

THE TABLE OF THE LORD

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The Table of the Lord by Caroline Fry

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CAROLINE FRY

**THE TABLE
OF THE LORD**

Wilson, Mrs.
= Caroline (Fry)

THE TABLE

OF

THE LORD.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE LISTENER," "CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE," &c.

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HERMAN HOOKER,

N. W. CORNER CHESTNUT AND FIFTH STREETS.

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THE LORD'S SUPPER.

CHAPTER I.

ON EXTERNAL ORDINANCES.

God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. The bended knee, the sacramental sign, the worded formulary and stated service were not devised for Him. He knows what we want before we ask, and needs not that any man should tell him. He knows what we are before it has been manifested in thought, or word, or deed—before one thought betrays the yearning of our affections—one word confesses the persuasion of our minds—or one act exposes the principle that reigns within us. Nay, the mere voiceless consciousness of the soul is not necessary to Him: He knows our love or hate before it knows itself: He knows—how much! that we have never known, of the heart from which He requires this spiritual worship. “When thou wast under the fig-tree I saw thee.”—Saw what? not the man Nathanael in the act, as he probably was, of prayer; this would not have surprised Nathanael into an immediate recognition of his

diety. Jesus saw under the fig-tree a chosen disciple who had not yet known his Saviour, unconsciously made ready to choose him and confess him when he appeared. "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God." All the discovery was on Nathanael's part; the Master had known his servant under the fig-tree—and long—how long before! "Before I formed thee in the womb, I knew thee."—"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." He sees the love that never saw itself, and accepts the unconscious service. "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered and fed thee?" He feels the hatred that knows not its own object: "Who art thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest." He accepts the faith that doubts of its own existence—minute as a grain of mustard-seed; and how he estimates the guilt of sins unconsciously committed, is apparent in the sacrifices appointed for them under the Mosaic dispensation.

It is not for Deity, then, that the manifestations and expression of devotions are required. It is not for himself God has appointed forms and places and symbolic signs, nor to himself he has adapted them. Mark here the pride and absurdity of human reasoning. We hear it said, "What does God care for forms and ceremonies? What can it signify to Him, who reads the heart, whether I pray in one place or another, or any where at all, if I live under a

sense of dependence upon Him? Is there any charm in the posture of the body, in the sprinkling of water, and muttering of words, and setting apart of days and sanctifying of places?—Every man is before God what he is in his heart, in spite of creeds, and formularies, and institutions of religion; irrelevant all to the nature of the Eternal Spirit; and what have they to do with the spirit of a man?" We answer, no more than the paper on which our words are written, and the characters in which they are expressed, have to do with the thoughts and feelings they convey from the mind of him who writes, to the mind of him who reads. Religious ordinances are the medium of communication God has appointed between himself and us, suited, not to His nature, but to ours. In earthly language, by material images and with sensible signs, the Deity holds communion with his earth-born creatures, and chooses to receive communications back again. It was left for the intellect of fallen man to discover that they are superfluous, contemptible—to mock at the simple machinery of the forbidden fruit, by which the first movement of sin was to be detected: to cavil at the similitude of earthly passion ascribed to the mind of the impassible God, of joy, and grief, and anger, and repentance; above all, to pour out the full vial of his scorn, the very spleen of his indignant reason, against that great device, that mys-