

parallels for the gospel the more we are likely to confirm monism.

When Gentiles began to be converted to Christ, problems arose which led to the Jerusalem conference. The conclusions were sent out to the churches but a few years later the matter of meats offered to idols was brought up again by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians. The problem here is what to do with things already used in idolatrous worship and which are still the symbols of idolatrous worship to some. The position Paul takes here is not that of allowing for the ignoring of the Jerusalem Council but of upholding it because of the almost sure possibility of putting a stumbling block in someone's path if it is ignored. He even warns against eating in a restaurant on the temple grounds, where everything is dedicated to the service of the idols, lest the example lead someone to ruin (1 Cor 8:9-13).

But in 1 Cor 10, Paul seems to carry the argument against accommodating oneself to eating things sacrificed to idols beyond that of the possible ill effects it may have on others, to an apparent condemnation based on the nature of the thing, and the ill effect it may have on the participator himself. In v14 he warns, "Flee from idolatry." Then he cites two illustrations as background for the conclusion he is to draw. In vv16 and 17, Paul notes that the Christian communion service is a fellowshiping with Christ. Next, in v18. he says that the Jews, eating the temple sacrifices, understand that they are partaking of all that is symbolized by the altar; to them it meant a communion with God. Now is it different with the heathen? Not that there is any reality to the idol, he repeats, but that behind the idol there are demons and it is to these the Gentiles are really sacrificing; their offerings are a symbol of their communion. The Christian cannot fellowship with demons, nor can he participate at a table where demon offerings are being made (vv19-21). The one who thinks he is strong enough to do this without harm is thinking that he is stronger than God, because God has forbidden it (v22). Then in vv23, 27-28 we read:

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go: whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you. This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof.

The conclusion seems to be that if anything has a very loose or distant connection with an idolatrous symbol this is not of vital concern, unless another points out the connection as something to be avoided (v28). In that case one must be ready to abstain to avoid hurting the other's conscience.

As the century drew to a close, we see that this matter of eating or refraining from food sacrificed to idols was a key test of loyalty to Christ. John mentions it in connection with the sins of two of the seven churches in Revelation, condemning the church of Thyatira for listening to one who led them "to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols" (Rev 2:20).

Even in the passage where Paul warns against any conduct which might compromise one's own or another believer's testimony, however, he does go on to indicate that he himself practised a measure of identification. In 1 Cor 9:20-22 we read,