

Author's Preface

TO THE 1927 EDITION

It is now fifteen years since this book was first published, and it is thought that a new and cheaper edition may be useful. In these fifteen years I have seen, and I have heard from others, that action in many parts of the world has been influenced by the study of St. Paul's missionary methods; and I myself am more convinced than ever that in the careful examination of his work, above all in the understanding and appreciation of his principles, we shall find the solution of most of our present difficulties. We are talking today of indigenous churches. St. Paul's churches were indigenous churches in the proper sense of the word; and I believe that the secret of their foundation lay in his recognition of the church as a local church (as opposed to our 'national churches') and in his profound belief and trust in the Holy Spirit indwelling his converts and the churches of which they were members, which enabled him to establish them at once with full authority. It is not easy for us today so to trust the Holy Ghost. We can more easily believe in His work in us and through us, than we can believe in His work in and through our converts: we cannot trust our converts to Him. But that is one of the most obvious lessons which the study of St. Paul's work teaches us. I believe that we have still much to learn from his example.

In the reviews which appeared when this book was first published I was surprised and pleased to find that little fault was found with my statement of the Apostolic practice. Accepting the statement of the facts as substantially true, critics almost invariably fixed on two points: (1) that the gulf between us and the people to whom we go is deeper and wider than that between St. Paul and those to whom he preached; (2) that he could rely upon converts from the synagogue to preserve his churches from dangers only too plain to us. The

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conclusion drawn was that what was possible for him in his day is impossible for us in ours.

To the first of these criticisms I replied in a book entitled *Educational Principles and Missionary Methods*, in which I argued that the greater the gulf the greater was the value of the apostolic method. That argument is too long to summarize here. To the second I may say here briefly: (1) That the dangers which we anticipate, the dangers of lowering a standard of morals, or of a confusion of Christian doctrine by the introduction of ideas borrowed from heathen philosophy or superstition, were not less in his day than in ours; (2) that the breach between the Synagogue and the Christian Church arose so early and was so wide that as a matter of fact churches were soon being established which certainly were not 'off-shoots of the local synagogue', and yet the apostolic practice was maintained; (3) that at Corinth, and in Galatia, and in Ephesus, the presence of Jews or proselytes in the church did not prevent the dangers from arising; if St. Paul relied upon them, they failed him; (4) that the argument demands that we should admit that Mosaic teaching is a better foundation for Christian morality and theology than the teaching of Christ and of the Holy Spirit; (5) that St. Paul's faith in Christ and in His Holy Spirit would have forced him to act as he did, under any circumstances. He could not have relied upon any power either in heathen philosophic, or in Mosaic, teaching to establish his converts, under any circumstances whatsoever; (6) that if we went to China or to India and told those people that in morality and intelligence they were so far beneath the provincial Jews and proselytes of St. Paul's day that he could not have dealt with them as he did with the provincials of Galatia, they would be insulted, and we should be saying what we should find it hard to prove. And if anyone answers me that when we use such speech we are thinking only of people in Africa and other uncivilized lands, I must reply that we are plainly thinking of all men everywhere, because we everywhere employ the same method, and everywhere alike shrink from establishing the Church on the apostolic plan.

In the light of experience gained in the last fifteen years I might have enlarged this book, but it did not seem wise to add greatly to its bulk. I have therefore contented myself with making as few corrections and additions as possible, and have carried

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the argument further in a book, which is now published as a companion volume to this, entitled *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church and the Causes which Hinder it*. In that book I have tried to set forth the secret of an expansion which was a most remarkable characteristic of apostolic churches, and have examined the hindrances which have prevented us from establishing such churches.

If any of my readers desire to pursue the consideration of missionary methods further, I can only refer them to that book.

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