

THE BURDEN WHICH THE PROPHET DID SEE

“‘What are the great non-Christian religions?’ said a friend of mine in my hearing,” wrote Bishop Moule. “And he answered his own question: ‘Hinduism, Muhammedanism, Buddhism—*unspiritual Christianity*.’”

(1) UNSPIRITUAL CHRISTIANITY

FROM time to time the missionaries of South India asked the seer who was among them to write what he saw, for they knew he would write faithfully. A paper prepared for the missionary Conference of 1902 told something of the burden the prophet did see. The subject was, *Spiritual life in the Indian Church*.

We have heard a great deal lately, on account of the statistics tabulated in the recent Census Report, about the steady increase in the number of Indian Christians. Prophets have been busy telling us, basing their predictions on purely arithmetical progress, that within a stated period all the population of this country will be nominally Christian. Possibly there are fallacies in this mode of reasoning, for it makes no difference between class and class, but assumes that those more difficult of access will be evangelized at the same rate as the others. However, this may be, thank God we have amongst us seers as well as prophets, men who consider quality as of more account than quantity. It is felt, and strongly felt, that the real influence of the Indian Church is in direct proportion to the depth of its spiritual life; and that while we may possibly win adherents by an imposing show of numbers or by a vast missionary machinery of schools, congregations, and agencies, we can only win true converts by the power of the Holy Ghost working in and through the lives of sanctified believers. It is a widely recognized fact, therefore, that this is essentially the age of consolidation, wherein the Christian Church in India must set her house in order and pay special attention to the spiritual condition of her

children. From many sides the cry is going up to heaven, "O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make known." There is a growing feeling, and I, for one, thank God for the fact, of dissatisfaction with the present state of things, and a longing on the part of many to see greater and fuller manifestations of the power of God among us. Not a few are praying as perhaps they have never prayed before, for the true conversion and sanctification of those who have renounced heathenism and embraced the faith of the Gospel.

The Condition of the Indian Church.—Let us face, first of all, the facts of the case. Just as there is danger from a false patriotism which refuses to recognize any fault or flaw in the constitution or customs of the nation, so there may be danger from a false sensitiveness which resents even the most loving indication of failure in the Mission or the Church. I have known a grand missionary, at whose feet I should consider it an honour, in most things, to sit and learn, provoked to indignation when fault was found with the state of the congregations committed to his charge; and yet I have seen the same missionary, when asked later on in life what he thought about the immediate prospect of those very congregations, shake his head, while he said with real sorrow, "I am not sanguine." And I have known pastors and others resent the statement that true conversions were few and far between; who have yet, when asked in private, confessed that the congregations under their care were carnal, dead and worldly. It seems to me, however, that the first thing to do is to realize our actual need.

There seems, so far as I can judge, something like a consensus of opinion that things are far from satisfactory. I once asked a leading Indian clergyman how many of the twenty or thirty congregations under his jurisdiction could be said to possess anything like real spiritual life. He was silent and thoughtful for a moment, and then replied, "Not more than two or three; and I dare only speak with certainty of one." Thank God, there are bright spots; and He is raising up little bands in one place and another of whose spiritual life there can be no doubt. Truth is neither pessimistic nor optimistic; it is simply and only true. We praise God for every congregation in which life clearly and manifestly exists. We thank Him for every man, woman, or little child who can give a good reason for the hope that is in them. But is it not a fact that multitudes of those who

figure in the statistics of our Missionary Reports are Christians in name only? And is it not a fact that many of our congregations are stagnant, dead, lifeless? Nay, more, is it not true that there are those (and are they very few in number?) among our mission workers as to whose true conversion to God we entertain the greatest doubts?

This is not said by way of criticism. It is rather the outcome of bitter experience and sorrowful conviction. Would that all the Lord's people were prophets. Would that all our mission workers were true servants of the living God. Would that every Christian congregation in this land were endued with real life and power. The Lord hasten it in His time. But, meanwhile, it is ours to deal with the actualities of the present.

A few days ago a letter reached me from a friend who loves the people, and is anxious for the welfare of the Church. He writes in reference to a certain part of the Tinnevely district, "The congregations round here are in a deplorable condition. I fear that there will be still further relapses." Whilst I am typewriting these words, a Pastor has come to see me on business. I asked him about the state of the Christians in the double Pastorate for which he is responsible. In reply, he names four congregations (out of the score or so where he has workers placed) where there is a little real life, but he shakes his head about the rest. Possibly I may be told that these instances are far from being typical. Thank God if they are not. I merely give them because they come to hand. So far as our own district is concerned, a tolerably close association with the village congregations during the last few years has opened my eyes to many things, and I do not hesitate to say that here, at least, true spiritual life is lamentably low—I write it with much sorrow of heart; worldliness, Sabbath-breaking, the caste spirit, marriage irregularities (with the consequent excommunications) are widely prevalent. There is no room for boasting; there is ample cause for weeping; for "many walk of whom I tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ." Small wonder, then, that so little impression is made on the non-Christian world around us.

I know not what may be the experience of those who hear this paper read. Most sincerely do I trust that it may have been infinitely brighter than my own. But of one thing I am sure, namely, that it will be generally agreed that there is abundant

cause for self-humiliation on our part, when we look under the surface and view things as they really are. Let us praise God for every token of life, wherever seen, and by all means let us expect great things in the future. But, at the same time, do not let us shut our eyes to the facts of the present, whatever they may be, or be content with superficial views. Christ said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Let us be content with nothing less than that in our churches: eternal life, and life more abundant.

There may be zeal for Christianity, without there being spiritual life. There may be liberality in giving, and yet no life. There may be church-going, and lyric-singing, and street-preaching, and all the time no life. Let us confess it on our knees before the living God—we have been too much occupied with outward organization and missionary routine; we have not sought for our Indian brethren, as we should, a Spirit of life from God; we have not loved them, wept over them, wrestled in prayer for them as we ought to have done. Lord, we blame ourselves to-day. We are verily guilty, we missionaries, before Thee in this thing. Our strength has often been expended over the externals of our work; and we have failed to attain, in any adequate degree, the main object of our mission, that immortal souls might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. From this time help us all to make a fresh start. And O Spirit of life, breathe upon our congregations. Breathe upon these slain, that they may live.*

To avoid misunderstanding, let me say quite clearly that I am not seeking to paint a sombre picture in the darkest colours possible. I believe that there are vast potentialities for good in the Indian Church. I am sure that God has many true children in this great Empire, and that we have many reasons for encouragement. It is my firm conviction that better times are before us, and that we may expect to see God's power and glory in this land. But, as a prelude to all this, we must lay us in the dust before Him; we must acknowledge, with true contrition, that much of our work is stamped with failure; we must realize, till the conviction overpowers us, that our congregations, on the whole, are sadly devoid of Divine life and power; and we must be ready, as God shows the way, to put away from our

* *We have not wrestled in prayer for them:* by that word he did not mean what is sometimes called "wrestling with God." What he did mean was a wrestle with all that hindered prayer.

missions every hindering thing; and, even though it mean the loss of reputation, to purge and readjust our work.

In one sense, India is Satan's chosen battle-ground. Here he has entrenched himself behind ancient philosophies and the bulwarks of caste prejudice. We shall never win ground from the Brahmans and more intelligent classes unless the Church of the land be full of life and power. A tiny, trickling stream of water will never carry fertility to so vast a continent. We need floods of living water to flow over the dry ground around us. And, alas, the Indian Church to-day is all too barren itself to pour forth rivers of blessing on the wilderness outside. Let us acknowledge it; let us realize it; and, by God's grace, let us deal with it.

(2) THE CAUSES OF WEAKNESS.

What is it which is hindering the influx of God's power into the Church of India to-day? With so many congregations, especially in South India, with a steady increase of nominal adherents—how is it that we see so little spiritual life and energy? These are questions which every missionary ought to ask in the secret chamber, with a loyal determination to act upon the will of God when He Himself reveals the truth. I feel reluctant to press upon others the facts which I believe He has pressed upon myself, for circumstances differ in the various Missions; moreover, a dread of appearing to dogmatize comes over me as I write. These words will probably come to many whose experience and judgment are riper than my own. And yet I think I ought to state, in all humility, the convictions which have been borne in strongly on my own mind. In doing so, I shall aim at being practical, for many brochures which I have read on such subjects have struck me as being largely theoretical. Our need, surely, is to discover actual hindrances, and to deal with them at once.

1. An Unspiritual Agency.—I do not like the word "Agents," but it is the one ordinarily in vogue among us. "Workers" would be better. When, moreover, I use the term "an unspiritual Agency," I do not for one moment wish to imply that the whole agency of our Missions comes under that denomination. May God forbid. But is it not true that there are workers in every Mission over whom we dare not write the words "converted," "spiritual," "godly"? Are men and women never

appointed to God's work, as to whose spiritual qualifications we have no sort of *bona fide* guarantee? Are we never influenced by what the world would call "the exigencies of the case"? We have a vacancy to fill, and we appoint the best applicant available, perhaps, though the applicant in question may be an utter stranger to the life of Christ. Possibly we argue, "No one can read the heart; and it is almost impossible to know, in many cases, whether the would-be worker is really converted or not. Granted that this is a real difficulty, and that, when we have done our best, we are liable to be deceived, does the difficulty in question excuse us from doing all that honest men can do, in dependence upon Divine wisdom and guidance, to keep out the unworthy, and to admit only those who, after fair enquiry, seem to be spiritual men and women? Surely not. We have a serious responsibility to discharge, and we cannot rid ourselves of it.

Of course, we shall make mistakes. Of course, we shall sometimes be deceived. But are we doing all we can to weed out from our Missions those who can give no evidence, even after patient trial, of true conversion, and to keep out of the work every unspiritual applicant? This is not a matter, let it be noted, of narrowing down the Kingdom of God. It is not a question of admitting men to, or excluding them from, the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is only and solely a question of appointing them as workers. This being so, we may surely take firm ground, and claim that no one shall be appointed to such a position who cannot give clear evidence of true conversion to God and a real acquaintance with Christ. The blind cannot lead the blind, whatever may be their ability in teaching or in speaking. The dead cannot bring life into our schools and congregations. Those who have not experienced the power of God's salvation will never lead on others to deliverance from sin. In the case of Mission workers, I seriously question whether we have any right to give anyone the benefit of the doubt. The risks involved are too great. We should hesitate, in an important journey, to trust ourselves to the guidance of a man who could not state positively, and give some evidence of the truth of his statement, that he knew the way. I would deprecate, also, the idea that a lower standard of spiritual qualification may be accepted in the case of schoolmasters. I know one large Mission in which teachers of schools and colleges are not, in the current terminology, included under the

head of Spiritual Agents. But surely the conversion and training of the young is, to say the least, as vitally important as that of their elders.

It is my firm conviction that every converted worker is a centre of life, in greater or less degree; and that, on the other hand, every unconverted agent is a hindrance and a bane. It is our bounden duty to rise superior to considerations of convenience and expediency. This is no case for making the best of the material at our disposal, or for conforming with the practices of other Missions. The point to face is this: is it a fact, or is it not, that only spiritual men are able to do spiritual work? If it be, then it seems to me that our duty is plain and obvious. We ought at once, with prayer and care, to set about the work of weeding our Missions of those who cannot give something like clear evidence of a New Birth in Christ Jesus. Of course this means trouble, and the reduction, perhaps, of a good deal of our work. Let every man and woman now employed have a full and fair opportunity of proving by their profession and their life that they are God's true children. If they cannot, after patient trial, they ought to go, no matter what trouble be involved. Let no worker be engaged in future who cannot give clear proof of regeneration by God's Holy Spirit.

I repeat it, we shall make mistakes; but, if we prayerfully and carefully set about the task, we shall at least be divinely helped in removing some who are holding back blessing by their love of money and their worldly-mindedness, and whose work is one long failure because they have never passed from death unto life. Many of our schools and congregations are like Lazarus, dead within the tomb; and, alas! many of our workers are like the stones which shut them in. Does not the Voice of Him Who is the Resurrection and the Life, call to us all to-day, "Take ye away the stone"? In many cases the people themselves can give us proof that their agent is not a man of God. I believe that a little careful observation of the lives of our workers and a little closer mingling with the members of their congregations will throw light upon our path of duty.

Is this too high a standard? Surely not. I have taken the lower ground, that Mission workers, one and all, ought to be truly converted men and women. But our Master has raised a higher standard. He points to the great pre-requisite for fruitful service, over and beyond a true regeneration, the Baptism of

the Holy Ghost. We need, and our workers need, not only a new heart, but also "the tongue of fire." "Tarry ye until ye be endued with power from on high."

Beloved brethren in the Lord and in His work, have we not acted too much on utilitarian principles? Have we not, all of us, deviated sadly from the lines laid down in the Acts of the Apostles? Have we never "used lightness" in the choice of workers? Can we say honestly before God to-day, that we believe all our workers to be, beyond all doubt, converted men and women? God keep us from lowering His standard and from trailing it in the dust. Let us turn anew to Calvary, and learn afresh the tremendous cost of Christ's redemption. Let us realize, in view of His precious Blood, the infinite value of immortal souls. Let us think of the needs of India, and the enormous issues involved in the welfare of its Church. Can we, dare we commit these congregations to the care of hireling-shepherds, or to the leading of blind guides? Are we not hindering God's gracious purposes in giving room to unconverted workers? I pray for myself—may I include you also in the prayer?—"Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation; and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness."

2. A Defective Presentation of the Gospel.—Unless I am mistaken, there are grave defects in the character of the preaching which is current in many of our churches. People are taught to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ in order to obtain salvation, but there is not always a clear statement made as to what such faith really involves. The consequence is that you will meet numbers of Christians who will tell you, and with evident sincerity, that they believe in Christ, whose lives are yet practically unaffected by such belief. Careful observation has convinced some of us that at least in our own congregations the doctrine of repentance is little preached, and at the best very feebly emphasized. In some cases, though there may be a sort of general declaration that sin must be forsaken, there is no strong denunciation of specific sins. I have known even workers and their wives who had never realized that it was wrong to go and buy at a bazaar on Sundays, until it was definitely arraigned before them as a sin. Scores of village Christians (I wonder whether the evil is confined to villages) will be found who think there is no harm in telling lies occasionally. Even intelligent persons have told us that, though they tell lies every day, they

always confess them before going to bed, and obtain Divine forgiveness. I venture to think that some, who may not have been thrown into close contact with the ordinary daily life of village Christians (and again I wonder whether town congregations are always better and wiser), would be surprised at the general ignorance which exists as to the very fundamentals of the Gospel. It is a common thing to meet people who seem totally unaware of the fact that repentance and the forsaking of sin is absolutely essential to salvation. They rest upon their profession of Christianity to take them somehow or other to heaven at last. Their argument is: "We are not heathen. We believe that Christ died on Calvary. Does not the Bible say, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved? That is enough for us. Let us alone, and do not teach new doctrines about the need of repentance and holiness. God is merciful. It will be all right at last." Thus our churches are filled with Antinomian doctrines, and with a dead faith that cannot save.

I have known Tamil catechists and schoolmasters, during the course of a Special Mission, set to work to undermine the teaching of repentance by telling the people behind our backs: "This is new doctrine: who can bear it? how can it be possible for any man to live without telling lies sometimes? and as for forsaking the love of the world, that is a preposterous demand." This covert opposition has been met with not once or twice, but again and again. It seems clear to me, therefore, that there is something altogether wrong in many of our congregations, and that a clear clarion blast of repentance must be sounded throughout the length and breadth of the Indian Church. It was the message of the Baptist, "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." It was the message of the Christ Himself, "Repent, and believe the Gospel." The terms of His commission to the Church are equally emphatic. "Repentance and remission of sins must be preached among all nations." I believe that in order to true spiritual life in the Indian Church three simple facts must be pressed home upon the people with the reiteration of intense earnestness:

- (a) Sin of every kind must be confessed and forsaken.
- (b) Salvation means deliverance from the power of sin.
- (c) The true Christian must live a holy life (holy in every detail).

It is obvious, of course, that unconverted workers cannot, dare not, preach these doctrines with any emphasis upon their

truth. Their life before their people is too palpably inconsistent to allow it; and this, I take it, is one of the reasons why, in many places, these facts are conspicuously absent from the preaching. But until our people realize that the very essence of the Gospel is good tidings of deliverance from sin, aye, and from all sin, we shall never see a high tide of spiritual life. And until practical holiness is more conspicuous among us, we shall never convince the Hindu and Muhammedan that the Gospel of Christ is "the power of God unto salvation."

3. A sad lack of Personal Fellowship with God.—Here the average Indian Christian is at a disadvantage which we Europeans and Americans fail adequately to understand. The poor, especially, experience difficulties in finding opportunities for private devotions, of which we know practically nothing. Life, in the vast majority of Indian homes, is lived in the glaring light of publicity. We, for our part, can retire to our own secret chamber, and shut and bolt our door. But multitudes of our people have no such private room; and from morning till night they live more or less in public, at least as regards the other inmates of their home. In these circumstances, their private devotions are carried on under the greatest possible difficulties. We can see at once, therefore, that only the more earnest will persist in them, seeking a retired spot in the fields or under some tree when they cannot secure privacy indoors. In many houses a sort of formal "Family Prayers" is made to do duty for private devotions. I feel sure that a careful canvass of the members of our congregations would reveal the fact that a very small proportion of them really begin and end the day with bona fide private prayer and Bible-reading. If we were to deduct from these the number of those whose devotions are formal and perfunctory, I fear the proportion of the remainder to the whole would be grievously small. Again and again have we found that true conversion is followed by the necessity of facing practical difficulties such as these. In the East, public functions often take the place of private exercises. Many Christians in India who attend three or four or even five services or meetings on Sunday, do not spend half an hour alone with God. Add to this the fact that very many cannot read at all, and the further fact that comparatively few who can read know how to study the Word of God systematically and to profit, and is there any wonder that spiritual life is not more healthy and robust? No

one can be a strong and vigorous Christian who does not hold real and continual personal intercourse with God. Truly, our Indian brethren need our warm sympathy in the peculiar difficulties under which they labour in this respect; and need our loving and persistent counsel in encouraging them, in spite of the difficulties, to follow a practice so essential to their spiritual life.

4. The Prevalence of Unholy Customs.—There is a slavish adherence to custom in many quarters, which militates powerfully against the development of the Church's spiritual life. I would mention, first of all, as the fruitful source of many evils, and the parent of many questionable practices, the active existence of the caste spirit. In many places it keeps Christian apart from fellow Christian. It regulates marriage arrangements to such a fatal extent that it is regarded by multitudes as almost a crime, not only to marry out of caste (as the world expresses it), but even to transgress the minute sub-divisions of caste; and, in Tinnevely at least, inter-marriages with the heathen, which means, surely, a practical denial of Christ, are preferred by some to the slightest deviation from the tyrannical rules of caste. Under such conditions, spiritual life cannot be high. The number of excommunications due directly to this cause is considerable every year.

I believe debt, also, to be a sad hindrance to spiritual progress, alike among the workers and the members of their congregations. Spending beyond their income is not regarded, by the vast majority, as contrary to the rule of Christ; and Romans xiii. 8 is treated, largely, as devoid of meaning. Thus the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches now, as ever, choke the Word, and it becometh unfruitful. Is it not true that custom, rather than the Bible, rules the amount of the expenditure on marriage occasions, to take a concrete example, and to such an extent that many incur debts on account thereof which cripple them for life as regards spiritual progress? And what about enormous dowries and excessive jewellery?

Sabbath-breaking, too, prevents the blessing of God from descending on many of our congregations. In the palmyra districts we have noticed again and again that when the palmyra season comes round, men and women, who seemed to have been really stirred and to have started out on a new life, get cold and dead again. The reason is that time and strength on the Lord's

day are given to tree-climbing and juice-boiling, and the soul's interests are neglected. Until this matter is faced in the spirit of true faith in God, and His command honoured, I fear we shall see nothing like the vigorous Christian life which ought to exist. And what is true of the palmyra districts is true, to some extent at least, *mutatis mutandis*, of other districts. "Custom" in such matters is pleaded, to the disregard of God's holy will and word.

The observance of "lucky months," even when "lucky days" are not regarded, as auspicious occasions for marriages; the practice among Christian widows, even the widows of Mission workers, of absenting themselves from God's house for a certain number of weeks after the death of their husbands; these and a hundred other superstitious observances which are in vogue, at least in many places, show that custom is all-powerful with numbers of those who name the Name of Christ, and are a standing witness to the feebleness of faith and the low level of spiritual life. I feel sure that we shall have to deal with practical matters of this sort if we would see God's power and glory manifested in our midst unhindered. These evils must be faced, not in the spirit of harsh condemnation, but with the loving heart of those who would take their weaker brethren by the hand and lead them on to better things. It should be made quite clear, however, that they are contrary to the word of God and opposed to the whole tenor of the Gospel, and must be forsaken if men would so walk as to please God. Many of these so-called customs are truly grave-clothes. They bind our people fast, and keep them back from the life and liberty of Christ.

5. The Evil of Financial Dependence.—This paper is too long already, and so only the briefest possible allusion can be made to a subject which demands full and separate treatment. I know quite well the difficulties with which it bristles. The poverty of many of our Christians is a fact beyond dispute. And yet it seems clear, on careful consideration, that financial dependence upon others is to a large degree detrimental to real spiritual life. It teaches Christians to lean upon the arm of flesh instead of depending directly upon God. How many eyes in India are looking to the Mission, which ought to be turned, in living faith, to the Hills, from whence cometh their help. How much energy is paralysed because foreign subsidies obviate the necessity of its active expenditure. I am not ignorant of the fact that the

Indian Church is becoming more and more alive to the duty of self-support. But is it not true that the power of the rupee in our Indian Missions has sometimes been more strongly felt than the power of the Holy Ghost? And is it not a fact that, compared with some other countries, we are behindhand as regards progress toward financial independence? From personal experience I do not hesitate to say that our most living congregations are those which have received the least financial aid; and the converse is also true. It was the churches of Macedonia, Philippi, and Thessalonica, remarkable for their glad readiness in giving, which showed so vigorous a spiritual life, and cheered and rejoiced the heart of the Apostle Paul.

We missionaries must largely bear the blame in this matter. One of our great missionary societies has humbly and truly said, We have made a mistake in India. Have we not all made mistakes in this? I have a vivid recollection of hearing a speech delivered by an able Tamil clergyman at a large missionary meeting in your own Madras, in which he said (the vast audience cheered the words to the echo), "We are told we are not as independent as we ought to be. True! we are spoiled children. But who has made us so? The missionary societies have brought us up as spoiled children, and what can we do?" Doubtless there was an element of facetiousness present in the speaker's mind and words; but the remark was true enough to send at least one of his hearers home thinking.

Surely the time has come to throw our Indian Brethren, more and more, in dependence upon God, on their own resources. They are beginning, some of them, to realize this for themselves. Let us, then, help them to help themselves. It may mean self-denial on our part, though it sounds very paradoxical to say so, to stand out of their way and let them open their purse-strings. It may require patient and persistent refusal to meet what seems like obvious needs, in order that they may have the privilege of meeting them. It may mean less authority and more trouble for us. However that may be, I feel quite confident that the more congregations are thrown upon their own resources, the stronger will be their Christianity and the healthier their spiritual life. The past may have left us legacies which have to be faced patiently (we never make mistakes without suffering for it), and dealt with gradually. All we are concerned with now is seeking to realize the fact that financial dependence is a grave hindrance

to true spiritual life, and the realization to aim forthwith at sound remedies. God in His Mercy forgive us whereinsoever we have taught the Christians of India to look, in any measure, to us or to our Mission funds, instead of looking straight to Him.

(3) PRACTICAL REMEDIES.

The Course to be Adopted.—We have thus noticed some of the causes which make against the development of spiritual life in the Indian Church. The list enumerated is far from being exhaustive, and other sources of weakness will doubtless suggest themselves to all. I have only dwelt upon some topics with regard to which I have strong personal convictions, formed after no casual observation, and burnt in upon my soul after practical experience of the work. But now the Tamil proverb bids "him who pointed out the danger suggest the proper way to meet it." Some of the measures which commend themselves have already been anticipated in considering the sources of our weakness. Perhaps the best plan will be to append here, even at the risk of partial repetition, in a very practical shape the practical remedies which are available to practical men.

(a) Since the unspiritual part of our missionary agency is a hindrance to the highest welfare of our people, steps should be taken, as carefully and prayerfully as you like, but quite courageously, to dispense with the services of those concerning whose spiritual character we have serious doubt. Better pay them to leave than pay them to stay.

Great care should be exercised, moreover, not to admit new workers who cannot give clear evidence that they have passed from death unto life, and are living according to their profession. Do not vote the thing "impracticable." It means taking pains and putting ourselves to much trouble; but it is worth while, for the issues involved are vast and far-reaching. Anyhow I claim that, in the light of God's Word, we have no option in the matter. We have no right to adopt any other course.

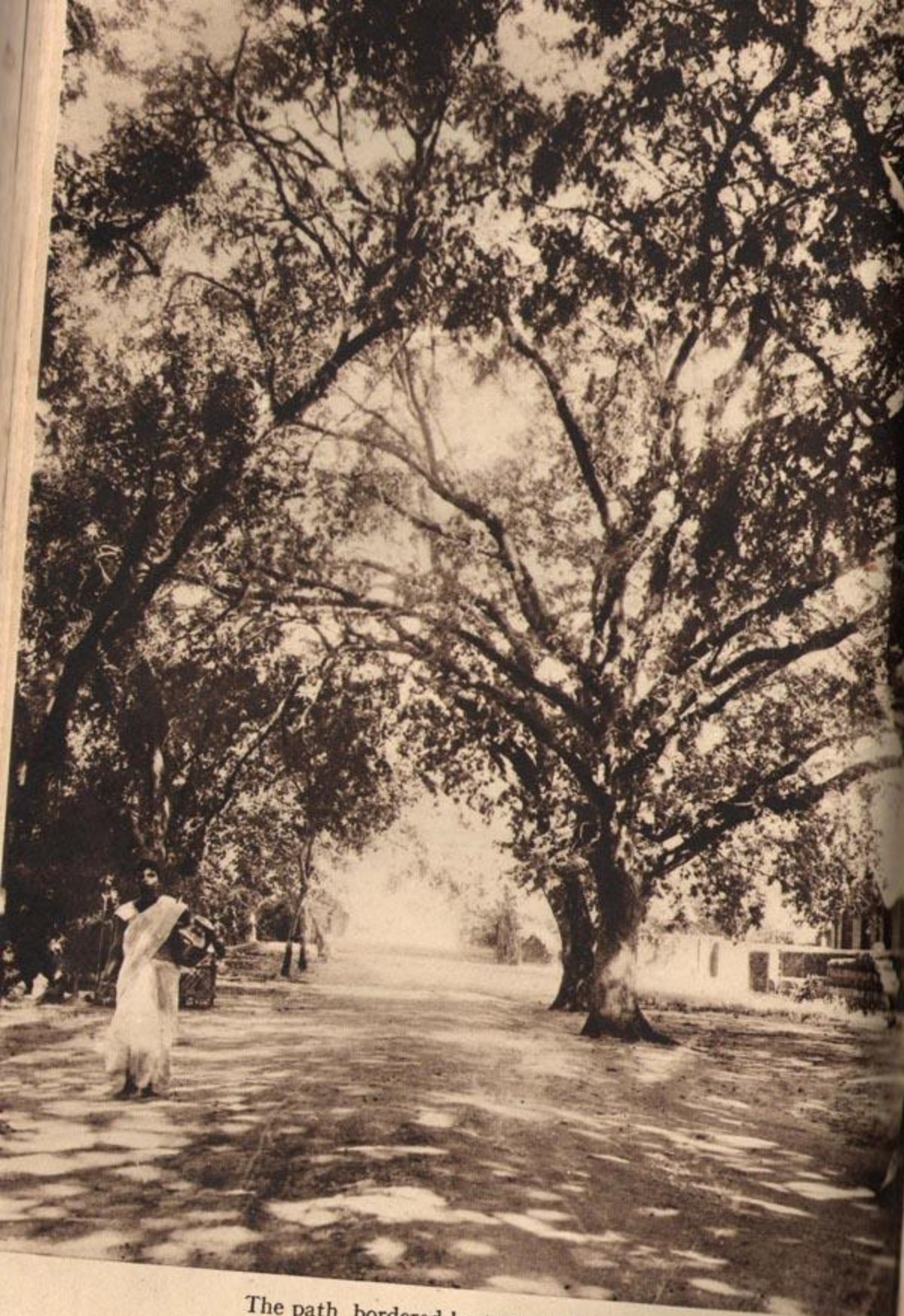
(b) Since, in many of our congregations, the doctrine of repentance unto the remission of sins is not clearly taught and strongly emphasized, special efforts should be made, in each Mission, to have a systematic preaching of this truth inaugurated in every town and village containing Christians. Let men of approved spiritual character, who have themselves experienced



Evensong.

The mountain that welcomed the traveller.





The path, bordered by tamarind trees—
And he went out into the light.

the power of Christ to save from sin, be set apart, for a time at least, to blow the trumpet of repentance; and, beyond that, to set before the people the real meaning of God's great salvation, with the life of holiness to which it leads through the power of the Holy Ghost. In this connection, let specific sins be indicated, and unholy customs held up to the light of truth. In the case of neighbouring Missions, united efforts of this sort might be set on foot, for unity is strength. The proposal, it will be seen, is tantamount to something like a special mission, general, even if not simultaneous.

(c) Let continual stress be laid on the vital importance of private prayer and Bible-reading, morning and evening. In many congregations, adults and young people who are unable to read should be urged to attend night-schools or classes formed, according to convenience, for their special benefit. Where classes are impossible, individuals at least should be taught to read their Bibles, and the help of Christian men and women should be enlisted in this work. We have known women past middle life who have thus learned to read God's Word after their conversion. Instruction and help should be given to our people in the matter of systematic Bible study, and to this end occasional Bible Schools for workers and others, conducted by suitable leaders, would be found of great advantage. It is only the few who derive real help and teaching every day from the reading of God's Word. One word of caution is here needed; such Bible Schools should not aim at a sort of dissection of the Bible, but at indicating lines of study calculated to produce spiritual profit.*

Let it be remembered, in all this, that the subject to be promoted is daily fellowship with God for workers and for people. We should not think it a point of superfluous detail, either, to show men that they may find a secret chamber in the rice-fields or under the tamarind or margosa tree, if they cannot find a quiet corner in their homes. It is often the practical details in which help and counsel are required. It is practical godliness in every detail which needs enforcing in our teaching in India to-day. It is possible to sit down and read holiness books, and to enjoy high spiritual doctrines, and yet to be culpably negligent in the details of everyday Christian life.

* Some forms of Bible study are attempts to satisfy soul-hunger by eating the dishes instead of the dinner."—Spurgeon.

(d) Conferences or conventions for workers should be held periodically; not too frequently, but often enough to guard against stagnation. In this the various Missions might lend each other mutual aid. Let men be invited to conduct them who know the needs of those assembled, and can lay their fingers on the evils which require remedy. When such conferences are convened, let no money or business transactions be associated with them. It should be a time when men and women can meet with God without distraction. As far as possible, let the meetings be seconded by private conversations, in which difficulties may be met and individual souls encouraged. Many of our dear Indian fellow workers are located in lonely places, surrounded by a heathen atmosphere, with little or nothing to help them in external circumstances. Only those who know their environment, and the dead level all around them, can properly appreciate their needs and enter into their trials.

(e) Steps should be taken, in every Mission, to throw Indian Christians, financially, upon their own responsibility. But I must close. How miserably inadequate, after all, must seem this treatment of so great a subject. In the very allusion to existing evils, too, it is so difficult not to seem unloving.

One word only should be added in conclusion. I have made no reference to the outflow of the Church's life in evangelistic effort. Given the life, it is sure to manifest and propagate itself. If our Indian brethren drink, and drink deeply, of the Living Water, then beyond all doubt, out of them shall flow rivers of living water, and the whole land will feel its power. God bless, revive, and use, beyond all our expectations, the Church of India.

As for us, fellow workers of South India, shall we not humble ourselves for our many, many failures? Do you not feel with me that the times of refreshing which we desiderate for the Native Church must begin with us, the missionary body? We have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. We have not yet, to any adequate extent, offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears on behalf of those committed to our care. We have not yet paid the cost of the tide of blessing which we long to see. We have not yet claimed our full share in the promise of the Father. The good Lord, in His mercy, begin with us. Let Him search us, and cleanse us, and fill us with His power. Are we humble enough? Are we willing enough? Are we unworldly

enough? Are we loving enough? Are we holy enough? Are we in earnest enough? Are we obedient enough?

And He said unto me, Son of Man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, Thou knowest.

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying . . . This shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God.