on the summit of Mount Cithæron, and to let it be consumed together with the sacrifice.

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 Megalopolis. Often in later times the decoration of an altar, in architecture and sculpture, became more elaborate. The altar of Athene 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 Praxiteles. The great altar of Asklepios at Cos was an elaborate structure; but the chief example of this kind was the great altar of Zeus at Pergamus. This consisted of a great basis, about 100 ft. square, ornamented with the well-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 this space was the altar proper, consisting of 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 *Tholos* or *Thymele* (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 ἡρῶος or ἡρώων painted on its stucco face in the Heroum at Olympia. The chief altar attached to a temple or precinct 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 Chians, and a smaller inscription on its corner adds that the Chians received the privilege

of προμαντεία 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 required also on altars in public places; *e.g.* the inscribed altar in the Dipylon gateway at Athens, dedicated to Zeus Herkeios, Hermes, and Acamas. Where the object 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 stela 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 (*σύμβωμοι, ὁμοβώμιοι θεοί*). 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 (Ac 17^{23}) 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 by Pindar in *Ol.* v. 12 (see Schol. *ad loc.*). In Athens, Poseidon and Erechtheus shared a common altar in the Erechtheum, and in the Amphiaræum at Oropus the altar has been enlarged so as to accommodate several deities (Πρακτικὰ Ἀρχ. Ἑτ. 1804, 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 *hestia* 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 note that when Cylon's followers 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.

LITERATURE.—See end of art. ALTAR (Roman).

ERNEST A. GARDNER.

ALTAR (Hindu).—Altars, or raised platforms, play an important part in the Hindu ceremonial. The Sanskrit for a Hindu altar is *vedi*, which is defined as 'an altar or raised place made of Kuśa grass, or strewed with it, and prepared for an oblation, for placing the vessels used at a sacrifice, a place or ground prepared for sacrifice' (Monier Williams, *s.v.*). The original *vedi* 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 Agnyādhāna, 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 Gārhapatya and the Āhavanīya fires respectively. A circle was marked for the Gārhapatya fire, and a square for the Āhavanīya fire; a semicircular area for the Dakṣināgni or southern fire, if that also was required. The *adhvaryu* or officiating priest then procured a temporary fire, either producing it by friction, or obtaining it from the village, and, after the usual fivefold lustration of the Gārhapatya fireplace, he laid down the fire thereon, and in the evening handed two pieces of wood, called *araṇi*, to the sacrificer and his wife, for the purpose of producing by attrition the Āhavanīya fire the next morning.

There were different *vedis* for different kinds of offering, as, *e.g.*, the large Soma altar (*mahāvedi*) and the *pāśuki vedi*, used for animal sacrifice, which resembled the *uttarā vedi*, or 'northern altar'; the latter was an altar raised with earth excavated in forming what is called a *chātvāla*, or hole. The Śatapatha 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 Śulbasūtras, which form part of the ancient Śrautasūtras, and give the measurements necessary for the construction of the altars. The different shapes in which brick altars might be constructed are mentioned as early as in the Taittiriya Saṁhitā. Thus there is a falcon-shaped altar built of square bricks, or an altar of the shape of a falcon with curved wings and outspread tail; a heron-shaped altar with two feet; one of the shape of the forepart of the poles of a chariot, an equilateral 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 *puruṣas*, the term *puruṣa* 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 these operations was the compilation of a series of geometrical rules which are contained in the above-mentioned Śulbasūtras.

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 Śulbasūtras, and their close connexion with the ancient sacrificial rites of the Brāhmans, 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 *vedi* made of earth or clay, on which an open fire for oblations of butter had been kindled, at the consecration of a public tank near Calcutta. Hindu altars are also erected at some of the Saṁskāras or family celebrations of the Brāhmans. Thus among the Deshasth Brāhmans 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 kindles 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 bridegroom 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 kindles 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 Deshasth Brāhmans of Bijāpur, boys on their initiation are led to an altar called *bahule*, where the priest girds them with the sacred thread, to which a small piece of deerskin is tied.

LITERATURE.—Eggeling's transl. of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa in *SBE*, vols. xii. xxvi. (1882, 1886, with plan of sacrificial ground with *vedi*); R. C. Dutt, *History of Civilization in Ancient India*, 3 vols., Calcutta, 1889–1890; J. Thibaut, 'On the Śulvasūtras' in *JRASBe*, vol. xliv., 'Astronomie, Astrologie, und Mathematik' in *GIAP*, Strassburg, 1899; A. Hillebrandt, 'Ritual]itteratur,' *ib.*, Strassburg, 1897; A. Bürk, 'Das Āpastamba-Śulba-Sūtra' in *ZDMG*, vols. lv. lvi., 1901, 1902; *BG*, vol. xxii. Dharwar, and vol. xxiii. Bijāpur; Monier Williams, *Brāhmanism and Hinduism*[4], London, 1891, p. 308.

J. JOLLY.

ALTAR (Japanese).—In Japan little distinction is made between the table and the altar. No special sanctity attaches to the latter. In Buddhist temples there is a stand on which incense is burnt, called *kōdan* or *kōdzukuye* ('incense-table'). Shinto offerings are placed on small tables of unpainted wood. The old ritual prescribed that in the case of Greater Shrines the offerings 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 (*butsudan*)—a miniature cupboard or shelf where an image of a Buddha is deposited, or a Shinto altar (*kamidana*) 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 inscriptional, 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 Inscriptions 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 Achæmenians, in the representation of the altar itself in bas-relief over the entrance of the tomb of Darius Hystaspis on the rocks at Naksh 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.‡ Herodotus, claiming to speak from personal observation and research, states (i. 131 ff.) that the Persians 'think it unlawful to build temples or altars, imputing folly to those who do so.' Therefore, 'when about to sacrifice, they neither erect altars nor kindle fire.' Strabo (born *c.* 60 B.C.), writing some four hundred and fifty years later, reiterates (xv. iii. 13) the testimony of Herodotus, though, in regard to the phenomena of his own time, he afterwards modifies 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 and under the shadow of the sculptured statue 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 5th 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 is presented for the acceptance of the deity; for while it lies there, the *Magus*, we are told, performs the religious service (cf., in some respects, the use of the altar of peace-offering amongst the Hebrews).

The same custom was observed in the cult of certain Persian divinities even in Strabo's time. 'They sacrifice to water by going to a lake, river, or fountain; having dug a trench, they slaughter the victim over it . . .; then they lay the flesh in order upon myrtle or laurel branches' (*loc. cit.* § 14). Here we meet with an Iranian substitute for the Greek *βωμός*, or raised altar for immolating the victim, namely, the *trench*, which, indeed, is highly suggestive of the antiquity of the method of sacrificing 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 *vedi* of the Vedic ritual.*

There is another fact in connexion 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.† Remembering this and the fact that the chief god of the Persians was a sky-god, do we not here perceive 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 Zoroastrians saw the altars which their God had provided, 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 Naksh i Rustam does not represent a sacrificial altar, or indicate any substitute whatsoever for the Greek *βωμός*, 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

* The *dāitya gātu* of the Avesta (*Vendīdād*, viii. 81, 85; xiii. 17) forms no real exception; for, etymologically, it means no more than 'legal or consecrated place,' and is synonymous rather with *temple* than with *altar*. See, however, Jackson, *Grundr. iran. Phil.*, ii. 701; *Persia, Past and Present*, p. 303, by the same author.

† See Dieulafoy, *L'Acropole de Suse*, p. 292.

‡ See art. TEMPLES.

* See 'Das Āpastamba-Śulba-Sūtra: Übersetzung von Bürk; Die altindischen Altäre und das geometrische Wissen welches ihre Konstruktion voraussetzt,' *ZDMG*, vol. lv. p. 543 ff., vol. lvi. p. 327 ff.

† Compare the use of 'high places' (*bāmōth*) amongst the Hebrews (1 K 3[4], 2 K 17[11]. See also Gn 22[14]).

symbol and truest 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 *Agni*-cult amongst the Indians as well as the Iranians shows conclusively that it was part of that common heritage which the Indo-Iranian period bequeathed to them. And the reform of Zoroaster had, 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 Achæmenian 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 very naturally be regarded as the prototype of what is now so well known as the *Ādōsht*;‖ (*c*) crowning all, the sacred urn, now called the *Ātash-dān*, the 'fire-container,' wherein the divine and eternal fire burned.

Even in those early days, probably, just as in the time of Strabo ¶ and Pausanias ** (*c.* 180 A.D.), and in modern Fire-temples, this sacred vessel was full to its utmost capacity with the ashes of preceding days, and upon these the sacred flame was kept burning day and night with incense and sandal-wood.

Moreover, from the days of Cyrus onwards the divine fire burned, not only in the sacred vase concealed in the seclusion of the *Ātash-gāh*, 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 (*Cyrop.* VIII. iii. 11–13), tells us that 'after the third chariot men followed carrying fire on a large altar' (*ἐπ' ἐσχάρας μεγάλης*).

In what respect, if at all, the *ἐσχάρα* differed in form from the altar of the *Ātash-gāh*, we are unable to say. The word *ἐσχάρα*, which Xenophon employs, is variously translated in passages where it occurs as 'hearth,' 'unraised altar,' 'brasier.' One would scarcely think that this portable altar would include the massive support which seems to have characterized the temple altar * (but see on Sasanian altars, below, § 2).

Sebēos (wrote *c.* 650–675 A.D.) states that the portable altar was less elaborate than that in use in the *Ātash-gāh*.* Quintus Curtius (*c.* 64 A.D.), however, asserts that these royal altars were made of silver.† The latter statement may refer only to the *Ātash-dān*. Tabari, the Arabic historian (*b.* 839 A.D.), relates how Yazdijird III., the last of the Sasanian kings, carefully deported 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–A.D. 226). 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 *Ātash-dān*, having as support the lower part of the Fire-temple or *Ātash-gāh*; that is, it is only a convention. Still they serve sufficiently to show that in its main element, the *Ātash-dān*, the Fire-altar of the Achæmenians 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 was during this period§ that the sacred places on the high mountains, under the influence of foreign cults, gave room to temples, in the classical sense (*ἱερόν*), and consequently there arose the accompanying altar (*βωμός*) for animal 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 orthodox Zoroastrianism, and a recrudescence of ancient cults (cf. J. H. Moulton, *Thinker*, 1892, vol. ii. pp. 498–499). 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 used in Zoroastrian ritual, namely, the Fire-altar of the *Ātash-gāh*, and the sacrificial altar attached to the temples erected to specific Persian divinities.

Was there not yet another altar in use at this period? Certain statements in the terse 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

* See von Ferdinand Justi, 'Die älteste iranische Religion und ihr Stifter Zarathustra' in *Preussische Jahrbücher*, vol. lxxxviii. pp. 84, 85, 86. Also, Shahrastani, ed. Haarbrücker, Halle, 1850, i. pp. 281, 298; and Gottheil, 'References to Zoroaster in Syriac and Arabic Literature' in *Classical Studies in Honour of Henry Drisler*, pp. 44–47.

† See Jackson, *Zoroaster, the Prophet of Ancient Iran*, pp. 98–100.

‡ See Dieulafoy, *L'Acropole de Suse*, p. 392, n. 1.

§ There is no reason to think that the two large rock Fire-altars hewn out of the rock at Naksh i Rustam were typical of those in use in the regular worship at any period in the history of the Zoroastrian religion. (See Jackson, *Persia, Past and Present*, p. 303, and illustration, p. 305).

‖ 'Ādōsht, Pehlevi ātishto (Dādistān 48. 15), probablement formé de *ātar-sta*, "où se tient le feu"' (Darmesteter, *Le Zend Avesta*, vol. i. p. lxi, note 3).

¶ 'In the middle of these (the fire-temples) is an altar, on which is a great quantity of ashes' (Strabo, *loc. cit.* § 15).

** 'In the temples of the Persians there is a room where ashes of a colour other than that of ordinary ashes are found. . . . He puts dry wood upon the altar . . . the wood is to be ignited on the ashes without fire' (Pausanias, v. 27. 5).

†† Dieulafoy, *L'Acropole de Suse*, p. 399; Tiele, *Geschiedenis van den Godsdienst in den Oudheid*, Deel ii. 2de Stuk, pp. 363–4, Amsterdam, 1901.

* 'Outre les somptueux pyrées construits dans les villes, il existait encore des pyrées ambulants pour lesquels on disposait une tente spéciale, et le roi n'entrait jamais en campagne autrement qu'accompagné de mages et de pyrées' (*Journal Asiatique*, 1866, p. 113 [Sebēos, p. 50]). For a somewhat different version of this passage, see Dr. Heinrich Hübschmann, *Zur Geschichte Armeniens und der ersten Kriege der Araber* (*aus dem Armenischen des Sebēos*), Leipzig, 1873, p. 7, n. 1.

† 'Ordo autem agminis erat talis. Ignis, quem ipsi sacrum et æternum vocabant, argenteis altaribus præferebatur. Magi proximi patrium carmen canebant' (iii. 3, 9 *f.*).

‡ These coins were not part of the national issues, but belonged, probably, to the semi-independent kings of Persis—Persia in the narrower sense. See *Numismata Orientalia*, 'Parthian Coinage,' by Percy Gardner, p. 20; *Num. Chron.* vol. vii. pp. 237, 242, 244; and especially Justi, *Grundr. iran. Phil.* ii. pp. 486–87; *Corolla Numismatica*, Oxford, 1906, *Étude sur la Numismatique de la Perside*, pp. 63–97, Pl. iii. by Allotte de la Füye; Dorn, *Collection des monnaies sassanides de feu le lieutenant-général J. de Bartholomæi*, St. Petersburg, 1873, *passim*.

§ See Dieulafoy, *L'Art Antique de la Perse*, pt. v. 7–8, 10–11, 207.

‖ See Jackson, *Persia, Past and Present*, pp. 236–242.

divinities were separate and distinct from the Fire-temples or *Ātash-gāhs* (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 *Ātash-gāh*, but a fire on some kind of altar or brasier present at the place of sacrifice (§ 14). This fire would naturally be of an inferior grade to that used in the *Ātash-gāh*, and consequently it is quite conceivable that it may have served both for boiling the flesh* and for representing the fire of the *Ātash-gāh* 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 *Izashnah-Gāh*, or place where the religious rites are performed.

2. On Sasanian 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 rest upon what were probably intended for handles wherewith 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 *Ātash-gāh*. However, in 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 *Ādōsht*, which, in turn, supports the *Ātash-dān*.‡

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

The *dāitya-gātu* was no doubt more extensive than a mere shrine for the *Ātash-dān* 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 *Izashnah-Gāh* (as witness of this, see the elaborate ritual of Avesta, *Vend.* v. 39, etc.). These are the two classes of altars in use among the Zoroastrians of Persia and the Parsīs of India at the present day.

3. Modern Fire-altars, while always retaining the two most essential out of the three parts of which Sasanian and, probably, as we have seen, earlier altars consisted, namely, the *Ādōsht* and the *Ātash-dān*, vary somewhat in the form of the latter from those found on the coins and sculptures.

The *Ātash-dāns* seen by Anquetil du Perron at Surat (see *Zend Avesta*, ii. pl. x.; Darmesteter, *Le Zend Avesta*, i. pl. iii.), consisted of large round vases of metal, much like our garden flower-vases, with a foot 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 *Ādōsht*, about six inches in height. The size and degree of elaboration which characterize the *Ātash-dān* depend in the first place upon the wealth of the community worshipping 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 *Ātash i Ādarān*, the fire of the second grade, or only that used in the *Izashnah-khānah*.

The larger of the two fire-altars which Anquetil saw was that of an *Ātash i Ādarān*, placed, of course, in the *Ātash-gāh*; the smaller one was that in use in the *Izashnah-Gāh*. 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 *Ātash-gāh* (Darmesteter, *Le Zend Avesta*, i. p. lxiii). In front of this altar the priestly rites and religious ceremonies are performed (see SACRIFICE and 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 *dādgāhs*, or small chapels, which have no *Ātash-gāh* attached.

Unlike the sacred fire on the altars of the *Ātash-gāhs*, 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 also in all pious and orthodox Zoroastrian homes (see Dieulafoy, *L'Acropole de Suse*, Pl. xvi.).

LITERATURE.—The principal works have already been referred to in the body of the article. Dieulafoy's *L'Acropole de Suse*, p. 350 ff. (Paris, 1890–92), is the only work which treats, with anything like fulness, of *ancient* as well as *modern altars*. Scattered references in Greek and Roman authors have been collected and translated by (1) Wilson, *Parsi Religion*, p. 182 ff., Bombay, 1843; (2) Haug, *Essays on the Sacred Language . . . and Religion of the Parsis*, p. 7 ff., London, 1884. These two works contain other relevant matter. On *modern altars*, see Anquetil du Perron, *Zend Avesta, Ouvrage de Zoroastre*, vol. ii. pp. 531, 568–71, Pl. x., Paris, 1771; C. de Harlez, *Avesta, Livre Sacré des Sectateurs de Zoroastre*, vol. ii. p. 10 ff.; Darmesteter, *Le Zend Avesta*, vol. i. p. lix-lxiii, Pl. ii.-iv., vi., Paris, 1892. E. EDWARDS.

ALTAR (Polynesian). — The Polynesian altar, or *fata*, 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 *marœ*, or temple (Moerenhout, *Voyages aux îles du Grand Océan*, Paris, 1837, i. 470–471); while in Hawaii, where the pyramidal *marœ* was replaced by the *heiau*, the figure of the god was put in the inner apartment to the left of the door, with the altar immediately in front of it (Ellis, *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, *Troisième Voyage*, Paris, 1785, ii. 152–153, 350, iii. 388): 'Domestic altars, or those erected 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 rich yellow plantain leaves. Beside 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 carcase of the hog presented 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 *fata aiai*. Offerings and sacrifices of every kind, whether dressed or not, were placed upon the altar, and remained there till decomposed.' A Tahitian altar is described and pictured by Wilson (*Missionary Voyage to the Southern*

* See Rawlinson, *Five Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World*, vol. iii. p. 359, London, 1871.

† See *Num. Chron.*, New Series, vol. xii. 'Sasanian Coins,' Pl. i.

‡ See *Num. Chron.* vol. xii. pl. ii.–v, and, in general, Dorn, *op. cit.*

Pacific Ocean, London, 1799, p. 211) as being forty feet long and seven wide, and resting on sixteen wooden pillars eight feet in height. It was covered with thick matting which hung down the side in fringes, and on it was a rotting pile of hogs, turtles, fish, plantains, coconuts, and other offerings. Since the Polynesians had no burnt-offerings, and since the sacrifices to the gods were, of course, *tabu*, this unsavoury procedure was unavoidable. In Tahiti, the victim was usually dead when placed on the *fata*, and there were also stone altars on which the heads of human victims were placed. The type of altars here described did not differ materially from the class represented by the Hawaiian *rere*, on which human victims were laid face downward, covered with sacrifices of sacred pig, and left to decay (Ellis, iv. 162).

The same distinction which prevails among the Melanesians (wh. see), is found in the Polynesian altars, which include not only the *fata* here described, but also the *fata tupapau*, or altar for the dead, which was six or seven feet in height, and received a corpse immediately after death. This *fata tupapau* was covered by a cloth which protected the dead body from the elements (Moerenhout, i. 470–471, 547); to the corpse food was offered daily for six weeks or two months. This covering is also extended in the Marquesas, where altars to the *tikis* and spirits of the dead are frequent along the roads and by the houses (Waitz-Gerland, *Anthropologie der Naturvölker*, vi. 387, Leipzig, 1872; cf. Cook, ii. 301), to the small *marœ* (Seraut in *L'Anthropologie*, xvi. 475–484). At the *maui fata*, or altar raising, the altar was decorated with mero branches and coconut leaves, while the offerings were pigs, plantains, and the like, but not human sacrifices (Ellis, i. 349).

LITERATURE.—Waitz-Gerland, *Anthropologie der Naturvölker*, vi. 378, 384, 387–388 (Leipzig, 1872).

LOUIS H. GRAY.

ALTAR (Roman).—Much of what has been said about altars in Greek religion applies to Roman religion also, especially in the case of customs or rituals borrowed from Greece. Indeed, most treatises or articles do not make any distinction between the two. Here only those cases will be mentioned as to which we have independent evidence for Roman practice, or in which Roman practice differed from Greek.

1. As to *names*, Varro (as quoted by Servius, *Æn.* ii. 535) asserts: 'Diis superis altaria, terrestribus aras, inferis focos dicari.' But this distinction, like that between *βωμός* and *ἐσχάρα* in Greek, is by no means universally observed by Latin writers, though there seems to be a general impression, in accordance with the etymology, that *altaria* are usually higher structures than *arœ*. Lofty altars were thought suitable to Jupiter and the gods of heaven, low ones to Vesta and Earth. Natural or improvised altars, especially those built of turf, are familiar in Latin literature (*e.g.* Horace, *Od.* III. viii. 3–4: 'Positusque carbo in cæspite vivo'). Such altars were set up all over the country, especially in connexion with sacred groves or trees; but they tended, as Greek influence spread, to be superseded by altars of stone or marble. Some of the earliest and most sacred altars in Rome seem not to have been attached to any particular temple; among these were the *ara maxima*, sacred to Hercules, and the mysterious subterranean altar of Consus, which was uncovered only once or twice in the year during festivals.

2. When altars are associated with temples, their *position* varies. Vitruvius (IV. viii.) states that altars ought to face east, and should be placed on a lower level than the images of the gods in the temple, in order that the worshippers may look up to them. The orientation of temples being much more varied in Italy than in Greece, that of the altar varies also. Roman temples are usually 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 part of the way up. The sacrificer appears, 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 Bosco Reale. In Pompeiian houses the hearth has been transferred, for practical purposes, from the atrium to the kitchen; and that its religious functions accompanied it is shown by the fact that here also a shrine or painted figures of the domestic 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 *lares* and *penates*, 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 contained it. Small altars were commonly placed in the streets, usually with a niche, or at least a painting on the wall behind, to indicate the gods to whom the altar was dedicated—sometimes the *lares compitales* or street gods, sometimes other deities.

5. As regards the *form* of altars in early Italian religion, we have not much information. The Ara Volcani, discovered in the recent excavations of 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 underneath the famous black stone was a rectangular block, which was probably an altar. Roman altars were probably influenced in form considerably by Etruscan custom, which seems, from vase paintings and other evidence, to have favoured 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 Augustæ, which was surrounded by

reliefs with allegorized and ceremonial scenes, and is perhaps the most characteristic example of the sculpture 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. Smaller *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 the *gartibulum* or marble table, frequently found behind the impluvium in the atrium of Pompeiian 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 its 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.

'Between the tablinum and the open part of the atrium stood an ornamental stone table, the only reminder of the sacred hearth. It is a very striking fact that this is precisely the position of the holy table in the basilica; when we take into account the similarity of many of these tables with the most ancient [Christian] altars, we can hardly fail to admit a close relation between them' (Lowry, *Christian Art and Archæology*, London, 1901, p. 100).

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' (*Æn.* 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 Daremberg-Saglio, *Dict. des Antiquités, s.v.* 'Ara.' For Pompeiian altars see Mau, *Pompeii*, 1899; for the decoration of Roman altars, Mrs. Strong, *Roman Sculpture*, 1907. See also the Handbooks of Antiquities, such as Hermann, *Lehrbuch*, ii. 'Gottesdienstliche Alterthümer'; Iwan Müller, *Handb. der klass. Altertumswissenschaft*, v. 3 'Griech. Sakralaltertümer' (Stengel, pp. 10–15), v. 4 'Religion und Cultus der Römer (Wissowa), and indexes of these works. See also A. de Molin, *De Ara apud Græcos* (Berlin, 1884).

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 beyond its borders. Both in Arabia and in Palestine trees are found hung with the relics of such offerings.* Gifts were thrown into the Zemzem at Mecca,† and into other springs.‡ That they were also brought into contact with rocks, appears from the ritual of the *maṣṣēbāh* 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 Curtiss, *Bibl. World*, xxi. 255, 256). Sometimes the blood was conveyed by a rivulet to a sacred well. Such a rivulet was the *Ghabghab* 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, one 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 *maṣṣēbāh*.

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 sometimes surrounded by artificial trenches (1 K 18^{32}). Traces of such altars are found among the Israelites and the Aramæans (cf. 2 K $16^{10ff.}$, Ezk 43^{13}, and 1 Mac $4^{45ff.}$). They were probably at first rude cairns, which suggested a 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, *Heth and Moab*, 181 ff.; 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^{24-26} (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. Analogy 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. **Maṣṣēbāhs.**—Another development from the primitive crag was the Arabic *nuṣb* or Hebrew *maṣṣēbāh*. This was a stone pillar of conical shape, frequently resembling in a rough way a phallus, in which the god was supposed to dwell. The fat and oil of sacrifices were smeared on this

* See Doughty, *Arabia Deserta*, i. 449 ff.; and Barton, *A Year's Wandering in Bible Lands*, 162.
† See Barton, *Semitic Origins*, 235.
‡ Cf. W. R. Smith, *Rel. of Sem.*[2], 177.
§ See Wellhausen, *Reste arab. Heidentums*[2], 108 ff.
‖ *Bible Side-Lights from the Mound of Gezer*, 56.

stone, so that it served at once as an emblem of deity and as an altar. It was a *bethel* (Gn $28^{17ff.}$). 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-Safi,* at Petra,§ at Megiddo,§ and at Gezer.‖ When the number of stones is more than one, it is usually easy to identify the *bethel*, 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 sacrifice was cooked and eaten by the worshipper, as in 1 S $1^{4.\ 5ff.}$ 2^{13-16}. 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 fashion of roasting the meat instead of boiling it came in. The transition in Israel is noted in 1 S 2^{14-16}. 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. Ariels.—One way of making a fire-altar was to add a fire-hearth to a *maṣṣēbāh*. This was actually done at Aksum in Abyssinia, where such structures have been found.†† Perhaps the 'ariels' of Moab, mentioned in 2 S 23^{20} and on the Moabite 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 Moabite Stone, and from Is $29^{1.\ 2.\ 7}$, where the name is figuratively applied to Jerusalem.

W. R. Smith supposed that the pillars of Jachin and Boaz, which stood before the temple of Solomon at Jerusalem, were used as fire-altars also.‡‡ Herodotus (ii. 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-*maṣṣēbāhs* of Aksum, out of the primitive pillar.

7. Rock-cut altars.—Another development from the primitive mountain crag 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 crag, but it was built of stones on which man had lifted 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 Taanach.* This consists of a stone about half the height of a man, roughly rounded at the top, but square at the base. At the corners rude steps have been cut in the stone, and the top is slightly hollow. It appears to have been used for libations only, and never for fire offerings.

Another example of a rock-cut altar is found in the rock-cut high-place which was discovered at Petra in the year 1900.† This altar is 9 ft. 1 in. long, 6 ft. 2 in. wide, and 3 ft. high. It is approached on the east side by a flight of steps, on the top of which the officiating priest could stand. On the top of the altar is a depression 3 ft. 8 in. long, 1 ft. 2 in. wide, and 3½ in. deep. This was apparently the fire-pan of the altar. On three corners of this altar there are depressions cut, which have suggested to some the possibility that, when complete, it was adorned at the corners with horns of bronze. This is, of course, only conjectural.

Just to the south of this altar, and separated from it only by a passage-way, is a platform which seems to have been used for the preparation of sacrifices. It is 11 ft. 9 in. long from north to south, 16 ft. 6 in. wide, and 2 ft. 9 in. high. It is ascended by four steps at the north-east corner. In the top of this platform there are cut two concentric circular pans, the larger of which is 3 ft. 8 in. in diameter and 3 in. deep, and the smaller 1 ft. 5 in. in diameter and 2 in. deep. From the lower pan a rock-cut conduit, 3 ft. 2 in. long, 2 in. wide, and 3 in. deep, leads away. This platform was, no doubt, used for the slaughter of the victims, and these basins were designed to catch the blood, and the conduit to conduct it away.‡

When we remember the importance attached to the blood by the early Semites, and their feeling that it should be offered to the deity (cf. 1 S $14^{32.\ 34}$ and Dt $12^{16.\ 23-25.\ 27}$), it becomes clear that this platform was as important a part of the altar as the other. Some scholars have called it, because of the circular basins cut in it, the 'round altar.'§ Analogy makes it clear that the trench of the Samaritans, referred to above, is in reality a part of an altar. Probably every altar of earth in ancient times was accompanied by a slaughtering-place similar to the one seen on Mount Gerizim.

8. Altars of incense.—A still later form of the altar—later from the standpoint of cultural development—was a small portable altar carved out of a stone. Such altars were developed in many parts of the Semitic world, and are described more fully below in connexion with the altars of the different nations. They were used for the burning of fat or of sweet-smelling incense, and probably came into use at a time when, in ordinary sacrifices, such parts of the offering only were given directly to the deity, the other and more edible parts becoming the property of the priests.

9. Bronze altars.—At the farthest remove culturally from the primitive Semitic altar stands the bronze altar. Not made of an unmanufactured product like stone, it is an altar of a civilized, and not of a primitive, people. Such altars are found among the Babylonians, Assyrians, Phœnicians, and Hebrews. Our knowledge of their forms is set forth below in describing the altars of these nations.

10. Arabian altars.—The only large altar that can in any sense be called Arabian which has, so far as the writer knows, been studied by Europeans,

Cf. Bliss and Macalister, *Excavations in Palestine*, 32.

† See Herod. iii. 8, who says the Arabs had seven.

‡ Macalister, *op. cit.* 57.

§ See Robinson, *Biblical World*, xvii. 6 ff.; Curtiss, *PEFSt*, 1900, 350 ff.; Libbey and Hoskins, *Jordan Valley and Petra*, ii. 175–187. For Megiddo, cf. *Nachrichten der Zeit. Deut. Paläs. Ver.*, 1903, 47.

‖ Macalister, *Bible Side-Lights from the Mound of Gezer*, 56.

¶ See the Fifth Dynasty temple restored in Erman's *Ägypt. Rel.* 45.

** See Schell, *Délegation en Perse*, ii. 130, and compare Barton in *JAOS* xxii. 122 n. 31, and 128 n. 9. A similar scene is figured on a seal in the writer's possession.

†† See Theodore Bent, *Sacred City of the Ethiopians*, 180 ff.

‡‡ *Rel. of Sem.*², 488 ff.

* See Sellin, *Tell Ta'anek*, p. 36.

† Cf. *PEFSt*, 1900, p. 350 ff.; *Bibl. World*, vol. xvii. p. 6 ff.; Brünnow and Domaszewski, *Provincia Arabia*, i. 241, 242; and Nielsen, *Altarab. Mondreligion*, 172–177.

‡ See the references in note †.

§ So Wilson and Robinson; see Brünnow and Domaszewski, *op. cit.* p. 243.

is the great altar at Petra, described above (§ 7). That rock-cut altar may, however, be an Edomite or Nabatæan work, and indicative of their civilizations 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 crags, or stones containing hollows to receive the blood (see Curtiss, *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 7½ in. 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.

Petrie discovered three such altars of incense in the temple at Serabit el-Khadem 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, 3½ in. wide and 1 in. deep. One of these altars presented on the top a burnt surface, about ¼ 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. **Aramæan altars.**—In 2 K $16^{10ff.}$ we are told of an altar in Damascus which the Judæan 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^{13-17}) 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 hearth 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 Nabatæan structure. If so, it should be counted an Aramæan altar.

A few smaller Nabatæan altars, of the kind called altars of incense above, have been discovered. One such was found at Kanatha, and bears a Nabatæan inscription. On one side of it a bullock is carved in a rather primitive type of art.§ Another Nabatæan altar of similar type from Palmyra has two hands carved on its side below an inscription.‖ A fragment of a basaltic altar found at Kanatha, carved with the head of a bullock,* betrays such excellent artistic workmanship that it can hardly be Nabatæan, but is probably Greek. Another Nabatæan altar, found by the Princeton expedition, is pictured by Littmann.† It consists of a straight stone, the shoulders of which are rounded as the top is approached. This is set in a larger base. The upper edge of the base is carved into a moulding. Another Palmyrene altar‡ has straight sides, and at its top an ornamental moulding projects, making the top larger than the body of the altar. Altars of similar structure, probably of Nabatæan workmanship, may now be seen in Muhammadan cemeteries at Palmyra.§ All these Nabatæan incense-altars known to the present writer have a perpendicular pillar-like form. None of them is shaped like an hour-glass, as are the Arabian altars. Sometimes the base is larger than the stem of the altar, and sometimes a moulding makes the top larger, but the lines of the intervening part are perpendicular.

12. **Babylonian altars.**—Our knowledge of early Bab. altars comes in part from the pictures on old Bab. seals. These altars may not be purely Semitic, as the Semites there were mixed with the Sumerians,‖ but the Semites were in the country before the dawn of history and early mingled with the Sumerians, so that it is often difficult to disentangle the strands of their civilization.¶ The earliest altars pictured may be Sumerian in origin, but they were employed by Semites at so early a time that we shall treat them as Semitic.**

At the very dawn of Babylonian history the only altars pictured belong to the class called above 'altars of incense.' They are of two forms, each of which appears on seals as archaic as those picturing the other. One of these was apparently a block of stone, shaped thus  . The seals which portray it represent the notch as a kind of hearth in which the fire was built. Probably the high portion was hollowed out. One seal represents this style of altar as constructed of large bricks.††

Equally ancient, so far as appears, was the altar of the hour-glass shape.‡‡ These were not all exactly alike. Sometimes the middle of an altar was small, sometimes it was large; sometimes the top was larger than the bottom, and sometimes the reverse was the case; sometimes the narrowest portion was almost at the top, sometimes it was nearer the bottom; but the hour-glass form describes them all.

A third altar, figured on a seal of the de Clercq collection,§§ is perhaps older than either. It consists of flat stones, or possibly large flat bricks, placed above one another in a simple pile.

Still other forms appear on later seals. One such altar‖‖ is of stone, and is triangular in form, broad at the base, sloping toward the top, and surmounted by a fire-pan. Just below the fire-pan runs an ornamental ledge. That the Babylonians had bronze altars is made probable by another seal, showing a low structure supported by three legs, on which a sacrificial fire burns.¶¶

That the Babylonians had larger altars corresponding in function to the rock-cut altar at Petra is not only probable *a priori*, but is confirmed by the explorations of Dr. Haynes at Nippur. This

* See Mordtmann, *Himjar. Inschriften und Alterthümer*, Pl. iii.; and Nielsen, *Altarab. Mondreligion*, 135.
† See Petrie, *Researches in Sinai*, 133–135.
‡ Cf. Toy, 'Ezekiel,' p. 101 in Haupt's *SBOT*.
§ See Sachau, *SBAW* (1896) 1056 and Pl. x.; Clermont-Ganneau, *Recueil d'archéologie orientale*, iii. 75 and Pl. i., also *ib.* ii. 108 ff., Littmann, *Semitic Inscriptions*, p. 84.
‖ Cf. Clermont-Ganneau, *op. cit.* i. 117 and Pl. i.

* See Merrill, *East of the Jordan*, 42.
† *Op. cit.* p. 66.
‡ Littmann, *ib.* p. 80.
§ *Ib.* p. 82.
‖ Cf. Meyer, *Sumerien und Semiten in Babylonien*.
¶ See Barton, *Semitic Origins*, ch. v.
** The best description of these is by William Hayes Ward in Appendix G of S. I. Curtiss' *Primitive Semitic Religion To-day*.
†† See Ward, *op. cit.* 267–269. For the brick altar, fig. 2, p. 268.
‡‡ Cf. Ward, *ib.* pp. 270–275.
§§ No. 141.
‖‖ *Collection de Clercq*, No. 208.
¶¶ *Ib.* No. 202.

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. Near it was a bin containing several bushels of ashes. 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 pre-Sargonic period.*

Herodotus (i. 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 is 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.'

13. Assyrian altars.—The altars of the Assyrians consisted, no doubt, of the two varieties employed by the Babylonians. Those which explorations have brought to light belong to the smaller type, or the class of 'altars of incense.' These are sometimes of stone and sometimes of bronze.

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 an oblong stone 55 cm. long and of the same height, so carved 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 carved that its base is triangular, and is ornamented by two horizontal ledges. At the corners between these ledges a lion's foot is carved. This base is surmounted by a circular top.‡ The third altar is shaped much like the Nabatæan 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, the perspective 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 hollow and formed the fire-pan. 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.

14. 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, 7). 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 and tapering considerably toward the top. It was ornamented by many heads—both human and animal—in relief.**

* See Clay, *Light on the OT from Babel*, 110.
† Cf. Perrot and Chipiez, *Hist. de l'art dans l'antiquité*, ii. 260.
‡ Perrot and Chipiez, *ib.* p. 268.
§ See Birch and Pinches, *Bronze Ornaments from the Palace Gates of Balawat*, Pl. B 1 and 2; cf. also Ball, *Light from the East*, 164; Perrot and Chipiez, *op. cit.* 429 ff.
‖ Cf. Ball, *op. cit.* 200.
¶ *e.g.* cf. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*, ii. 354.
** See Sellin, *Tell Ta'anek*, 75.

15. Phœnician altars.—The Phœnician altars which have survived are all '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.* Sometimes they are of the same general shape except that they are round, and the base and top join the central portion in an abrupt shoulder instead of being tapered down to it. Such is an altar found at Malta.† Another altar found at the same place has its central portion carved into panelled faces in which a vine is cut for ornamentation.‡ Still others are variations of the hour-glass form.§

Bronze altars are mentioned in Phœnician inscriptions as having been erected at Gebal, Kition, Larnax Lapethos, at the Piræus, and in Sardinia,‖ 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 Phœnicians copied Assyrian art.

16. Hebrew altars.—According to Ex 20^{24-26}, early Israelitish 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 Phœnician fashion. The description of this has been omitted by redactors from 1 K 6, because it was not made of orthodox material (so Wellhausen and Stade). Its presence is vouched for by the story of 2 K $16^{11ff.}$ and by the late and confused insertion (so Kittel), 1 K 8^{64}. The Chronicler (2 Ch 4^{1}) makes it a gigantic structure 30 ft. square and 15 ft. high, 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 $16^{14, 15}$), 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^{45-47} and Jos. *BJ* v. v. 6).

According to 1 K 6^{22} 7^{48}, a golden altar, apparently of incense, stood before the Holy of Holies 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 27), 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 fancies of priestly writers, as 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 carve the altar into the form of an ox, while 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 (*BJ* v. v. 6) says of the altar of Herod's temple that 'it

* See Renan, *Mission de Phénicie*, 163.
† Cf. Perrot and Chipiez, *op. cit.* iii. 804 (fig. 220).
‡ *Ib.* fig. 228.
§ *Ib.* 252 (fig. 191); Renan, *op. cit.* 229.
‖ See *CIS* i. Nos. 1, 10, 95, 118, 143.
¶ So Benzinger, *Heb. Arch.* 388.
** *Gesch.* i. 465.
†† *Rel. of Sem.*[2] 486.

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[1], 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.

LITERATURE.—Nearly all the literature has been mentioned above. In addition, mention may be made of art. 'Altar' by Addis in *EBi*, that by Kennedy in Hastings' *DB*, and that by Barton in the *JE*; also Nowack, *Heb. Arch.* (1894) ii. 17 ff.; Benzinger, *Heb. Arch.* (1894) 378 ff.; Curtiss, 'Places of Sacrifice among the Primitive Semites' in *Biblical World*, vol. xxi. 248 ff.; Greene, 'Hebrew Rock Altars,' *ib.* vol. ix. 329 ff.; and W. H. Ward, 'Altars and Sacrifices in the Primitive Art of Babylonia' in Curtiss' *Primitive Semitic Religion To-day* (1902), Appendix G. GEORGE A. BARTON.

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 *altāri*, from the Latin *altare*. The Old Church Slavic *žrŭtva*, 'sacrifice' (cf. *žrĭcĭ*, 'sacrificer, priest'), compared with its Russian derivative *žertveniikŭ*, 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 *θυσιαστήριον*. The entire group of words associated with *žrŭtva* primarily means only 'praise' (Vondrák, *Altkirchenslavische Grammatik*, Berlin, 1900, p. 129). Mention may likewise be made of Old Church Slavic *trèbiśte* (connected with *trèba*, 'negotium'), 'altar, *θυσιαστήριον, σέβασμα*'; and *krada*, 'rogus, fornax.'

LITERATURE.—Miklosich, *DWAW* xxiv. 18.

L. LEGER.

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 *stalli* appears to be the regular term for an altar within a temple: we are told that the *stalli* was set up in the centre of the sanctuary [the *afhús*—see TEMPLES (Teutonic)]; and it is described by the Christian writer of the Eyrbyggia 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 earth, stone, or wood. There are 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 Kialnesinga Saga the *stalli* is described as made with much skill, and covered above with iron. If the material was wood, the iron would be necessary, since the writer goes on to say that upon the *stalli* burnt the sacred fire that was never allowed to go out. There is some evidence that the figures of the gods stood upon the *stalli*; it is certain that it carried the oath-ring and the great copper bowl (the *hlaut-bolli*) into which was collected all the blood of the victims slain at the sacrifice. Within the bowl were the *hlaut* twigs, by means of which the walls of the temple, within and without, were sprinkled with the blood, and the altar reddened all over.

We hear further of altars within sanctuaries in England and elsewhere: in Anglo-Saxon the regular Christian term for 'altar' was *wihbed* (earlier form, *weofod*), which had probably come down from heathen times. In Gothic the word for 'altar' is *hunslastaþs*, lit. 'place of sacrifice.'

There is mention also in the sagas of a sacrificial stone, called Thor's stone, which stood in the midst of the place of assembly, and on which the men who were sacrificed to Thor had their backs broken. With this we may compare the altars mentioned by Tacitus (*Ann.* i. 61) in the forest of Teutoburgium, where the officers of the army of Varus were sacrificed by the Cherusci in A.D. 9. We hear elsewhere of sacred stones, especially in the Dane Law in England.

Many writers have supposed that the *hörg* of the sagas was some kind of stone altar, mainly on the strength of the passage in Hyndluliódh, where Ottar is said to have built for Frey a *hörg* of stone, which he made glassy with the blood of cattle. But other passages clearly indicate that the *hörg* was of the nature of a room; while the Old German glosses give the corresponding form *haruc* as a translation of *lucus* and *nemus* as well as of *ara*. It is perhaps safer, therefore, to regard the *hörg* simply as a sanctuary. It was apparently often in the charge of women, and seems to have been used especially in connexion with the cult of the dead, while the sacrifices at it took place, sometimes at least, by night.

C. J. GASKELL.

ALTER.—The social 'other,' fellow, or *socius* of the personal 'ego.' In current social Psychology and Ethics the 'alter' is the fellow of the social environment or situation in which the personal self finds itself. It is a contrast-meaning with 'ego.' The term 'altruism' shows historically an earlier use of the same word, meaning conduct or disposition favouring or advancing the interests of another rather than those considered advantageous for oneself. The development of less individualistic views in Sociology, Psychology, and Ethics has rendered important, indeed indispensable, the notion of personality as in some sense more comprehensive than individualism was able to allow. Various views of collectivism, social solidarity, general will and self, rest upon a concept of the 'ego' which essentially involves and identifies itself with its social fellow. The present writer has developed (reference below) such a view in detail, using the term 'socius' for the bipolar self which comprehends both 'ego' and 'alter.' On such a view, the 'ego' as a conscious content is identical in its matter—and also, in consequence, in its attitudes, sympathetic, emotional, ethical, etc.—with the '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 'unit,' to be brought into social relationships, but an 'outcome' of the social forces working to differentiate and organize common self-material. The altruistic or 'other-seeking' impulses are on this view normal and natural, because in fact identical 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.—Rousseau, *Contrat social*; Bosanquet, *Philosophical Theory of the State* (1899); Baldwin, *Social and Ethical Interpretations* (1897), and *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology, in locis.* J. MARK BALDWIN.

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

* κερατοειδεῖς προανέχων γωνίας.