

**A WORD IN DEFENCE
OF OUR ALTARS AND
CATHOLIC CHURCH**

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A Word in Defence of Our Altars and Catholic Church by William Brudenell Barter

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WILLIAM BRUDENELL BARTER

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AND

CATHOLIC CHURCH.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM BRUDENELL BARTER,

RECTOR OF BURGHECLERE AND HIGHCLERE,
AND LATE FELLOW OF ORIEL COLLEGE, OXFORD.

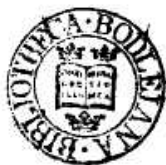
WRITTEN AFTER HEARING A CHARGE DELIVERED BY THE REV.
DR. DEALTRY, CHANCELLOR OF WINCHESTER, AT HIS
VISITATION AT ANDOVER, SEPT. 13, 1843.

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A WORD

IN DEFENCE OF OUR ALTARS,

ETC.

HAVING publicly expressed my dissent from the doctrines contained in Dr. Dealtry's charge to his clergy, I think myself called on to state my reasons for so doing ; and I hope that I shall examine his arguments and expose their fallacy, without violating the regard that is due to his station and character, and those claims to our respect and esteem which no one more readily allows him to possess.

Dr. Dealtry begins his argument with a quotation from Barrow. "There is," says Dr. Barrow, "a strange enchantment in words, which being, although with no great colour of reason, assumed, do work on the fancies of men, especially the weaker sort." And again : "Words innocently and carelessly used, are, by interpretation, extended to signify great matters."

Dr. Dealtry exemplifies the force of this apothegm in the instances of the words Altar, Priest, Sacrifice, Catholic, Evangelical, Church. He wishes

to shew that these terms have been perverted from the meaning which the Church of England has attached to them, by men whose names are not mentioned, but are as well known as if they were.

With the word 'altar' Dr. Dealtry seems to have taken the greatest pains. He has not opened a new view of the case, nor was it to be expected that he could have done so. The question of the altar is one of very old standing, and has been discussed of late, sometimes most irreverently, and at others by able and learned men in various religious publications: the arguments which Dr. Dealtry has used appear in the *British Magazine* for June and November 1837, in well-written letters with the signature 'J. G.,' and, no doubt, may be found in many similar periodicals. But as they are now placed by him before the clergy, I will endeavour fully and fairly to meet them; especially as, if in this case I obtain a decision in my favour, I may claim, as a matter of course, a like judgment with regard to the two following points in abeyance, viz. on the words 'priest' and 'sacrifice:' for if the use of the word 'altar' is allowed, it follows that the words 'priest' and 'sacrifice' must be received in some sense or other as connected with the altar.

Dr. Dealtry's argument is this: that in the first Prayer-book of King Edward the Sixth the word 'altar' occurs in the Communion-service at least three times; but in the service for 1552, the second Prayer-book of King Edward the Sixth, it is in

every instance struck out. He proves by many analogous instances of alterations, that this was most probably done by design, and that therefore this act is binding on us, both as members of the Church of England, and because we use a Prayer-book from which the word 'altar' has been struck out designedly.

Since it is the conclusion to which I am opposed, it will be useless to say much of the premises; I will therefore allow, for argument's sake, that the word 'altar' was most probably struck out by design from the second Prayer-book of King Edward the Sixth.

Now, although Dr. Dealtry may not pay much deference to the teaching of the primitive Church of Christ,¹ yet, since there are many among us who

¹ The following is a plain statement as to the word 'altar,' taken from the Notes of Bishop Mant's "Prayer-book." "Altar was the name by which the holy board was constantly distinguished for the first three hundred years after Christ, during all which time it does not appear that it was above once called 'table,'—and that was in a letter of Dionysius of Alexandria to Xystus of Rome. And when, in the fourth century, Athanasius called it a 'table,' he thought himself obliged to explain the word, and to let the reader know, that by 'table' he meant 'altar,'—that being the constant and familiar name. Afterwards, indeed, both names came to be promiscuously used—the one having respect to the oblation of the eucharist, the other to the participation." If any one should wish to multiply authorities on this subject, either from the best of our own divines, or from the Fathers of the Church, he may find an inexhaustible store in Tract 81 of the *Tracts for the Times*, and in the notes on Dr. Pusey's *Sermon on the Eucharist*.

would wish to follow the holy army of martyrs in this matter, it may be as well clearly to point out their foot-prints; and of that holy band I will choose two of the most noble leaders, St. Ignatius and St. Cyprian.

Having one altar to offer up their sacrifices to God, was a bond of union to the first Christians, just as having one Temple at Jerusalem was, before its destruction, a means of uniting the Jews. The word 'altar' is mentioned in this sense by St. Ignatius, the friend of St. John. The altar, as being the most sacred place in the church, is used by him for the church itself. "Let no one deceive himself," he says; "if a man be not within the altar, he faileth of the bread of God." Again: "Come ye altogether, as to one temple of God, and to one altar, and to one Christ, who proceedeth from one Father, and exists in one, and is returned to one." Again: "Wherefore let it be your endeavour to partake all of the same eucharist; for there is but one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup in the unity of His blood; one altar, as also there is one bishop, together with the presbytery, and the deacons my fellow-servants; that whatsoever ye do, ye may do it according to the will of God." Such are the words of St. Ignatius, which he wrote to the Churches of the Ephesians, the Magnesians, and Philadelphians, on his way to martyrdom, about seventy years after the death of Christ.

That the bread and wine are to be considered oblations on the altar, is plain from the words of St. Cyprian; an authority acknowledged by our Church in the homily on the worthy receiving of the sacrament. He says: "The blood of Christ is not offered up if the cup have no wine in it; and that we do not offer up the sacrifice which God commanded in a proper manner, unless our oblation and sacrifice correspond with His practice in their first institution." "How, then, shall we drink," he says, "this wine now with Christ in the kingdom of His Father, if in this sacrifice we do not offer the wine which God hath required?" Enforcing the same doctrine he says, "*If we are indeed the priests of God and Christ, I cannot for my life find out who we should choose rather to follow than God and Christ.*"

Now in this instance we have the doctrine of an altar, and sacrifices on that altar, collected by a Catholic Father from the holy Scriptures. This would be strong were it alone; but that such was the teaching of the whole Church of Christ for the first four centuries, is proved by the following extracts from the most ancient Liturgies.

The Alexandrian form, not later than the beginning of the fourth century:—"Shewing forth, therefore, O Lord Almighty, heavenly King, the death of Thine only-begotten Son, our Lord, our God, our Saviour, Jesus Christ; we, O Lord, have set before Thee Thine own, out of Thine