

through those slow-passing centuries, the Church has withstood and lived down the opposition that has beaten her like waves upon a rock, then we cannot but believe that there is a spring of life within her that will carry her on to the end of the earth.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH.

Everybody knows there are different ways of building churches; plan and shape, pillars and arches, windows and porches, vary in every one.

We are not in this paper to consider the *architecture* of a church, but the *meaning* of the way in which it is built.

Perhaps it is a new idea to you that there should be any meaning at all; but to the first builders (and we still follow in their steps) a church was a kind of parable, and every part of it had its own story.

Since the days when they built their churches of basket-work, or of mud, and thatched them with straw, the same meanings have attached to the various parts.

Let us see what those meanings are, and we will take a church very simply arranged.

You will observe at once that, roughly speaking, it has three parts: the *nave*, the *chancel*, the *sanctuary*.

The *nave* is that larger part in which the congregation remains; the *chancel* is that part in which the choir and organ are usually placed; and the *sanctuary* is the smaller space where the altar stands.

You will have noticed, too, that the altar is always placed so high that worshippers at the other end of the church can see it.

On the other hand, the font for baptism, which one would naturally consider a holy thing, stands quite near the door by which you enter the church.

There is no accident about this. The font is the very beginning of the Christian life, and, therefore, is placed by the door. Presently, the little Christian takes his place as one of the congregation in the nave. A few years more, and he goes forward to kneel at the chancel step to receive the laying-on of hands, or Confirmation; and then he is permitted humbly to seek the altar to receive the Bread of Life, which is to strengthen his soul on his way through this wilderness to the Heavenly City.

The altar is, of course, the most sacred spot in the Church. In some churches you will see people bow and curtsy to it. I think it may be useful to explain why.

We must go back a long way to get at the meaning—so far back as the first act of worship we hear of outside Paradise. What was that? The offering of a lamb in sacrifice by 'righteous Abel.'

God ordained sacrifice from the beginning of the world; and if you look into the Old Testament you will find sacrifice running through it all. There it is—from Jacob alone in the wilderness, pouring out his oil upon the stone, to the dedication of Solomon's Temple, when 'the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud,' and on through a thousand years till the Temple was destroyed.

It all meant one thing; it all pointed to the sacrifice on the Cross of the Lamb of God.

And as the Jewish sacrifice looked