

The Holy Sacrifice Of The Mass Part VIII

How Christ Said The First Mass

Fr. James L. Meagher, D.D. 1906

Meaning Of The Bitter Herbs

The stately Liturgy and service of the Temple of Christ's day were but an extension of the patriarchs' Passover.

The patriarchal Passover with the roasted lamb foretelling the crucifixion, and the unleaven bread of the Last Supper and the Mass, had come down from prehistoric times to the Hebrews living in Egyptian bondage. But the night of their delivery God ordered bitter herbs to be added to the rite to remind them of the bitter slavery the race had suffered in the Nile-land. Later God revealed to them His laws, established the tabernacle ceremonial built on the simpler ceremonial of their fathers, the patriarchs. But as ages passed over the world, inspired prophets added new rites, new objects, and a wealth of details to the Passover and the Temple worship, each filled with types, figures and emblems of the crucifixion and the Mass.

The unleaven bread developed into the feast of unleaven bread celebrated for a week. But to show that the crucifixion and the Mass are one and the same sacrifice, this series of festivals was interwoven into the Passover held the first night. Thus Passover and feast of unleaven bread, often called by the same name, were never separated, always intermingled one with another.¹ Now let us see the other foods eaten at Passover and their mystic meaning, remarking that history is silent regarding the epoch when they were introduced.

The Leviathan

The behemoth "a large beast"² represented during the Passover by a dish of meat, meant either the hippopotamus, "river horse," or the elephant, "chief animal." The former is a large species of the cow family like the buffalo, and the Fathers say it foretold the demon conquered, not by Job with his skin-disease, but by Christ in His Passion and death.

Jewish writers, the Talmud and other works give most exaggerated descriptions and stories relating to this beast. According to them, he was the greatest of the four-footed animals which God made in the beginning, male and female. He killed the female, preserved her flesh for the elect at the coming of the Messiah; the male still lives and will be slaughtered for the Hebrew race, when they rise from the dead at the end of the world. They have many wild dreams of that kind regarding this animal.

The Lord spoke to Job of the leviathan³ called in Hebrew leviathan great water animal,” the whale or other marine animal, which Job could not catch with a hook.⁴

The flesh meat and the fishes on the Passover table figured the elephant and whale, signifying to the Hebrews one Assyria, the other Egypt, both ancient enemies of their fathers. But a careful reading of Job⁵ shows that not only are these countries meant, but the demons, enemies of the human race. Job with his terrible skin disease, and his patience in sufferings, did not conquer the demons, who brought on him in his innocence all these sufferings, but he points to Christ, His skin torn off in His flagellation, dead for mankind, for He was to conquer the demons represented by these great Scripture beasts. In this sense Isaias foretells that “The Lord with his hard and great sword shall visit Leviathan, the bar-serpent, and Leviathan, the crooked serpent, and shall slay the whale which is in the sea”⁶ showing that even with his strength and wicked wiles with which he deceived mankind in the Eden-serpent, he would be overthrown by the Redeemer, that is, his power broken.

At the time of Christ every act, every rite, every object and each ceremony brighter and clearer brought before them their Messiah foretold to come and die to atone for the world’s wickedness, and bring back our race to innocence lost in Eden. But beyond the crucifixion, while lives our race, the story was to be continued in the Mass with its elaborate rite and ceremonial.

Christ’s Last Supper and His death the next day were to fulfill, end, seal up Passover, Temple, Old Testament and all they foretold. But the last of the Hebrew inspired seers had revealed the rejection of the Jewish Temple and sacrifices because the Jewish priesthood would reject Christ, then He passed

to the calling of the heathens, the offerings of the Christian priesthood, the Mass among the nations.

“I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will not receive a gift from your hand. For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation, for My name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts.”⁷

How The Mass Was Foretold In The Cenacle

The History Of Melchisedech, Sion, And The Cenacle

CHRIST chose the Cenacle in which to celebrate the Passover, because there lived, died, and were buried Melchisedech, David, Solomon and all the kings of David’s family till the Babylonian Captivity.

Melchisedech comes into history under this name in the account of the four Mesopotamian kings, who went into Palestine, captured Lot, Abraham’s nephew, and started for home. Abraham roused his servants, fell on them at night, rescued Lot, took their spoils, and returning passed by Salem, as Jerusalem then was named.

“But Melchisedech, the king of Salem, bringing forth bread and wine, for he was a priest of the most high God, blessed him and said: ‘Blessed be the most high God by Whose protection thy enemies are in thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.’”⁸

Here for the first time in Holy Writ we find a priest “of the most high God” offering the “bread and wine” of the Passover and Mass. Eight centuries of silence pass, and 1,100 years before Christ David wrote of Christ’s priesthood: “Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech.”⁹ Then this great pontiff-king appears no more, in Holy Writ, till St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews mentions him eight times as a type of Christ.¹⁰

In patriarchal days, the chief of the tribe, or the king, united in his person the two offices of priest and ruler. Abraham was a priest, and sacrificed suffering animals, for of his race the priests of Aaron’s family were born — the Hebrew

priests who demanded the death of Christ — as they had in tabernacle and Temple immolated the victims which foretold the crucifixion.

Who Was Melchisedech?

But here for the first time in history, comes forth another order of priests, this mysterious Melchisedech offering bread and wine of the Last Supper and Mass. To him Abraham offered tithes — the tenth part of the fruits of his victory. Therefore Melchisedech priesthood was higher than that of Abraham; it was to be eternal; it pointed to Christ's priesthood of the Last Supper and of the Catholic Church. The whole prophetic scene in that vale beside the sacred city was emblematic of the future.

First dimly the bread and wine appear in patriarchal sacrifices, but brighter in the Temple ceremonial, and still clearer in the Passover. Beautifully S. Augustine explains prophetic Noe naked in his tent after taking the wine, an image of Christ crucified nearly naked. Ham, his son, reviling him, foretold the Jewish people mocking the dying Lord.¹¹ To the wine his son Melchisedech added bread, and from that time the bread and wine were always offered with the bloody sacrifices of the Hebrew Temple.

Who was Melchisedech? Early heretics hold he was the Holy Spirit Himself, who in human form appeared as the "Just King." But this is wrong. Origen, Didymus and others of that age say he was an angel, but this we cannot hold.¹²

It is certain he was a man. He was the king of Salem, as Jerusalem was then named, who offered bread and wine in sacrifice.¹³ Others think him one of the Canaanite kings, who lived a holy life amid the awful corruption of that age.¹⁴

Coming into history to bless Abraham, to receive the tenth part of all he had, nothing given of whence he came, his history, his parents, his origin and end, of him St. Paul says: "Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, but likened unto the Son of God, continueth a priest forever."¹⁵

Not according to Aaron's priesthood killing countless animals foretelling the Redeemer's awful death, but according to this great high priest's order, Jesus Christ offered bread and wine at the Last Supper.

Melchisedech, “King of Peace,” in that Palestine where kings were then called Abimelech, as in Egypt they were named Pharaoh, and later the Ptolomies, in his innocence and justice he was a striking figure of Christ, spiritual King and High Priest of mankind. Ignatius of Antioch¹⁶ and other fathers say he was a virgin, without father or mother, foretelling the Redeemer without mother in heaven, father on earth or posterity.¹⁷

Opinions Of Leaned Writers

Many learned works on this subject give various solutions. But Oriental traditions, Jewish and Samaritan writers clear up the difficulty. The Targums of PseudoJonathan and Jerusalem,¹⁸ Jewish Cabalistic works,¹⁹ Rabbinical writers,²⁰ Samaritans²¹ of ancient time, with Luther, Melanchthon, Lightfoot, Selden, etc., say Melchisedech was the patriarch Sem, sole survivor of the flood, eldest son and heir of Noe, king and high priest of the world.²²

Noe established the right of primogeniture, that the eldest son should succeed the father in his property, kingship and priesthood, a custom coming down to our day. In monarchies, the eldest son sits on his father’s throne, or becomes owner of the family estates. Of this Virgil sang “King Anius was indeed the king of men and the priest of Phebe.”²³ Sem was therefore heir of Noe.

What is the meaning of the word Melchisedech? The Hebrew word for king is melek, and for justice tsaddiq, the latter coming from the Babylonian sadyk, “the just one,” Therefore the name of this Pontiff-Founder of Jerusalem is “My King is Just.” In our day, at Tel-elAmarna in Egypt, terra-cotta tablets were discovered inscribed in the Babylonian tongue, the diplomatic language of the nations a hundred years before Moses led the Hebrews from the Nile land. When Melchisedech died Adoni-Zedek, his successor as king of Jerusalem, sent these tablets to the Egyptian king, telling of the great king Melchisedech his predecessor, who had founded the city, stating he had five sons. A wealth of Jewish and Arabian lore is found relating to this personage. Smith in his Dictionary says under the name Shem “Assuming that the years ascribed to the patriarchs in the present copies of the Hebrew Bible are correct, it appears that Methuselah, who in his first 243 years was contemporary with Adam, had still nearly 100 years of his long life to run after Shem was born. And when

Shem died, Abraham was 148 years old, and Isaac had been nine years married. There are therefore but two links Methuselah and Shem — between Adam and Isaac. So that the early records of the Creation, and the Fall of man, which came down to Isaac, would challenge, apart from their inspiration, the same confidence, which is readily yielded to a tale that reaches the reader through two well-known persons, between himself and the original chief actor in the events related. There is no chronological improbability in that ancient Jewish tradition, which brings Sem and Abraham into personal conference.

Was He Sem, Son Of Noe?

Sem or Shem, “Name,” “Renown,” or “Yellow,” father of the yellow Asiatics, was born before the flood, when Noe was 500 years old.²⁴ “He (Sem) begot Arphaxad two years after the flood, and Sem lived after he begot Arphaxad five hundred years.”²⁵ When the latter was in his thirty-fifth year, he begot Sale. And when Sale was thirty years old his son Heber was born.²⁶ Heber became the father of Pheleg in his thirty-fourth year. The latter had a son in his thirtieth year named Reu, who in his thirty-second year had a son born to him called Sarug. This Sarug in his thirtieth year begot Nachor, and the latter in his twenty-ninth year had a son Thare, who in his seventieth year became Abraham’s father.²⁷

According to this statement, Abraham was born 352 years after the flood, when Sem was 450 years old. “ Sem lived after he begot Arphaxad five hundred years.”²⁸ Born 92 years before the flood, Sem lived till Abraham attained his forty-sixth year. Josephus has the following “Abraham, who accordingly was the tenth from Noe, was born in the two hundred and ninety-second year after the flood.”²⁹ Following this Sem died when Abraham was ninety-two, and eighty years before Isaac’s birth.

Sem therefore died when Abraham was either forty-six, ninety-two or one hundred and forty-eight years of age, and he could have been that great pontiff of mankind, high priest of the nations, whom the Canaanites called Melchisedech. Oriental and Hebrew traditions have the following, we think the best, solution of the difficulty. But we do not say that the following statements are all true. Let the reader judge for himself.

Dying Adam said to his son Seth: “Now I die for my sin, but bury me not till God shows you the place where I will sleep till the ‘Seed of the woman,’ who will crush the serpent’s head will come.”³⁰ They embalmed the body, patriarchs passed it down, Noe had the skull in the ark, and before he died, 350 years after the flood, he gave it to Sem his eldest son telling him the tradition.

The Revolt Of Nemrod

There was born of Ham’s family, his grandson Nemrod, “Valiant,” or “The Rebel,” who comes down among the Heathen nations as Baal, Bel, the god Jupiter, Hercules, Thor, etc. “He was the grandson of Ham, a bold man of great strength of hand. He persuaded them not to ascribe it to God, as it were through his means they were happy, but to believe it was their own courage, which procured them that happiness. He also changed the government into a tyranny, seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, and to bring them into a constant dependence on his power. He also said he would be revenged on God, if He should have a mind to drown the world again. For that he would build a tower too high for the waters to reach, and he would be revenged on God for destroying their forefathers.”³¹

This Nemrod turned mankind from Adam’s religion; taught that the sky was a crystal ceiling; that their forefathers, the patriarchs, went to heaven and became the planets; that the natural forces were gods, and thus he founded paganism. Guided by him, the seventy-two families, born of Noe’s grandsons, built the Tower they called Bab Il, “Gate of God,” in the Babylonian tongue, which the Hebrews later changed to Babel, “Confusion,” whence they called the nearby city Babylon, “City of the Gate of God.”³²

Adam’s Skull Buried On Calvary

Infidelity, the worship of their father-patriarchs, the degradation of woman, immorality, irreligion were spreading through the people tyrannized over by this wicked Nemrod. But before the Tower of Babel was finished, God changed their language so each family spoke a different tongue and they could not understand the other families so they had to separate. Japheth’s children migrated to the southern shores of the Caspian Sea; Sem’s sons remained in his father’s house, Asia, because he was the eldest; Ham’s dark tribes went to

Africa, except the tribes which had rebelled against Sem over the division of the continents. They remained in the rich plains between the Tigris and Euphrates, where they founded the Babylonian empire, of which Nemrod was the first king. From these seventy-two families or tribes came the great nations of antiquity.

Sem, father of numerous tribes, eldest son and heir of Noe's civil and priestly power, was stripped of all authority in this revolt. Left alone in his old age, his children gone, an angel told him to come and he would show him where to bury Adam's skull. For full many a day they went west, till they came to a little hill, whereon he entombed our first father's relic, and called it Golgotha, a Babylonian word meaning "The Place of the Skull." Greeks later rendered it Cranion, and Romans Calvaria Calvary. There the angel told him to guard the relic of the first man.

The Revelations of Moses, an ancient book the Jews honoured, gives a long account of how the angels embalmed Adam's body. "And God said to Adam: "I will set thee in thy kingdom, on the throne of him that deceived thee, and he shall be cast down in this place (Calvary) that thou mayest sit upon him." Beside him they buried Abel's body, and there they laid Eve, when she died six days after Adam. Thus the thirty children of Adam laid to sleep our first parents with the priest Abel beside them. And the archangel Michael said to Seth: "Thus bury every man that dies until the day of the resurrection."

We give this as a specimen of numerous doubtful Oriental traditions. On the way to Damascus, not far from the vast ruins of Baalbec, amid the Libanon mountains, they show you the tombs of Noe and the patriarchs. Perhaps Adam was buried there and later his skull taken up and guarded as the relic of the first sinner and saint. The Church in honouring the relics of the saints, follows the customs of ancient races, especially the Hebrews. In the Church of the Holy Sepulchre they point out Melchisedech's tomb.

The Founding Of Jerusalem

Half a mile south rose rugged rocky heights surrounded on three sides by deep valleys, which Sem fortified and called Sion, “the Projecting.” There he reared his palace, round which rose a little city he named Salem, “Peace,” from the Oriental salute. Salama, “Peace,” a word still used in these countries, as we say “How do you do?”

In the migrations of the tribes, Caanan’s cursed sons,³³ Jebusites, Hittites, whom the Greeks called Phenicians, had colonized the land, where they had built many a city and town. Not knowing Sem, who he was, or whence he came, they called him “The Just King,” the King of Salem, in their language Melchisedech.

Last of the great patriarchal fathers of the nations, heir of Noe’s fatherhood, royalty and priesthood going back beyond the flood to Abel and to Adam, in his palace on Sion, on the very spot where Jesus Christ celebrated the Last Supper, this great high-priest king first offered the bread and wine of the Mass.

He was then the last link of the world before the flood. No writing, record, or monument of the ages before God wiped out the world’s wickedness with waters of his wrath survived, but Sem, who had preserved them according to the patriarchal customs of that epoch, when the eldest son was sole depository and heir of all his father’s learning, property and priesthood.

In Chaldea, at Ur, “Light of the Moon,” where she was worshiped, now the ruined Mughier, “The Betumined,” lived Abraham. His father made a living manufacturing and selling idols, says the Talmud. But his son did not believe in them, and God gave him supernatural faith, and told him to go into Palestine, where he would meet this great pontiff-king from whom he would learn Adam’s religion, the story of creation, the fall of man, the prophecy of the Redeemer, the story of the world before the flood. According to patriarchal custom, these truths passed down to Isaac, Jacob, to the Hebrews as traditions, till Moses gathered them up in the Book of Genesis.

Melchisedech and Abraham

Jewish rabbis say Sem called the little city Salem, “Peace”;³⁴ that after offering Isaac on Moriah, Abraham named the city Jireh, “Possession”; that the two great patriarchs disputed about the city’s name; but then agreed to unite the two words making Jerusalem, “The city of Peace,”³⁵ a word found six hundred times in the Old Testament, and seventy times in the New.

Hebrews called it Ariel, “Lion,” or “Hearth of God”;³⁶ Grecian Jews said it was Agia Polis “The Holy City”;³⁷ when Hadrian destroyed it the Romans named it Aelia after his first name.³⁸ It was the holiest of all the cities of earth, because of Him foretold to come and there redeem our race.

When Omar, Mohammed’s cousin, captured it, Moslems called it El-Kuds, “The Holy,” Beit-el-Makdis, “The House of the Holy Sanctuary”; Esh-Sherif, “The Venerable” or “The Noble.” To them Jerusalem is a most sacred place, where lived the prophets they hold inspired, and in their eyes Jerusalem in sanctity is second only to Mecca where Mohammed was born, and Medina where he lived.

Sem, bearing the name of Melchisedech, lived on Sion, his palace being built on the very spot where Herod built the Cenacle in which Jesus Christ said the first Mass.³⁹ This great prophet-king priest of the most high God,⁴⁰ “bringing forth bread and wine,”⁴¹ “offered this sacrifice of thanksgiving for the victory God gave Abraham; he offered this bread and wine to God as an image of the Mass, and not for food for Abraham’s troops as Calvin wrote.

And Abraham “gave him tithes of all”.⁴² Why did he do this? To show that there was to come a priesthood, offering the Mass in bread and wine, superior to the Aaronic priesthood offering bloody sacrifices, suffering animals immolated in the Temple by the priesthood to be born of Abraham’s race.

Abraham gave tithes to Melchisedech because that was the custom in those days. Pagans gave tithes, that is the tenth part of the spoils of their victories to their priests.⁴³ Zenophon⁴⁴ says: “For of this money collected from the captives, the tenth part consecrated to Apollo or to Diana of Ephesus the pretors received.” Agesilao writes “Offerings, that is fruits of the earth, every

two hundred years a hundred talents or more, the Ephesians dedicate the tenth part of that to God.”

Christ was therefore a priest according to the order of Melchisedech when He offered bread and wine at the Last Supper, and a priest according to the order of Aaron when He brought the lamb of Passover to the Temple to be sacrificed.⁴⁵

Death Of Sem And Abraham

Sem and Abraham slept with their fathers, and were buried one on Sion, the other at Hebron, sixty years of silent history passed, and Jebusites, sons of the third son of wicked Canaan, captured Sion, fortified its ramparts, and their dwellings rose round Melchisedech’s fortress. They called the city Jebus, “Trodden down,” in memory of their father.

It was a place of extraordinary strength. Recent excavations in Jerusalem laid bare the ancient ramparts running from near the Joppa gate, down deep into the Tyropceon valley, separating Sion from Moriah, and continued along the southern slopes and to the west bordering, the Hinnom vale to the place of beginning. They show Sion must have been in that day an acropolis, “A Citadel.” They then called it “The Dry Rock.” The Tyropoeon valley was then twenty-six, thirty-three and eighty feet lower than now, while to the south and west the ramparts rose hundreds of feet over the Hinnom and Cedron vales. At one spot a fragment of the ancient wall of Sion on the north was built close against the cliff, and though only rising to the top of the rock behind it, it was yet thirty-nine feet high towards the ravine in front.

David’s Palace And Treasures

David’s palace was celebrated. It was built on the very site of Melchisedech’s palace. There David prepared a place for the ark; there the great Mosaic ceremonies were carried out, till Solomon built his famous Temple on Moriah, another hill a little to the north of east. From that time Sion became a sacred place in Hebrew story, there they celebrated solemn feasts in David’s day, and called Sion “The Holy Mountain’.

On the walls of the palace, David's notices of administration, laws, etc., were posted. The fortress was called Mello, "Multitude," and handsome houses and palaces rose round the summit of the City of David, Sion and Melchisedech.

Down deep in the soft limestone rock, where Melchisedech was buried, David excavated passages, rooms and tombs. There he hid vast treasures for the building of the Temple which God told him his son Solomon would erect — the gold and silver amounting to \$19,349,260 dollars with bronze and brass and other treasures of far more priceless value. His tomb interests us for reasons given later.

"He was buried by his son Solomon in Jerusalem, with great magnificence, and with all other funeral pomp which kings used to be buried with. Moreover he had great and immense wealth buried with him, the vastness of which may be easily conjectured by what I shall now say. For a thousand and three hundred years afterwards, Hyrcanus the high priest, when he was besieged by Antiochus, that was called the Pious, opened one room of David's sepulchre, and took out three thousand talents, and gave part of that sum to Antiochus, and by this means caused the siege to be raised. After him, and that after many years, Herod, the king, opened another room, and took away a great deal of money, and yet neither of them came at the coffins of the kings themselves, for their bodies were buried under the earth so artfully, that they did not appear even to those who entered into their monuments."⁴⁶

Solomon's Palace

Solomon, "The Peaceful," stretched a stone bridge across the deep Tyropoeon vale separating Sion from Moriah, under which ran what was called in Christ's time the Cheesemongers' Street. Herod, with his mania for building, enlarged that bridge so that it was fifty-one feet wide and 350 long, its entrance being at the south west of the Temple area. It was across that bridge that Christ and his apostles went when carrying the lamb for the Passover or Last Supper. Part of the eastern abutment is now called Robinson's Arch.

Solomon enlarged and fortified the old fort built by Melchisedech and David. There abode the ark of the covenant from the time David placed it in his palace, till Solomon had finished his famous Temple on Moriah.⁴⁷ Now on the site of

Melchisedech's and of David's palace rose Solomon's great palace, which took thirteen years to build.⁴⁸ It was celebrated for its magnificence and extent. Court rooms, prisons, halls — all were of fine Judean marble and cedar of Lebanon. It was burned and totally destroyed by the Babylonians, when they captured Jerusalem.⁴⁹

In the deep soft, yellowish-white Judean rock, beneath that palace, beside David's tomb, other vault rooms and galleries were dug, and there Solomon and all the kings of Judea were buried with the prophetess Huldah "the cat."⁵⁰ When Jerusalem was rebuilt, after the Babylonian Captivity, Sion was again fortified as the city's citadel. The Machabees enlarged the Sion fortress and there they lived as warrior high priests. They fortified the Baris rock to the northwest of the Temple area which Herod rebuilt and called the Antonia.

There Pilate lived, and there Christ was tried and sentenced to death.

Herod's Search For David's Treasure

Herod, the Edumean, born of Judah's tribe, last of Hebrew kings foretold to reign till the Messiah came,⁵¹ hearing of David's vast treasures hidden in his tomb, before beginning to build his famous Temple twenty years before Christ was born, sought for the treasures David had hid under his palace.

"As for Herod, he had spent vast sums about the cities, both within and without his own kingdom. And as he had heard that Hyrcanus, who had been king before him, had opened David's sepulchre, and taken out of it three thousand talents of silver, and that there was a much greater number left behind, and indeed enough to suffice for all his wants, and he had a great while an intention to make the attempt. And at this time he opened that sepulchre by night and went into it, and endeavored that it should not be known in the city, but took only his faithful friends with him. As for any money, he found none, as Hyrcanus had done, but that furniture of gold, and those precious goods that were left there, all these he took away. However he had a great desire to make a more diligent search, and to go farther in, even as far as the bodies of David and Solomon, when two of his guards were slain by a flame that burst out upon those that went in, as the report goes. So he was terribly frightened and went

out and built a propitiatory monument of that fright he had been in, and this of white stone at the mouth of the sepulchre, and that also at great expense.”⁵²

The Banquet Hall And Furnishings

Thus over the tombs of the great kings rose the pile of buildings called the Cenacle,⁵³ “Banquet Hall,” by the Romans, for there public banquets were held. The Greeks named it the Huperoon, “high,” or Anageon, “Beautiful,” and the Jews Aliyah, “chamber,” because it was the highest, largest, finest and holiest room, except the Temple, of all places in the sacred city at the time of Christ. It was beautifully furnished with carpets, rugs, tapestries — its walls were decorated, its furniture most costly as became that building, over the tombs of the sleeping kings resting in the rock rooms beneath. There synagogue services were held, and it was the largest and finest of the 480 synagogues in Jerusalem at the time of Christ.

We mentioned the dead sleeping beneath Sion. Kings’ and prophets’ relics rested there the night Christ celebrated over them the first Mass, and said “Do this for a commemoration of me.”⁵⁴ Every incident of that night the room, the surroundings, the services impressed themselves on the apostles’ minds.

When they went forth to establish the Church, among the nations, they said Mass over the remains of saints and martyrs. Persecuted in Rome they offered the sacrifice in the catacombs.

They later placed the relics in altar stones, and thus down the ages, that custom has obtained till our day in all the Rites and Liturgies of Christendom.

The clergy of the Latin Rite use a stone on which to rest Chalice and Host, and in this stone, as in a little tomb, the relics of the saints are placed and ceiled up, as were relics of prophet and kings under the Cenacle. The Oriental Christians, who use only silk for altar cloths, place the relics of saints in the double silk folds forming the altar covering, on which the Eucharistic Elements rest.

All Oriental Christians follow the same custom. We trace it back to apostolic times, beyond Roman persecutions, and earlier than the catacombs. Some

writers say it came from the catacombs, but going deeper they will find it comes from the Last Supper.

When the apostles went forth to found churches in many lands they found customs of entombing the honoured dead in pyramids, “flamed-shaped,” in tombs, “mounds,” but the Greeks called their burial-place the necropolis “city of the dead”. The Christians followed the lessons of Sion and the Last Supper. In vaults beneath churches the early Christians buried their dead. The custom was followed till modern times in Europe where historic personages still sleep in churches. In this country they entomb the bishops under the cathedrals. These customs are traced to Sion and the Cenacle.

Sion The Richest Quarter In Jeruslaem

Sion is a hill higher than that of Moriah to the northeast, where rose the “Gold House” of the great Temple, flashing the sunlight over the city. Sion is 2,700 feet over the sea and 4,000 over the Dead Sea. The Temple with its priesthood and sacrifices was to pass away. The Church with its priesthood and Eucharistic Sacrifice was to be eternal. Therefore, down the Old Testament 177 times the prophets, in burning words pour forth the glories of Sion, image of the Church, while condemning Moriah with its wicked Jewish priesthood.

In the time of Christ, round the Cenacle rose the homes of richest Jews, wealthy Pharisees, learned Scribes, Judges of the Sanhedrin. Joseph Caiphas and his father-in-law Annas there had palaces worthy of princes. Sion was the aristocratic residence quarter of Jerusalem. Therefore when we select the richest and most wealthy quarters of our cities as sites for our cathedrals and churches, we follow, perhaps without thinking, the example of Christ when he celebrated the first Mass on Sion.

The Cenacle belonged to David’s family. The Lord’s Mother was the Princess of the royal family and David’s heir. Therefore Christ, Prince of the House of David, had a right to the building. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were leaders of the synagogue congregation worshipping in the Cenacle. There gathered the apostles, disciples and Christ’s followers for the synagogue services on that historic Thursday night, and on that Sabbath eve while the Lord’s body lay in the tomb. There they remained during these forty hours till

he rose from the dead. From that spot 500 persons followed him down the Tyropoeon vale, across the Cedron, up the slopes of Olivet, the day of the ascension. Ascending the Mount of Olives, the Arabs now call Gebel et Tur, the Lord before He ascended told James to take care of the disciples at Jerusalem.

Day by day they there assembled for the synagogue services, preparing for the feast of Pentecost, waiting for the promised Paraclete. They were in the Cenacle that day, when at nine in the morning the Holy Ghost, the fiery cloud of the Shekina of the burning bush, Sinai, tabernacle, Temple and Thabor filled the room of the Last Supper and rained down tongues of fire, giving each apostle a knowledge of the language of the nation to which he was to preach.

The Cenacle Described

“On Wednesday,” says an ancient writer.⁵⁵ “St. James first said Mass according to his Liturgy, which he said he received from the Lord, changing not a word.” The apostles used the Cenacle as a church while they remained in Jerusalem. While the Roman army under Titus was marching down from the north to invest the holy city in the year A. D. 70, Simeon, who had been elected bishop after James was thrown down from the roof of the Temple, and killed with a fuller’s stone, preached on the Lord’s words foretelling the terrible siege, the destruction of the city, and warned them to flee. In a ravine to the east of the Sea of Galilee, nestled then the little city of Pella, and there they found a home while the war lasted, after which they returned to find Jerusalem a heap of ruins.

Round the Antonia tower and the Temple had raged the fierce fighting, Josephus so graphically describes.⁵⁶ The Romans knew nothing about the little band of Christians worshiping in the Cenacle, and the building was little damaged. After the war St. James’s Liturgy of the Mass was again followed. The Cenacle was called “The Church of the Apostles” or the “Church of Sion.” Pilgrims in the early ages mentioned it.

Again the Jews rebelled and Hadrian leveled the city and walls, drew the plow over it, and forbade a Jew under pain of death to enter, except once a year to celebrate the Passover.

The holy building of the Last Supper had survived the calamities of the two wars. Syrian clergymen now called the Maronites then served the people. Eusebius, the famed historian, gives a list of fifteen bishops of Hebrew birth, and twenty-four of Gentile parentage who governed the See of Jerusalem.

A century and a half passed, and Silvester sat on the high Apostolic See Peter had established at Rome, of whose bishops Eusebius mentions twenty-nine names, beginning with Peter and bringing them down to the Council of Nice in 325. The empress Helena, mother of Constantine, after her son's conversion came to Jerusalem.

It was easy to find where slept the famous kings, and the building where the Lord said the first Mass still stood. Jerusalem, then as now, was built of stones, all rooms and ceilings arched. You could not burn the buildings, for wood is only in doors and windows. Only man or an earthquake could ruin Jerusalem.

Queen Helena Purifies The Cenacle

Under Helena's directions the Cenacle was purified, consecrated, and in it Mass was again said. It became the seat of an archbishop — a patriarchal See second to Rome and Alexandria.

In the Cenacle they said Mass according to St. James's Liturgy, and the Mass St. Peter composed at Antioch. The first is written in Greek, the latter in Syro-Chaldaic the language of the people of Judea at the time of Christ. The Church of Jerusalem with the Cenacle as its cathedral flourished till A. D. 636, when with fire and sword came the fanatic followers of the false prophet of Arabia. Omar, Mohammed's cousin came and negotiated with the patriarch Sophronius for the surrender of the holy city. He treated the Christians with kindness, gave them the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Cenacle, retaining for the Mohammedans the site of the Temple.

Maronite priests served the Christians till the crusaders came, after which at the request of their founder St. Francis who went to Jerusalem, the Cenacle fell into the hands of the Franciscan Fathers who held it for more than 200 years. Then some Mohammedans, claiming direct descent from David's family,

drove out the monks, and they still serve as the guardians of the Cenacle, calling it Bab Neby Daud “The House of the Prophet David.”

To Be Cont’d.

References:

1. Edersheim, Temple, p. 178.
2. Job xl. 10
3. Job xl. 41
4. Job xl. 20
5. Chap. xl.
6. Isaias xxvii. 1
7. Malachias i. 10-11
8. Gen. xiv. 18-20
9. Psalm cix. 4
10. Hebrews v. 6-10, vii. 1 10,11, 15-17
11. S. Augustine, De Civitate Dei, L.XVI C. i. and ii.
12. S. Augustine Quest in Gen. Quest ixxii
13. Epiphanius, Heres, 56, St. Cryil, etc.
14. Theodorus, Eusebius, etc.
15. Hebrews vii. 3
16. Epist. Ad Philadel
17. St. Augustine, De Docet. Christ., L.IV. XLV, Epist. Cixxxli. V.
18. Rashi, in Gen. xiv.
19. Apud Bochart, Phaleg, Pt. I., b, ii., sec. 69
20. Schotgen, Hor. Heb. II. 645

21. Quoted by St. Ehiphanius, Her. LV., 6
22. See Bereshith Rabbah. S. 9, etc.
23. Eneid, III., V. 80
24. Gen. v. 31
25. Gen xi. 10,11
26. Gen. xi. 12-15
27. Gen xi. 12-26
28. Gen. xi. 11
29. Antiq. B. I., c. vi. N. 5
30. Gen. iii. 15
31. Josephus, Antiq. B. I. c. iv. N. 2
32. Dutripon, Concord. S. Scripturae, Babel
33. Gen. x. 16
34. S. Augustine, Enar in Ps. Xxxiii. Ser. 1, V
35. Young's Concord. Of the Bible; Edersheim, Temple, 3; Smith's Dec. of Bible, Jerusalem, etc.
36. Isaias xxix. 1,2,7. Ezech. 43-15.
37. Matt. iv. 5, xxvii. 53
38. Aelius Hadrianus
39. See Josephus, Antiq. Vii. C. iii. N. 2
40. In Hebrew, vehu cohen
41. Hotseti nincha
42. See Migne, Cursus Comp. S. Scripturae, v. 47; Gen. xiv. 20
43. Livy, L. 6

44. Cyro, L. 6
45. See Migne, Cursus Comp. S. Scripturae xxv. 319 to 325, v. 47, etc.
46. Josephus, Antiq. B. VII, c. xv., n. 3 See Migne Cursus Comp. S. Scripturae, 11, 783, etc.
47. II Kings vi; III. Kings viii.
48. III. Kings vii
49. IV. Kings xxv
50. Talmud Baby., Ebel, 60
51. Gen. xlix. 10
52. Josephus, Antiq., B. XVI. C. vii. N. I
53. See Migne, Cursus S. Scripturae iii., 909
54. Luke xxii. 19
55. Dion. Barsilius, Hist. S. James' Liturgy
56. Jewish Wars