

## **COMMUNION TABLE**

The fixed table standing in the middle of the sanctuary (*haykal*) of the church, at which the Divine [Liturgy](#) is celebrated. It is an almost cubical structure of brickwork, stonework, or marble. In the first three centuries of the Christian era, the communion table was made of wood, partly in symbolic allusion to the wooden table at which Christ shared the Last Supper with the disciples before His crucifixion, and instituted the Eucharist; and partly to facilitate its removal when churches were subject to heathen incursions.

Saint ATHANASIUS (326-373) refers to the wooden altar that was destroyed by the [Arians](#) in Alexandria. Saint Augustine (354-430) also relates how Maximianus, the Orthodox bishop of Bagai, a town of Numidia, was nearly beaten to [death](#) by the Donatists, who stripped boards of wood from the altar under which he had been hiding.

Wooden altars have not been used in the Coptic [church](#) since the fourth century. (Among the exhibits of [the Coptic Museum](#) in Cairo, there is a wooden altar that formerly stood in the Church of Abu Sarjah [Saint Sergius] in Old Cairo.) They may be used only on a temporary basis in churches that are under construction. They were banned from other churches at a later stage.

In 517 the Council of Albion (Epiona) in France forbade the consecration of altars not built of stone, and toward the end of the ninth century, Patriarch [John](#) bar-Algari interdicted the use of wooden communion tables in the Nestorian church. The Ethiopian church, on the other hand, still retains the use of wooden altars. However, according to the procedure followed in the consecration of the holy CHRISM the service is invariably conducted on a wooden altar.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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## **ARCHBISHOP BASILIOS**

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