

## *Fear for the Doctrine*

One of the most serious difficulties in the way of any spontaneous expansion and of the establishment of apostolic churches arises from our fear for our doctrine. I once heard a missionary from Africa say that if we allowed our converts to teach as the Muslims allow their converts to teach, the doctrine might spread like wildfire. 'But,' he added, 'we could not possibly permit that.'

Such a saying might naturally surprise us. We might have expected that a man who went to Africa to propagate the doctrine would welcome with joy the prospect of its spreading like wildfire through the country. And he would assuredly do so unless he was restrained by some powerful influence. Nor is there any doubt what the restraining influence is. It is fear for the doctrine. He is afraid that the doctrine may be misrepresented by the unguided zeal of native Christians to teach others what they have learned. I do not think he is afraid that his converts would wilfully and deliberately misrepresent it: I think that he rather doubts their knowledge of it, and their ability to express it as he thinks that it ought to be expressed.

This fear compels him to say that we cannot possibly permit native Christians to express their spontaneous zeal in teaching others what they have learned, and in so saying he proclaims that we can generally restrain it, and do so. He proclaims also that, if we did not restrain it, spontaneous zeal would in fact spread the knowledge of the doctrine far and wide. He recognizes the presence and the power of such spontaneous zeal. He says that 'we do not allow', 'we could not permit' it to have free course.

I

Now this saying represents the thought of a very large number of our missionaries abroad, and of our people at home. We often hear it said that we must maintain at all costs our standard of

doctrine. We cannot possibly allow untrained and uncontrolled natives to propagate Christianity. It is this attitude that the believer in spontaneous expansion must meet, and it is, therefore, necessary to examine carefully its character.

But before I do that I would beg all those missionaries who protest that they do all in their power to encourage spontaneous activity on the part of their converts, to consider well whether this saying does not in fact represent their real thought, whether they do not in spirit accept the position that we must maintain our standard of doctrine, and that we cannot permit our converts to teach as the Muslims allow their converts to teach. For it is surely obvious that if we hold this theory spontaneous expansion is impossible. We may welcome spontaneous expansion, or we may refuse to permit it; but we cannot do both at once.

(1) The attitude which 'cannot allow', and 'cannot permit', is obviously the attitude of a governor: it is an imperial attitude. *We* must maintain, we say, *we* cannot permit. We, then, are the guardians of the standard, and we must maintain it not only for ourselves but for all who learn to believe on Christ through our preaching. In accepting our message they accept our direction. They are in our charge and we accept the responsibility for them. Unlike St Paul, we are far from disclaiming lordship over their Faith. The standard is ours, and we must maintain it.

(2) The standard to be so maintained must be a fixed standard; but if we were asked where this standard of doctrine is to be found, what should we say? Should we say, In the Catholic Creeds? That is not what we really mean when we talk about maintaining our standard of doctrine. If we are members of the Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society we mean a certain doctrine of inspiration: if we are members of the Anglo-Catholic party we mean what they mean when they speak of Full Catholic Teaching. It is not the Apostle's Creed that we think of when we speak of maintaining our standard of doctrine, but of some interpretation of it, or of some addition to it. And where that standard is to be found we do not know, for we are not all agreed as to the terms of it.

## II

On what do we rely for the maintenance of this standard? When we talk of maintaining it we are obviously not relying on its own inherent truth: it is we who are proposing to maintain it, and we are depending clearly upon some power which we possess to maintain it. There is clearly a great difference between 'contending earnestly for the Faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints',<sup>18</sup> and this maintaining of a standard by authority. When we contend earnestly for a Faith, the emphasis is upon the inherent truth of that for which we contend: when we maintain a standard, the emphasis rests upon the exercise of authority.

On what then do we rely for the exercise of this authority? Without doubt we rely upon our prestige; and in no small degree upon our wealth, and our ability to give to the converts all those material advantages which only money can supply, salaries and buildings and education and hospitals and such-like. This is a fact with which every student of missions at home and every man of experience in the mission field is familiar:

*Cherchez la bourse* will almost always lead one to the seat of real power in mission administration. Even societies which have been most emphatic in the assertion of the theory of the independence of native churches have found in the power of the purse a sure device by which to guard infant churches from lapses or novel experiment.<sup>19</sup>

We often attempt to disguise it, but it is appallingly true:

It is far from the thought of missionaries and boards to make their money a means of retaining control, but it is as futile in Asia as it is everywhere else to imagine that real independence is compatible with financial dependence.<sup>20</sup>

When we say we must maintain our standard, we certainly mean that it is *our* standard and not *their* standard; that for some reason they have not so accepted it that they will maintain it themselves. If we ask how it comes to pass that they have not so accepted it, the answer generally given is that it has taken us

ages to grow up to our present standard, and that it will take our converts generations to grow up to it, and that meanwhile they cannot maintain it for themselves. That answer simply confirms what I said above, that our standard which we maintain is something of our own age and race. It cannot be the Catholic doctrine in the sense that it is the doctrine of all the ages, of the primitive Christians as well as of us who live in this last age.

It is a question which we might well consider whether new Christians must necessarily begin at that point of development at which we happen to stand at the moment when we go to them. It is a question of still more serious importance whether a standard of doctrine can be really maintained by an external authority as a code of laws can be enforced by a conquering government upon a subject people; or whether a standard of doctrine must not essentially be something internal, maintained by people who really do understand and believe it. It does not seem to me that any maintenance of doctrine which does not spring voluntarily from internal convictions can properly be called a maintenance of doctrine at all. If that is so, for us to maintain a standard of doctrine is a kind of contradiction in terms.

How do we attempt to maintain it? First we make the preparation for baptism long and difficult by insisting upon each convert learning what is for very many of them difficult verbal lessons. Multitudes of our converts are totally unfamiliar with the kind of abstract language which the teaching of our doctrine involves, and consequently what seems to us very simple is for them very hard. When they have learned enough to satisfy their teacher that they are ready for Holy Baptism, they may be baptized, but we do not consider that they are therefore qualified to teach others what they have learned. And very often, if not generally, they do not themselves feel able to teach others; for they instinctively recognize that that kind of teaching is difficult, and that they themselves have not grasped it. Consequently they are not expected, and hardly themselves expect, to do more than listen to the teachers.

Then we train the teachers. We take children quite young and give them special training in elementary schools and high schools

and theological colleges, so that they can understand our use of abstract terms and can learn at least verbally our doctrinal expressions; and these men we set over the little congregations, knowing well that in the great majority of cases they do not know enough to do more than repeat exactly what they have been taught.

From amongst these teachers we select the men who repeat best and teach best from our point of view, and to these we give further teaching and then ordain them with great confidence that they will teach nothing but what they have learned from us. And these men we put into positions of greater authority, under superintending missionaries, and I have heard them complain, 'We do what we are told; but we do not understand what we are doing'.

In this way we certainly have succeeded in maintaining a standard of doctrine in the sense that in our missions heresy on any considerable scale is practically unknown. But what has been the result of this method of maintaining our standard?

(1) First a terrible sterility. Our converts have not gone astray from the fold; but they have produced nothing. We have taught them to depend upon us, rather than upon Christ, and dependence upon man produces sterility, dependence upon Christ produces spiritual and intellectual fecundity.

(2) We have convinced the heathen as well as our converts that to become a Christian it is necessary to learn the lessons imparted by one of the trained teachers, or better still to receive the instruction of a foreign missionary himself. This obviously tends to restrict advance to the number of paid and trained teachers, and when there is any widespread movement the missionaries are unable to meet the demand. Then, instead of blaming their method, they lay the blame upon their supporters at home, as if they ought to supply teachers for every village in the world.

Listen to this:

The pressure on the missionary of masses of these outcasts clamouring for teachers and for baptism at times passes all endurance. Several deputations are

on your verandah before dawn, waiting to press their claims.

‘Sahib, we want you to send teachers to our village.’

‘I am sorry, but I have none to send.’

‘But, Sahib, we want to learn all about Christianity.’

‘I know, but it is impossible.’

‘But, Sahib, we want to become Christians.’

‘I am very sorry, but you cannot.’

‘Sahib, cannot we become Christians?’

‘No, go away, go away.’

And the missionary drives them from his verandah, angry, indignant with the apathy of the Church that has placed him in such an impossible position.<sup>21</sup>

(3) The Doctrine has been maintained by external authority,, but it has hampered the thought of the people, and as the Christians advance and grow in understanding they begin to feel this dimly and to resent it. The result is that in places where our missions have been long established and where the converts have made great progress in intellectual education, as for instance, in India, there arises an instinctive, unreasoning, revolt.

When I was in India some years ago I was told repeatedly that young educated Indians were saying, ‘We will not have your Western Creeds’, but that they very seldom had any reasoned objection to them. As far as I could, I made enquiries for myself, and I found this to be true. Young educated Indians said to me, ‘We will not have your Western Creeds’. But when I inquired which particular articles in the Creed offended them, the only answer that I got was, ‘You have forced them upon us’.

Thus the maintenance of our standard of doctrine by external compulsion seems to proceed through sterility to revolt.

### III

(1) In the early Church we find a very different state of affairs. When the Christian Church was first spreading throughout the Roman Empire she certainly maintained a standard of doctrine, and that standard was not imperilled by the

spontaneous activity of a multitude of Christians who were certainly not trained theologians. These unknown missionaries taught the doctrine which they had learned, and that teaching was so far adequate that the bishops of the Church did not hesitate to consecrate new converts as bishops for the new churches without giving them any long or special training in theological colleges.

The great heresies in the early Church arose not from the rapid expansion resulting from the work of these unknown teachers; but in those churches which were longest established, and where the Christians were not so busily engaged in converting the heathen round them. The Church of that day was apparently quite fearless of any danger that the influx of large numbers of what we should call illiterate converts might lower the standard of church doctrine. She held the tradition handed down by the apostles, and expected the new converts to grow up into it, to maintain it and to propagate it. And so in fact they did. The danger to the doctrine lay not in these illiterate converts on the outskirts; but at home, in places like Ephesus and Alexandria, amongst the more highly educated and philosophically minded Christians. It was against them that she had to maintain the doctrine.

Now all this suggests quite a different atmosphere from that with which we are familiar. The Church of those ages was afraid of the human speculation of learned men: we are afraid of the ignorance of illiterate men. The Church then maintained the doctrine against men who were consciously innovating: we maintain the doctrine against men who may unconsciously misrepresent the Truth that they have learnt. The Church then maintained the doctrine by her faith in it: we maintain our doctrine by distrusting our converts' capacity to receive it. The Church then maintained her doctrine by thinking it so clear that any one could understand it: we maintain our doctrine by treating it as so complicated that only theologians can understand it. Consequently, the Church then was quite prepared that any man who believed in Christ should teach others what he knew of Him: we are only prepared to allow men whom we have specially trained to teach it. When others, whom we have not specially

trained, of their own spontaneous motion do teach others, we hasten to send a trained teacher to take their place. That is, of course, exactly what the early Church did not do, yet it maintained its standard of doctrine.

(2) And here I would recall the fact that in all those sporadic cases of spontaneous teaching with which we are familiar in our own day we never hear of any deliberate corruption of Christian doctrine. When our missionaries discover these cases, they nearly always find that the teaching given is, so far as it goes, true, and is very often surprisingly true and deep. These converts seem to have learned by themselves much that we think can only be taught by us. And what they have learned is very fundamental. And they seem also invariably to show a great readiness to learn more. Now that is not the spirit which breeds heresy. The spirit which breeds heresy is a spirit of pride which is puffed up with an undue sense of its own knowledge and is unwilling to be taught.

## IV

The reason why the spontaneous zeal of new converts does not breed that spirit is not hard to find. Such converts are almost invariably men who have had some real religious experience. They have heard something of Christ; they have received some teaching about Him; they have generally learned to repeat the Creed and to read the Bible; they have called upon Christ and been heard; and this has wrought a change in their whole outlook upon life, such a change that they are eager that others should share their experience. Hence they begin to teach others, and to share their experience with others.

Now all religious experience demands doctrine for its proper statement and explanation. If then these men are not well instructed in the Christian doctrine, when they attempt to share their experience with others they feel that there is much in it which they cannot understand. Consequently instruction in Christian doctrine comes to them with an enlightenment and a power which is a joy, and therefore they gladly receive it, because it supplies a felt need of their spiritual experience. In such an atmosphere Christian doctrine is in little danger, for though false



or inadequate teaching, if they received such, might prevail for a time, yet the true teaching when it comes must inevitably drive out the false. For the experience is a true experience, and a true experience demands a true doctrine.

It is as the complement of experience that Christian doctrine first took shape. It is notorious that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, for instance, was formulated through the attempts of the disciples of Christ to explain their experience. Christ appeared, and the apostles experienced His power: the Holy Ghost descended, and the apostles and their immediate followers knew His indwelling; the Christian doctrine of the Trinity arose out of attempts to express that experience.

It is as the complement of experience that the doctrine continues to have reality and meaning. We can remember how Cyprian wrote to Donatus:

As I, myself, was held in bonds by the innumerable errors of my previous life, from which I did not believe that I could by possibility be delivered, so I was disposed to acquiesce in my clinging vices; and became I despaired of better things, I used to indulge my sins as if they were actually parts of me, and indigenous to me. But after that, by the help of the water of new birth, the stain of former years had been washed away, and a light from above, serene and pure, had been infused into my reconciled heart – after that, by the agency of the Spirit breathed from heaven, a second birth had restored me to a new man; then, in a wondrous manner, doubtful things at once began to assure themselves to me, hidden things to be revealed, dark things to be enlightened, what before had seemed difficult began to suggest a means of accomplishment, what had been thought impossible, to be capable of being achieved.<sup>22</sup>

Now here is expressed a doctrine of baptismal regeneration, but it is the complement of experience, and as the complement of experience it is expressed with power, and has all the vigour of a new discovery. And so it is always.

As the complement of experience, doctrine renews its youth from age to age; but divorced from experience it is nothing more than the statement of an intellectual theory, and to rest in something which an intellectual process has created is to rest in that which an intellectual process can destroy.

Doctrine, accepted either as an intellectual satisfaction, or as an authoritative pronouncement, divorced from experience, has no power in itself. In the seventeenth century Richard Baxter, and all his readers alike, believed in the doctrine of a fiery hell, a doctrine delivered with all the weight of authority. Listen to his appeal to men to care for the souls of others, 'What if the man die and drop into hell while you are purposing to prevent it!' What doctrine is there conceivable more calculated to stir those who believed it? Yet Baxter complains, 'Alas, how few Christians are there to be found that set themselves with all their might to save souls!' They believed the doctrine, they assented to it, they accepted it, yet they were not moved by it.

It is vain to say that the doctrine was false or falsely stated, and therefore it failed. It failed not because it was false or falsely stated, but because it was mere doctrine divorced from experience. Experience of the power of Christ to deliver from sin and from fear of the punishment due to sin, did then, and does now, induce zeal; and the preaching of that power of Christ is Gospel; but the other by itself is mere doctrine, and, like all doctrine, in itself lifeless.

We see the same thing today. High sacramental doctrine should make men eager, if any doctrine could make men eager, to provide the sacraments for Christians, and to remove all hindrances which prevent men, anywhere, from using them; but we see those who most glorify the sacraments, glorifying them by external adornment and standing most stoutly for those very things which make the administration of them to Christians in out-of-the-way corners of the world impossible.

In the light, then, of the history of the early Church, and of our own experience of sporadic cases of spontaneous teaching, I venture to suggest that the method by which the early Church maintained its standard of doctrine is superior to ours, and that we should be free to rely upon the free expression by any convert,

however illiterate, of his spiritual experience, and to teach our doctrine as the complement of that experience. But that is nothing else than to open wide the door to that spontaneous expansion which the man I quoted at the beginning of this chapter deprecated, saying that we could not permit it.

Nevertheless the fear haunts us that if we allowed our converts, though they might be illiterate men, to teach freely what they had learned, the doctrine might spread like wildfire, and the country might be covered with multitudes of groups of men calling themselves Christians, but really ignorant of the first principles of Christ; and that thus the Church and her doctrine might be swamped, as it were, with a flood of ignorance. That is the fear which causes young educated Indians to protest against the admission of large numbers of outcasts into the Christian Church; that is the fear which causes some of our missionaries to say that we have no right to receive more illiterate converts than we can really teach.

Here we must observe that so far as these young educated Christians are concerned their fear is much more fear for the prestige of the Church, which has established through many years a reputation for having the highest standard of literacy of any religious body in the country, than for the purity of her doctrine. And as far as the missionaries are concerned they are thinking entirely in terms of a theory and method of missions which limits teaching to a comparatively small body of missionaries and their trained native helpers, and of doctrine almost entirely in terms of intellectual education.

Now I have already tried to show that spontaneous expansion proceeds by an expression of experience much more than by a mere intellectual instruction. This witness of experience brings a spiritual enlightenment, and spiritual enlightenment quickens the intellectual faculties, and prepares the mind for intellectual teaching: it also brings a great readiness to receive instruction. Consequently where there is spontaneous expansion there arise not only a multitude of witnesses to Christ's power; but also a host of teachers, not only ready to impart teaching, but to receive it.

This alters the whole complexion of the problem. For in such a case the Church would have to deal not with the few professional

teachers whom she could collect and train and pay; but with a host of unpaid men who were already teaching and eager to teach better. Moreover, under such circumstances men learn an immense amount from one another. They have a very quick eye for perceiving those who among them have a truer grasp of the realities of the doctrine; and they both can, and do, obtain help from them in the form which is most useful to them.

I am not denying that where spontaneous expansion was very rapid there might be very large numbers of dangerously ignorant converts; I am not denying that the fear expressed by these men is a reasonable fear; I am only saying that it is exaggerated because their conception of Christian doctrine is too intellectual, and they are familiar only with the teaching of doctrine which restricts it to a small number of teachers trained in a western manner, with the result that they cannot conceive any true advance in the apprehension of doctrine apart from this western intellectual education.

The mere fact that all these men are driven to declare that they would prefer that the spread of the Gospel should be deliberately restricted is enough to give anyone who is familiar with the Bible reason to think that there must be something wrong. In the Bible the preaching of Christ is not so purely intellectual, the apprehension of Christian doctrine is not so purely intellectual.

## v

What Christ asks of His disciples is not so much exposition of doctrine about Him as witness to His power. Now witness to His power can be given by the most illiterate if he has had experience of it. It does not require long training for a man to say: 'Whereas I was blind now I see', even though he may be compelled when asked: 'What sayest thou of Him?' to answer: 'I know not.' Such a man was quite prepared to say: 'I believe' and to worship, when told that his Healer was the Son of God. Christ did not require any long training in doctrine when He said to the Demonic of Gadara: 'Go and tell how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and how He had mercy on thee.'<sup>23</sup>

I remember a missionary in India telling me that most of the converts in his district were brought in by extremely illiterate

men. He said: 'The villagers look at them and say, "We know what you were, we can see what you are; what has made the difference?" These men cannot preach sermons,' he said, 'but they know enough to answer, "Christ", and the result is men are converted to Christ.' I do not remember that he told me that many evil results followed, or that the doctrine suffered from such witness. The truth is that such witness is a preaching of the doctrine, and of the true doctrine. The doctrine is implied in the witness, though it may not be intellectually apprehended. It is a far more true preaching of the doctrine than a long discourse on the Divinity of Christ. Does anyone seriously think that the doctrine would really suffer in the long run, if India or China, or Africa, were flooded from end to end with the teaching of men who knew enough to say: 'I called upon the Lord and He heard me,' 'I appealed to Christ and He saved me from my fear?' Does anyone doubt that in such ground as that true doctrine would flourish very abundantly? It ought to be a cardinal principle with missionaries that anyone who knows enough to be saved by Christ knows enough to tell another how he may be saved.

There is indeed a certain advantage which the illiterate possesses when teaching illiterate men. When the speaker says: 'I sought the Lord and He heard me,' and he was delivered from precisely those things under which his hearer labours, the witness is far more likely to come home to the hearer than when the speaker was delivered from a sin, a danger, or a fear so refined and subtle that the other cannot understand the fear of it at all. I suppose nearly all those who have tried to help other men have realized this difficulty. They have felt that the only thing to do in some cases is to call in, if they can, the assistance of a man who has actually been delivered from that particular vice, or danger, or fear. They realize that, however strangely to their ears that man may express his experience, yet, if only he will express it truly, his experience may do what their experience cannot do, that is, persuade the inquirer that if he, too, calls upon the Lord, he will be delivered.

There is a danger to which men who have had a literary training are liable, which does not seem to attack the illiterate to the same degree. Mental training teaches us to pay much attention

to secondary causes, and unless we are very careful we are apt to concentrate our attention upon the secondary causes: whereas the illiterate, knowing very little of secondary causes, often, or even generally, express themselves in terms of the first cause. The temptation to the trained mind is to dwell on the process by which deliverance came and to forget that the deliverance really preceded the process. While the difficulty seemed yet insoluble, I called and He heard; and the witness is: 'I called upon the Lord and He heard me.' But we are tempted to say: 'I was in a difficulty, and then I thought, and then I saw, and then I argued, and then I heard, and then I put two and two together, and then I found the solution of my difficulty.' It may be all quite true; but in stating the deliverance thus, we somehow alter the emphasis, and the statement becomes rather an explanation than a witness to Christ's power. Now, what distinguishes us Christians from other men is that we know the first cause; other men know secondary causes. But when we dwell upon the secondary causes we are likely to obscure rather than to reveal the first cause. And so instead of bearing witness to Christ we present an argument.

And the argument is never a sufficient explanation, and it is sometimes so weak that it can be easily answered. Moreover, if we succeed by this argument in convincing our hearer, we have only succeeded in convincing him by this argument so far as this argument serves. The moment another difficulty arises to which this argument is not applicable, he must either find another argument which will serve, or he is lost. Only if the witness has taught him to seek the Lord that he may be delivered will he be in a position to meet any difficulty that may arise; for when a soul has once found that Christ can deliver, whatever difficulty arises, he has only to pursue the same course, and call upon the Lord, to be delivered. Thus the presentation of secondary causes too often robs Christ of His Glory, and men of His salvation, while witness glorifies Christ, and sets men upon the true path.

The power of this witness is most profound. 'One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see,' 'I sought the Lord and He heard me,' are arguments for faith in Christ which may be rejected but, cannot be controverted. They appeal to all, to learned and to simple. When men come into the presence of a

real deliverance, they marvel; and, if they have a consciousness of need of deliverance for themselves, they covet it. All down the ages it has been the witness to Christ borne by manifest deliverance which has moved and converted men.

Yet we commonly insist that to propagate the doctrine we must have men who can answer the arguments of opponents. No doubt it is well to have men who can do this, but it is far more important to have men who can witness to Christ simply and truly, for true and simple witness is by far the more powerful weapon. A clever argument may silence opponents, but witness converts them: they see in a deliverance something which all their wit does not supply.

## VI

Fear for our doctrine has another serious consequence. It leads us to put the doctrine in the wrong place. We must maintain, we say, our standard of doctrine, we cannot allow untrained natives to teach the doctrine. We cannot but notice that in this saying the doctrine is foremost in our thoughts.

We constantly imagine that this is a matter of no importance. We speak as if the Gospel and the doctrine, preaching Christ and preaching Christianity, were identical terms. It is impossible to read a page of a missionary magazine or to speak five words about missions without finding out how habitually we do this. But is it really true? Far from it: Christianity, the doctrine, is a system of thought and practice: preaching Christ, the Gospel, is a revelation of a Person.

There is a difference between the revelation of a Person and the teaching of a system of doctrine and practice; but our use of the words shows that we find it difficult to grasp this and still more difficult to practise it. Is it possible to reveal Christ to those who have never heard His name without setting forth the facts of His Life, His teaching, His works, His character, His Godhead, His atonement, His priesthood, His kingship; the moral, intellectual, and emotional attitude due to Him; the duties to other men which arise from belief in Him; the effects of belief in Him which have been, and must be, revealed in the lives of individuals and nations; or some of these things, or others like them; and is

not all this what we understand by Christianity? Is it possible to propagate Christianity without setting forth these same facts of Christ's life, of His nature and work, and of the duties which follow: and is not this the way to reveal Christ? Can a man expound the doctrines of the Incarnation, of Atonement, of Grace, and not reveal Christ? Can a man say one word about Christ, or even utter His name without preaching Christianity?

Yet there is a difference, and we know it; but we know it only within narrow limits. We know that in our Christian experience we come into contact with the Person of Christ: that is indeed for us the fundamental reality of all realities: it is that which distinguishes us from men of every other religion: and we can distinguish between that contact with Christ and apprehension of a doctrine. And we know that it is possible to apprehend a doctrine without that contact with Christ. And we know it is possible for one to teach, and for another to learn the doctrine, without approaching the Person to whom the doctrine refers. So far, I suppose, we can all distinguish.

What we find it difficult to believe is that others can receive Christ and find salvation in Him unless they know, or at least in speech employ, our familiar doctrinal expressions. We know, of course, in some sort, that people whose intellectual understanding of doctrinal expressions is very weak, or immature, or even false, do draw near to Christ and receive His grace. We can see in the Gospel story and in the history of the Church, and in our own experience in our own day, that ignorance of doctrine does not prevent men from being lovers of Christ, and being saved by Him from vice and sin, and danger and fear. It seems indeed almost ridiculous and profane to think that Christ does not save those who call upon Him because they have not the power to grasp an intellectual doctrine about Him. We know that the doctrine of the atonement has been expressed in different ages in very different forms, some of which seem to us untrue and evil; but we know that in all ages men have found atonement in Christ. Nevertheless our doctrine so dominates our minds that we can scarcely believe that men can love Christ and be saved by Him unless they know and use our doctrinal expressions.



Because we find this difficult we inevitably tend to give the teaching of our doctrine the first place in our work, and to make the teaching of the doctrine prior to the revelation of Christ.

Now this produces very serious consequences. When we preach the doctrine, the doctrine occupies the first place in our thought, and is in the foreground of our mind. When we preach Christ, the Person is in the foreground and occupies the first place in our mind. When we speak of preaching Christianity it is the system of doctrine and practice of which we are really thinking: when we speak of preaching Christ we are really thinking of the revelation of Christ. But the Person is greater than the doctrine and far excels it, and consequently, when we speak of preaching Christianity and pass from the thought of Christ to the thought of the doctrine, we pass from the reality itself to the shadow of the reality.

When we fall into this error, we inevitably tend to make the acceptance of the shadow, the doctrine, the system, the aim and object of our work. In doing that we are doing something of which Christ spoke in very severe terms. To make converts to a doctrine is to make proselytes. The proselyte abandons one system of thought and practice for another; and to adopt a new system of thought and practice is not the way of salvation. The Christian convert is a convert not to a system of doctrine but to Christ. It is in Christ that he trusts, not in any system of doctrine or of morals. The difference between the work of the judaizing zealot and the Christian missionary lies here: that the one sought a convert to his doctrine; the other seeks a convert to his Lord. This distinction is most profoundly important; and it is a matter for very grave anxiety that we have of late years heard missionaries speak of making proselytes. When we put doctrine in the first place, we are in danger of falling into exactly that error which Christ condemned.

But missionaries do fall into this error. It is indeed true that among missionaries are to be found those who are most keenly alive to the reality behind the doctrine, and live most consciously and constantly in His presence; but those of us who are most keenly conscious of the reality are the very men who also realize most clearly the danger of allowing the doctrine to take the first

place in our thoughts and expression: they, too, are the first to acknowledge how often we do this. The danger is, indeed, insidious. It seems almost impossible to escape from it. We cannot but teach the orthodox doctrine that we know, and the line between teaching the doctrine so that it reveals Christ and teaching the doctrine so that it usurps the place of Christ, is so fine that we are all constantly in danger of allowing the acceptance of our orthodoxy to become the aim and object of our work.

Now when we say that we cannot allow untrained natives to teach the doctrine we are in grave danger of falling into this error; but the untrained native Christian is not so likely to fall into it as the man who has been trained in our theological colleges. For the one thing which he really knows is his experience of Christ, whereas the other has learned so much of the doctrine of his teachers and has given so much attention to it that he is very liable to fall into this error.

## VII

But men will say that native Christians will not spontaneously bear witness to Christ as I have suggested, and that we cannot possibly wait for them to do so. My answer is (1) that when we abandon that attitude which is represented by the saying, 'We must maintain our doctrine, we cannot allow untrained natives to teach the doctrine', when we put Christ first and the doctrine in the second place, and open the door for the spontaneous activity of our converts, when we establish churches with full authority, we shall know whether that is true or not; (2) that sporadic instances of spontaneous teaching by unpaid Christians are now so numerous, in spite of our restrictions, that there is very good reason to believe that such activity would be sufficient to carry the knowledge of Christ far and wide;

(3) that the very men who say it is impossible to allow untrained natives to teach, by that very argument show that they are persuaded, as the man whose words I quoted at the beginning of this chapter was persuaded, that native Christians would bear witness to Christ if we did not restrain them. We certainly do not hasten to forbid what we really believe to be impossible; (4) that when we ourselves know and feel the impulse of the Holy

Spirit driving us to communicate to others the knowledge of Christ it is really a contradiction of our own experience to say that other men who experience the power of Christ and His Holy Spirit will not do what we know Christ and His Holy Spirit must urge them to do.

I said at the beginning that the motive which urges us to restrain untrained teachers is fear. If it is not that besetting sin of Western people, the lust of control and government, it is certainly fear for the purity of the doctrine. Now when we are dealing with the Gospel fear is a very bad master.

SAMPLE