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THE TABLE OF DÆMONS.

1 CORINTHIANS X. 21.

As the Table of the Lord stands in this passage for the Lord's Supper, and indirectly for Christianity and all its associations of belief and feeling, so does the "Table of Dæmons"[1] stand for the opposed ideas and beliefs of heathendom. It may be worth the trouble of a little research to ascertain what place the sacrificial table filled in ethnic thought, and more especially in Greece.

In the Prophets we find allusions to the table, or food and drink offerings, prepared in honour of heathen deities, corresponding to the Roman *lectisternia*. Thus in Isaiah lxv. 11, the Gentiles are characterized as those "who prepare a table for Gad[2] and fill up mixed drinks for the goddess Destiny." Cakes, fine meal, oil, and honey, are mentioned as constituents of these food-offerings.[3]

In the description given by Diodoros of the temple of Bêl at Babylon (whom he identifies with Zeus), he mentions a large table of beaten gold, forty feet by fifteen, which stood before the colossal statues of three deities, whom he calls Zeus, Héra, and Rhea. Upon it stood two drinking cups.[4] Whatever be the source of the story of Bêl and the Dragon, it evidently presents an interesting and faithful picture of the trickeries of heathen priests, and the imposture of heathen worship. The priests of Bêl had made a secret passage under the table of the god; and after the door of the temple had been closed and sealed with the royal seal, they came, with their wives and children, and consumed

[1] *τράπεζα δαιμονίων.* [2] *τῷ δαιμονίῳ*, LXX.
[3] Jer. vii. 18, cf. li. 44; Ezek. xvi. 18; xxiii. 41. [4] Diod. Sic., ii. 9.

the provisions, which, in the popular belief, formed the meal of the god.

We may compare with this story the scene in the temple of Asklépios at Athens, treated with the rich humour of Aristophanes. The blind Plutus, attended by his servant Kariôn, visits the temple to obtain recovery of his sight. He, with the other patients, is bidden by the minister of the god, who has put out the lights, to sleep, and to keep silence, if any noise should be heard. Kariôn cannot sleep for the appetising smell of a jar of porridge not far off, the present of an old toothless woman to the god. He looks up, and sees the priest snatching the sacrificial cakes and dried figs from the sacred table, and afterwards going the round of the altars and making a clean sweep of any cakes that happened to be left there. "These he consecrated—to a bag!" Kariôn, thinking the example very holy, he says, proceeds to lay hands upon the jar of porridge.[1] There was another and more celebrated sanctuary of the same god at Epidaurus; many a Corinthian must have visited it, to seek a cure, or to gaze at the sacred serpents kept there. And from the table of such a "dæmon," and all its miserable associations of superstition and imposture, one can well imagine how anxious the Apostle would be to keep back his converts. In fact, there was at Corinth itself, a temple of Asklépios, and Sleep was his companion.[2]

But what we have to shew is, how familiar to every Greek was the sight of tables of gods, or, as St. Paul sternly calls them, dæmons. It seems that in every cult there was originally an altar and a table, the latter equally sacred with the former; the altar being destined for the burnt-offerings, the table for the fireless food-offerings. The table thus supplemented the altar.[3]

[1] Ar., *Plut.*, 660 ff. [2] Paus., ii. 10, 2.

[3] Boetticher, *Die Tektonik der Hellenen*, vol. iv. p. 265, has especially elucidated this subject.

Again, the distinction between the two sacred objects appears to correspond to the distinction between the "fore-sacrifices" (*prothumata*), at which the worshippers assisted and of which they afterwards partook; and the *penetrale sacrificium*, received only by the priest, and not brought by the worshipper into the *cella*. Pausanias mentions a case where there was no burnt-offering, the worship, namely, of Démétér at Phigalia. Grapes and other fruits, honeycomb, raw uncleansed wool, were placed on the altar, and olive oil was poured upon the whole. The priestess and the youngest of three priests performed the rite.[1] Here the altar seems to be identical in use with the table. At Megalopolis there was a sanctuary of the Lycæan Zeus, not to be entered. The interior, however, was visible; and there were altars of the god and two tables.[2] At the same place a table stood before the dwarf Héraklés and Démétér.[3] One of the most startling disclosures of the state of Greek superstition in the second century after Christ is connected with the usage of table-offerings. Our author calmly tells us that the people of Chæronea honoured, more than any god, the Sceptre said by Homer to have been fashioned by Hephaistos for Zeus, and by Zeus to have been handed down to Pelops and his line.[4] They had found it on the confines of Bœotia and Phokis, and had gladly surrendered some gold found at the same time, to the Phokians, in exchange for the relic. Of its genuineness and divine nature the periégéte was quite persuaded. He says there was no public temple built for this precious fetish; but every year the priest had it in a chapel; there were daily sacrifices, and a table stood before it full of all manner of meats and confections.[5]

The peculiar sacredness of the table in heathen worship

[1] Paus., viii. 42, 5.
[2] *Ibid.*, viii. 30, 2.
[3] *Ibid.*, viii. 31, 1 (insert τράπεζα after ἔμπροσθεν).
[4] *Iliad*, i. 100 ff.
[5] Paus., ix. 40, 6.

may be apprehended from the manner in which it is joined with the altar in solemn formulæ.

Polybius[1] speaks with horror of a massacre as perpetrated "about the altar and the table of the goddess" (Athéna). The Roman customs in general reflect the Hellenic; and, in Inscriptions, we read of the dedication of *ara et mensa*[2] simultaneously, which is also testified to by the old commentator on Vergil.[3] In fact, the table might entirely replace the altar; and it would seem that in course of time the former absorbed more and more of sacred significance. The Papirian law refers to the *augusta mensa* in the temple of Juno Populonia as thus taking the place of an altar, and gives the most eminent place among the sacred utensils to the table on which the foods, libations, and gifts are laid. How the table attracted to itself the associations of the altar may be seen from the interchangeable use of "altar" and "table" by the Christian fathers from the fourth century.[4]

Gold, silver, brass or bronze, and ivory,[5] are named as materials for the sacred tables.

To their service a special class of officials was set apart, who took their designation from the object, and were termed *trapezitai*, or *trapezophoroi*, *kallitrapezoi*, etc. At Athens the latter names are expressly given to the priestesses of the goddess, who performed all sacrifices in her honour.[6] It was the duty of a separate official, the Kommô, to tend the ἕδος, ædicula or shrine, containing the image of the goddess. It was in front of the agalmata, or images, that the tables, with the repast intended for the spiritual beings supposed to

[1] iv. 35.

[2] Orelli, *Inscr.*, No. 1795, 2270.

[3] Serv., *ad. Aen.* viii. 279; cf. *Aen.* ii. 764, iii. 257, vii. 111.

[4] Martigny, *Dict. des Antiq. Chrétiennes*, s.v. *Autel.*

[5] Athenæ., xv. 48; Aelian, *V. H.*, i. 20; Paus., viii. 31, v. 20; Cic., *N. D.*, iii. 34.

[6] Athenæ., iv. 170; Bekker, *Anecd.*, i. 307.

be localized in them, were placed;[1] and Livy tells some strange stories of how the busts of the gods of Rome on their Pulvinaria turned away from the banquet in displeasure, and caused the golden dishes to fall from the tables.[2]

When we compare what is thus known respecting the heathen table with the use of the phrase "table of dæmons" by the Apostle, it seems tolerably clear that he is referring in the general sense to heathen sacrifices both of the altar and the table, so including those of which the worshipper ritually partook. In Chapter viii. he expressly refers to flesh that has been offered in sacrifice, and to sitting at meat in the idol's temple. Here, then, arises another question: namely, the religious significance, in heathen belief, of the sacrificial repast. And to us it seems that the sitting at the sacrificial feast was, in heathen custom, equivalent to an acknowledgment of the presence and power of the god; that to sit at the dæmon's table was to own oneself his guest.

For proof of our thesis let us turn to the oldest representation of such a feast in Greek literature; it is to be found in the first book of the Iliad. Apollo hearkens to the prayer of Chryses, his priest, that he will protect the Greeks from the pest. The description of the sacrifice follows. Prayer is offered, and barleycorns are scattered between the horns of the victim, which is then slaughtered and flayed. The thighs are cut out and enveloped in two folds of fat, and upon them are placed in dedication pieces of the flesh. The offering is burned, with a libation of wine. The inwards

[1] According to a Spartan legend, the Dioskouroi came to the house o Phormiôn, which they had formerly occupied, and in the guise of strangers demanded hospitality. They asked for a favourite room, which was denied them, it being occupied by Phormiôn's maiden daughter. Next day she and her attendants were missing; while the images of the gods were found in the room, and a table with *silphion* on it.—Paus., iii. 16, 3.

[2] xl. 59, cf. xxii. 9.

of the victim are then eaten, and the remainder divided and roasted. The banquet follows; the god is propitiated with song in his praise: and he delights in his heart as he listens.[1] Similarly, in the Odyssey,[2] Athéné is conceived as listening and looking on with joy as prayer and sacrifice proceed. From the Homeric down to post-Christian times, there was, among the serious mass of the people, the same vivid realization of the presence of the gods as spiritual beings on such occasions.[3] No one can doubt it who reads, whether in the pages of men of refinement and learning like Athenæus and Plutarch, of the weak and narrow minded, but faithfully believing, Pausanias, or the scoffing *bel esprit*, Lucian. The notion, so fashionable among modern mythologists, that the gods of the Greeks were allegories of sun and moon, etc., is one that simply disappears like a waking dream when once we open our eyes, and attend to the evidence, and understand what we are talking about. Here, for example, at Corinth, the god Hélios had been honoured from the earliest times on the Akrokorinthos. His name is the name of the sun; and the solar attributes were partly borrowed to express him. But he himself was a god who heard as well as saw everything; and men offered libations not of wine but of honey on his altars, saying that drunkenness should be foreign to the nature of one who swayed and continually made the circuit of the world.[4] No doubt there was a large class of idlers and loafers in the Greek cities who lived in great part upon the sacrifices, and who were much more interested in the meal with which they ended, than in the religious ceremonies with which they began.[5] No doubt

[1] *Il.*, i. 457 ff.

[2] iii. 435 ff. For the separate tables, characteristic of the heroic time, cf. xvii. 333, 447, xxii. 74.

[3] Cf. Beyschlag's little tract, *Griechenthum u. Christenthum*, p. 40.

[4] Athenæ., xv. 48.

[5] Cf. Aristoph., *Peace*, 1105; *Wasps*, 654; *Knights*, 410, 420, 902, 1104.

there were many enlightened heathen at Corinth who had ceased to believe in any real existence corresponding to the idols. But, probably, there a were larger number who "being used to the idol" until St. Paul's time, "ate as of a thing sacrificed to an idol"; and their conscience being weak, was defiled.[1]

To the best feeling of heathendom there was, indeed, something very beautiful in the idea of the divine presence hallowing and chastening the enjoyment of the meal. Among the ancients, says Athenæus, the origin of every festive gathering was traced to a god. Garlands proper to the god were used, and hymns and odes; free men, not slaves, were the ministers. And, again, the ancients, conceiving the gods in human form, made their arrangements for festivals accordingly. Considering the eager propensity of men for enjoyment, it was thought well to accustom them to order and decorum, by appointing a set time, and by first sacrificing to the gods, before giving themselves up to recreation; so that each man, thinking that the gods were present at the first fruits and libations, might take his part in the meeting with reverence. Conceiving that the gods were nigh them, their feasts were held with order and temperance. And for this reason it was the ancient custom to sit at the sacrificial meal, not to recline; nor did they drink to intoxication; but having rendered the libation, and having drunk to his satisfaction, each man went home.[2]

But how disorderly and dissolute the heathen observances had become at Corinth may be inferred from the picture sketched by St. Paul in Chapter xi:[3] "In your eating each one pounceth on his own supper; and one is hungry and another is drunken." The converts had, in fact, imported the worst heathen behaviour at meals into the Church. Plutarch describes the result of the declension from the

[1] 1 Cor. viii. 7 (R.V. reading συνηθείᾳ).
Athenæ., viii. 65. [3] Ver. 21.

ancient religious custom of assigning to each guest his portion. Eating from a common board leads to quarrelling, to filching, and snatching, and finger-battles, and elbowings, and abuse and passion, among the guests and the waiters. "'Tis monstrous and dog-like," he says. The confusion may be compared to the rush and wash of water about a quick sailing trireme.[1] One can imagine the feelings of shame and indignation with which the Apostle learned of these disorders, and found it necessary to remind the Corinthians of the simple and solemn purport of the Lord's Supper. It seemed, in this and in other respects, as if the pure current of Evangelical truth and sentiment, instead of cleansing the foulness of Corinth, was in danger of being itself polluted in passing through them. And unhappily even to this day—as the study of its popular lore and customs must convince us—Greece remains a stronghold of heathenism, under changed names. Something very like the sitting at meat in the *eidôleion* is practised still, according to the late Ludwig Ross, to whom we owe some valuable contributions to our knowledge of the land and people.

Strabo speaks of a remarkable temple of Poseidôn on the isle Ténos. It was placed in a grove outside the city, and contained large dining-halls; a sign (he says) that a large number of the people there met together to celebrate the feast Poseidonia.[2] Ross, in a letter from Amorgos,[3] refers to this passage, and describes a level near the church of the Virgin (the Panagia Kastriani) which is covered with small heaps of stones. Here the people lodge for several nights on the occasion of the feast of the Virgin. Still more to the purpose is his notice from Pholegandros.[4] Here a long

[1] *Sympos.*, ii. 10. Much is here said about the blessing of *koinônia*, communion in the ethical sense.

[2] x. 747.

[3] *Inzel-reisen*, ii. 47.

[4] *Ib.*, i. 148. Hermann and Stark, *Lehrb.*, §28, n. 22, connect this with the ἐν εἰδωλείῳ κατακεῖσθαι, 1 Cor. viii. 10.

side-building abuts against the church of the Panagia, called Trapeza, "Table." On the 15th August, the feast-day of the Virgin, all the people assemble here, young and old, and partake of a common joyous meal. Greece, in these relics of ancient custom, remains the ancient in the modern, the old in the new.

In another important respect the heathen sacrificial feasts presented at once a parallel, and a contrast, to the central rite of Christianity. They implied, not only the presence and approval of the god, but the *koinônia*, the kinship, or some other kind of communion of the worshippers with one another. Two cases from the speeches of the Attic orators may be cited in illustration of this dependence of fellowship on the common religious bond. In Dinarchus against Aristogenes,[1] we read that a decree had been passed against the defendant to the effect that none should kindle fire for him, nor eat bread with him, nor partake with him of the sacrifices. In the speech of Isæus de Astyphilo,[2] which turns on a question of adoption, the orator says that no one who had once been adopted out of his family could return to his house, except by a legal process. "Now these men, knowing full well that Astyphilos did not adopt the son of Kleôn, never gave him a share of the meat" (*i.e.* of the family sacrifices), "though he often came." Communion (*Koinônia*) was indeed a word endeared to the heart of the Greek, whether ordinary man or philosopher. But he was, after all, narrow in his acceptation of the thought; he excluded slave and resident foreigner alike from participation in the sacrificial feasts.[3] He dreamed not of that sublime and world-embracing spiritual communion which knew nothing of Jew or Greek as such, and which was symbolized in the holy "Table of the Lord." Because it was narrow-hearted, as well as because it represented some

[1] § 9. [2] § 33. [3] *Cf.* the interesting Inscription in Ussing, p. 49.

of the darkest superstitions that have tyrannized over the conscience of mankind, it was impossible that men should partake at once of the "table of dæmons," and of *that* Table.

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THE BOOK OF ISAIAH.—CHAPTERS XL.-LXVI.

V.—ISRAEL, THE SERVANT OF THE LORD.

THE mission given to the Prophet being to preach "comfort" to the people of Israel, the great theme which he enlarges upon is their God. If the people had but right thoughts of God, such thoughts as this prophet entertains, it would be well with them. But, like Hosea, his complaint is that "there is no knowledge of God" among them: "How sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed away from my God? Hast thou not known? An everlasting God is Jehovah, creator of the ends of the earth, he fainteth not, neither is weary, there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint. The youths faint and are weary; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength" (xl. 27). It is characteristic of the Old Testament that it attributes all to God, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. Its conception of humanity is less developed; it has scarcely the beginnings of an anthropology. Salvation is of the Lord, and this salvation is of the nature of a crisis, a great interposition of Jehovah: "The Lord shall come with strong hand, his arm ruling for him." The conception of a humanity, with powers of its own in a certain sense, maturing the germ of redemption committed to its bosom, is due to our Lord, who suggests it in his parables, especially