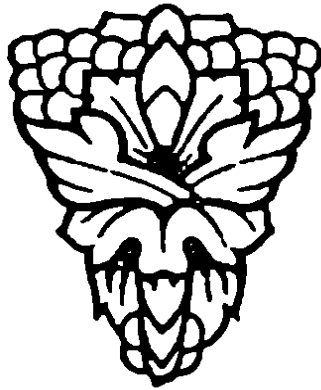


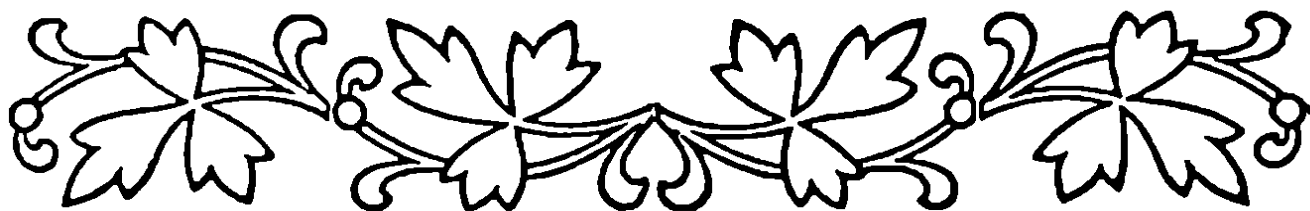
# THE LORD'S TABLE



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## THE LORD'S TABLE

**A**MONGST the things which so impressed the Queen of Sheba on the occasion of her visit to King Solomon was "the food of his table," in other words, his daily provision for his household. The order given is very significant — (1) The wisdom of Solomon, (2) The house that he had built, (3) The food of his table, (4) The deportment of his servants, (5) The order of service of his attendants and their apparel, (6) His cup-bearers and their apparel, and (7) His ascent by which he went up to the house of Jehovah (2 Chron. ix.

3-12, New Trans.). The effect upon the Queen was that with a satisfied heart she worshipped.

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians we find that which answers to this—"God's wisdom" in chapters i. and ii., "God's building," "God's temple" and the holiness which characterised it, in chapter iii., the Lord's provision (His table) in chapter x. This is followed in chapter xi. by the calling attention to the truth of headship. "The Head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the Head of Christ is God." To be kept responding in affection to Christ as Head, in the manner in which He responded to God as His Head, would produce and maintain that

comeliness of deportment which is pleasing to Him. This is followed by the Lord's Supper in which as His guests we are privileged to participate, and by means of His blessed service to us in connection therewith, the joy of our hearts is renewed and sustained. We thus become responsive to His love, and are privileged to contribute to His joy as we are led by Him into that scene of divine love "where God Himself vouchsafes to dwell, and every bosom fill"; and where "praises never fail."

The object, however, of this paper, is to call the reader's attention to the table of the Lord as set forth in chapter x. The apostle commences by pointing out "that

*all* our fathers were under the cloud," that "*all* passed through the sea; and were *all* baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." Further that they "*did all* eat the *same* spiritual meat; and did *all* drink the *same* spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them: and that rock was Christ." Hence we see that a partnership most blessed in its character was thus brought about, both as regards the Lord's gracious provision for them, and the responsibilities resulting therefrom.

Their failure to answer to this follows—"But with *many* of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness." We are allowed to see

the moral spring of *their* failure, in order that *we* may be preserved from it. This evil spring was selfishness, all their sorrowful history sprang from that—"They lusted after evil things"—this led them into idolatry, for if I allow my heart to go after any evil thing, that thing will control me. Then follows fornication, for if my heart becomes controlled by any evil thing, I shall be led into unholy associations and thus lose the presence and support of Christ. The result of this is that I shall be in danger of putting Christ to the test—of tempting Christ, as they did when they said, "Is the Lord among us or not?" and "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" If I lose the presence and support

of Christ I shall find the way hard and shall murmur. This is the climax, for they that murmured were destroyed.

What then is the preservative from selfishness? LOVE; hence, whilst we get on the one hand, "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry," we have on the other, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's" (lit.).

It is of great interest to consider the way in which we are preserved. First, we get the fact that there is no necessity for any one to yield to temptation, for God who is faithful will always make a way to escape. As has been often pointed out, the way of escape *may* be through death. No one

can be compelled to give way to temptation, for he can always die sooner than yield—"Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." This brings us to the truth of the Lord's table, for everything presented in the Lord's table has reached us *through death*. If I am prepared to die sooner than yield to temptation, I am prepared to respond to the truth set forth there.

As we have already seen, the idea of a table as presented in the scriptures is usually that of provision—"Thou preparest a table before me" (Psalm xxiii.); "Can God furnish a table?" (Psalm lxxviii.). The Lord's table sets forth therefore the Lord's provision for our souls. "The cup



of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion [partnership] of the blood of Christ ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion [partnership] of the body of Christ ? ” All that which the heart of God delights to bestow, all those blessings which are secured by the death of Christ, and administered by the Lord, are *for all Christians alike*. The Lord's table therefore sets forth that wealth of blessing which is the common heritage of *all* God's people, and thus forms their bond of partnership in the midst of a hostile world—“ We being many are *one* bread, and *one* body : for we are *all* partakers of that *one* bread.”

The blessings of this partner-

ship have all reached us through the death of Christ, and every partner has become such by the appropriation of His death. The removal in death of all that which is *of man*, and the establishment in power—through death—of all that which is *of God* (all that the love of God has given in the death of Christ), is thus the common property of all Christians. They enter into this partnership by that which made them Christians, viz. the appropriation of the death of Christ.

This places them *all alike* under the obligations and responsibilities which flow from such partnership, for in the very nature of things, if I am a partaker of the *gains* I must also of necessity

partake of the *responsibilities*. It is of immense moment to see this, for an idea is abroad that Christians are at liberty to take up, or leave alone, these obligations at will. Hence the hesitation of many to partake of the Lord's Supper on account of the obligations which are seen to accompany it. The fact really is, that if I am a Christian, I am *already* a partner (whether I break bread or not), and am therefore responsible to be faithful to the partnership bond. I do not break bread in order to become a partner, but that I may express the fellowship already formed.

The question may be asked, What are the obligations which bind each partner? *First*, the

table is the Lord's, His death has furnished all those blessings of which they partake. He who gave His body and His blood is surely entitled to the affections of His people. "Thou gav'st Thyself our love to win." This is taken up in verse 22: "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than He?" His love is so great that He is jealous of our affections. The word as to this is clear in 2 Timothy ii. 19: "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord [lit.] depart from iniquity."

*Secondly*, each partner is under obligation to all the other partners to act consistently with the partnership bond. He is not to seek his own, is to be free from selfish-

ness, and is to consider the welfare of his partners. The fact is that if I allow anything inconsistent with the death of Christ in myself or in my associations, I am acting unrighteously and thus doing them serious injury.

One word as to verse 21. He does not say ye *ought not* to "be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils," but "ye *cannot*." It is quite *impossible* for the heart to partake of the Lord's blessed provision, and thus to be filled with and swayed by His love, and at the same time to be controlled by some evil thing which it desires for itself.

I desire to add a remark with

reference to Chapter xi. In connection with the supper, the Lord gives His people such fresh impressions of His love (as expressed in His death) that the heart is awakened and revived in affection towards Himself, and those who are His. This forms the spring in the power of which the obligations of Chapter x. can alone be carried out.

May the Lord keep us so swayed by His love that it may govern our relations with Himself and with those with whom we are in partnership.

H. B.

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