

ed together to investigate the dispute between Jewish and Gentile converts, whilst there is much connected with the work of that first council which fully harmonizes with Christ's gospel, there are some things which manifestly do not.

By what right did James, as President of the assembly, tack on to his deliverance certain legalistic observances concerning meats offered in sacrifice to idols, and things strangled and blood? If he took the ground that he was authorized by the Holy Ghost so to do, then he compromised the gospel of Jesus Christ, for, according to it, as we have seen, the Holy Ghost without limitations in any direction was installed as teacher and guide for every individual. But how could he be guide for individuals and at the same time constitute a human being his infallible mouthpiece for these same individuals?

The inference to us is that James, with the others, yielded to a species of fear lest the Holy Spirit should not be able alone to attend to the Gentile converts, and so they undertook to supplement his work with them as guide and teacher. This our opinion is confirmed by the expression "to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things" which occurs in the letter sent to the Gentile converts, for the whole passage smacks of the duty life, whilst the word *necessary* is really apologetic in its character and so betrays its human origin.

Moreover, we hesitate not to connect this failure in perfect loyalty to the Holy Ghost with the fearful evils which afterwards fell upon the church through the deliverances of councils. For, evidently this was made an authoritative precedent, and so, under cover of this apostolic blunder, Popery was enabled truthfully to call its decrees in council *apostolic*.

Notice also, in this connection, how little Paul was influenced by this deliverance, when regulating his Corinthian converts with reference to eating meats offered to

idols. He did not appeal to this united deliverance of the church in council as settling the matter, but undertook to settle it for them himself. This deliverance of the church in council curtly demanded that all Gentile converts should abstain from eating meats offered to idols. But Paul argued that the Corinthian converts should not look at the act as wrong in itself but only as possibly wrong in its bearings on the consciences of weak brethren.

This attitude of Paul toward the matter would imply either that the deliverances of the church in council were not looked upon as of equal authority with the Holy Ghost, or that they soon became a dead letter, the majority speedily realizing that such deliverances were out of harmony with Christ's definite teaching concerning the Holy Ghost as an independent guide for every individual. Besides, we are not to leave out of this consideration of the whole matter, the great temptation which must have come to the church in the second century to make the most of this first council as an authoritative precedent. This would incline some to tamper with the text in the interest of legalism as far as they conscientiously could, and as to how far that could be done, illustrative incidents are not wanting.

Now, in throwing out this suggestive argument, we are not intentionally playing into the hands of destructive critics. We have it on very good authority—the authority of some of the early fathers—that changing the rendering of scripture was a very common practice in the first centuries.

It is hard for modern christians, brought up as they have been in the firm belief of the sacredness and inspired character of every part of the bible, to realize how different such an act as changing a scripture would appear to a copyist in the first or second century, from what it would to a nineteenth century one. Then this