

terises as an unbearable yoke. He warns them not to tempt God by reviving a question that was settled by divine authority ten years before, and concludes by showing that there is but one and the same way of Salvation for Jew and Pagan—namely, by faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul and Barnabas came forward with more facts bearing on the case, and proving clearly that God smiled on the attempt to evangelize the heathen.

JAMES the JUST, himself a strict observer of the law, who was "continually in the temple on bended knee praying for the salvation of his unbelieving kinsmen,"—is the next to speak. His appeal is to the Word of God. He briefly shows that the admission of the Gentiles is in fulfilment of Prophecy. God was only bringing to pass His eternal decrees and fulfilling His promises. He concludes with a "MOTION" which is a practical inference from fact and prophecy—fully agreeing with the sentiments uttered by Peter and Paul,—That the liberty of the Gentiles be not interfered with, but that they be charged to abstain from the abominations of idolatry and fornication, and from the flesh of strangled animals and from blood.

This motion is accepted by all. The apostles and elders, and the whole Church, send to the Gentile Churches some of their leading men with a letter containing the substance of the resolution moved by James. The "Deputies" proceed speedily to Antioch where they and their tidings are received with great joy.

We have to offer the following observations on the "first Synod."

1. The question at stake was the condition of salvation. God could have decided it at once by inspiring one or other of the apostles to speak with His authority.

But the decision is left to be reached by the exercise of the logical faculty on the great truths of God's word and the wise acts of His Providence. The Synod was willing to be guided by manifestations of God's will in His Providence. The same way of deciding questions is open to the Church in all ages.

2. The discussion was conducted by

the apostles and elders and the decision was arrived at by the apostles and elders; but the "brethren"—the members of the Church—the Christian congregation were present, were deeply interested, and their concurrence in the decision was fully secured. The people—the membership of the Church—should be duly consulted in all ecclesiastical movements, and their approbation sought and obtained. We see no trace here of the proud hierarchical system which eventually converted the government of the Church into an iron tyranny.

3. All the decrees of the First Synod are not binding on us. Abstinence from blood and from that which is strangled is evidently adapted to peculiar and temporary circumstances. Apostolic example is imperative when it concerns the substance of Government and Worship; not otherwise. The "holy kiss"—the "washing of feet"—the "love feast"—the weekly or daily celebration of the Lord's Supper,—and these examples of abstinence,—are not to be regarded as binding on the Church always and everywhere. The Church was not bound in the grave clothes of a minute ritual; her heritage from Christ and the apostles is glorious liberty, regulated by the Word, the Spirit, and the exercise of the reasoning faculties, and that wisdom which God gives to those who ask Him.

4. The history of this Synod warrants the Presbyterian system. There is full and open discussion. The apostles and elders freely discuss the question before them. Peter in one of epistles calls himself an elder; and it was in this capacity that he and his brethren took part in the Council. The Council met, not to institute new laws, not to bind grievous burdens on the people without their concurrence, but to determine the practical application of principles to present questions which were pressing on the conscience of the individual believer and on the Church at large.

5. Divisions crept into the Church even in the days of the apostles. Fundamental error lifted its head proudly and threatened the ruin of the new religion. See how the errors and the errorists were met: the