

adduce a great number of other passages; all shewing that the writers of the Epistles and Acts of the Holy Apostles considered that we are still living under a system which, in a deep, true and spiritual sense, is as really sacrificial as was the old Divinely ordained sacrificial system of the Jews. For I must hasten on now to shew that our blessed, glorious, Eucharistic Sacrifice has the sanction and witness of the Primitive Church. And first of all I would remind you that the structure of wood or stone, on which the Holy Eucharist was offered, was, in the earliest ages, universally called an Altar. The learned Mede, quoted by Bingham in his "Antiquities of the Christian Church," says: "It was called an Altar for the first two centuries," and adds that "the term Table is not to be found in any author of those ages now remaining," an assertion which is not quite correct, for there are just three or four instances in which we meet with the term Divine Table. And Wheatley in his "Commentary on the Book of Common Prayer," after saying much the same thing, adds that "from the fourth century onwards both names came to be used promiscuously, the one having," as he says, "respect to the oblation of the Eucharist, the other to our participation." "But," he adds, "it was always placed Altarwise, in the most sacred part of the Church, and fenced in with rails to secure it from irreverence and disrespect." Now this universal use of the word Altar in the earliest ages of the Church shews how completely the minds of the primitive Christians were saturated with the idea of sacrificial worship, for the very meaning of the word "Altar" is a structure upon which to offer sacrifice, a structure upon which to present an oblation.

Now, therefore, with this preparatory remark, I will offer you a brief series of quotations taken from the works of early writers, who, although they are not infallible, are more likely to know our Blessed Lord's meaning and intention as regards His Holy Mysteries than we are, and who certainly reflect the feeling and opinion of the early days in which they lived.

(1) Justin Martyr (died 165), in giving us a full account of early Christian worship, and in referring to the

Prophet Malachi's promise that the pure offering (Minchah) should be offered throughout the world, says in his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew. "As to the Sacrifice offered by us Gentiles in every place, i. e., of the Eucharistic Bread and Cup, the Prophet foretold it in this place."

(2) S. Irenaeus (died 202), a Disciple of S. Polycarp, who, as you know, was a Disciple of S. John, says: "This oblation of the Church, which our Lord by His Prophet Malachi commanded to be offered through all the world, is accounted a pure Sacrifice with God and is accepted by Him."

(3) Tertullian (died 200) writes. "No man, who hath a rancorous mind against his brother, shall offer his gift at the Altar, unless he turns to patience, and is first reconciled to his brother."

(4) S. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, (died 258) says: "If Jesus Christ our Lord is Himself the Chief Priest of God the Father, and has first offered up Himself a Sacrifice to the Father, and has commanded this to be done in commemoration of Himself, certainly that Priest truly discharges the office of Christ who imitates what Christ did; and he thus offers a full and true Sacrifice in the Church to God the Father when he proceeds to offer it according to what he sees Christ Himself to have offered."

(5) S. Athanasius, the great champion of Orthodoxy at the Council of Nicea, A.D. 325, says: "Melchisedec was the first example of offering the Unbloody Sacrifice, viz., Bread, and Wine, and therefore it was said to our Saviour, 'Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.'"

(6) S. Cyril of Jerusalem (died 350) says: "Then, having sanctified ourselves by these Spiritual Hymns, we call upon the Merciful God to send forth His Holy Spirit upon the Gifts lying before Him, that He may make the Bread the Body of Christ, and the Wine the Blood of Christ. For whatsoever the Holy Ghost has touched is sanctified and changed. Then after the Spiritual Sacrifice is completed (the bloodless Service upon that Sacrifice of Propitiation) we entreat God for the common peace, for the Church, for the tranquillity of the world, for Kings, for soldiers and allies, for the sick, for the afflicted, and, in a word, for all who