

who imagine that the least doubt thrown upon the accuracy of any one passage in the New Testament is a blow aimed at the trustworthiness of the whole, that they may see that doubting the accuracy of a passage is sometimes the lesser of two evils. If, to them, this doubt, in the least entertained, is to be at sea concerning all scripture, then for them it is only a choice between the devil and the deep sea. The consideration of this one passage ought, in our judgment, to dismiss forever this absurd thought from their minds.

But we have a fact stated in this narrative which is confirmed by other testimony, viz., that there were at this time many of the Jewish converts to Christianity who retained much, if not all, their former zeal for Judaism, and who evidently clung to the opinion that Christianity did not mean the death of the ceremonial laws of Moses. Is this evidence that the teaching of Christ concerning obedience to the Spirit was misunderstood by these his followers?

We answer that it might be evidence to that effect, or it might not, but to answer intelligently and correctly, further details of the fact must be known.

The instructions of Christ to his disciples were to the effect that the Holy Ghost would teach them all things and guide them into all truth. But he gave, as we have seen, no intimations as to the manner or outward results. Hence, it would not necessarily militate against the teaching of Christ if the Spirit should tell the bulk of the Jewish converts to remain zealous for the law during the first years of their christian life.

To practice any form of legality at the command of the Spirit, and to practice the same because it was found in the bible or taught by the church are two diverse matters. For, the one doing so at the command of the Spirit is prepared to change in any direction or totally abandon any legalistic practice at the command of the same Supreme Teacher. But, the

other is not so prepared, for, as his authority is the bible or the church, he cannot be led to modify his legalistic practices in any direction or abandon them altogether at the simple command of the Spirit.

Hence, we infer, that it is quite possible that this multitude of Jewish converts were sanctioned in their zeal for the law by the Holy Ghost.

And yet, it is possible also, that many of them, yes, even the great majority, had adopted Christianity after a legalistic pattern and were not willing to give up this zeal for Moses and his institutes at the sole command of the Spirit.

This latter class are fully described by Paul in his letter to the Galatians—they had begun in the Spirit but were already fallen from grace.

But we search in vain in this same book of the Acts of the Apostles to find a clear antidote preached against such legalistic tendencies. That the absence of such teaching from the narrative does not prove its absence from the teaching of the church, goes without saying; but this is tantamount to saying that as far as these records are concerned we cannot determine how clearly the gospel of Jesus was apprehended by his disciples, or rather, how long after Pentecost they retained a clear understanding of the teachings and life of their Master, whilst, in the incidents we have noted there is some indication that already some mists were gathering around the minds of the very first preachers of the gospel, as to its true attitude to legalism, unless we take refuge in the probable fact that the next generations of christians were able to fling some of their errors into Luke's writings.

However, in closing these our investigations of this book of *The Acts* we remark, that in all likelihood we will refer to it again and again, whilst examining the epistles, and then group it with all the other books of the New Testament in our final conclusions.