

It has been said that the greatest failing of the Church of to-day is that it does not yield a ready response to the Providence of God. But what does this mean? If it were true that the Church, clearly recognizing the call of Providence, deliberately or slothfully refused to obey that call, then would her condition be hopeless indeed. But is not the failure rather a failure to hear? Not disloyalty, but deafness, is the sin that will be laid at her door. Whilst the Church is busy here and there, the voice of the Spirit falls on unheeding ears—though it is to her life work, her one and only reason for existence, that it calls her.

But is it not the Church's work to do the duty that lies nearest to her? Is she not hard pressed in the struggle with unbelief and materialism on every hand? Is not the call of the Spirit to be heard in the claims of the moment? Yes, yes; but may we not speak of all these as, in a sense, *secondary* duties—duties of means, rather than of end? The one great cry of the Spirit is a cry of yearning: for a lost world. "*Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also must I bring.*" So long as the Church is awake to that cry, she may trust God to provide her with places of worship, and to defend her from the encroachments of materialism. Once let her shut her ears to it, and she is helpless against the unbeliever, though she be ever so full of business and good works.

The voice of the Spirit is not to be heard off hand. The temple must be cleared of traffickers before the call can reach our ears. Again and again in the Book of Acts we read that it was "as they ministered unto the Lord and fasted" that the Holy Ghost said this and that. But when our souls have learned to keep silence before Him, there are at least two simple tests by which we may discern between the voices and know the one that is of God.

(i.) Wherever, in answer to the prayers of the Church, long-closed doors have been thrown open, the answer to prayer is itself a call of the Spirit to enter in and take possession. If, under such circumstances, we make no honest and determined effort to advance, we stand convicted of insincerity in prayer as well as of lack of zeal for the Kingdom. For many years the churches of order besought God fervently that He would open to the Gospel the great Chinese province of Hunan. God has heard our prayers. Hunan is open, with its *twenty million inhabitants*, of whom no more than a few thousands have heard the story of God's love. Have we, as a Church, fulfilled our duty when we have sent *two men* to represent us in the evangelization of Hunan?

(ii.) In many heathen lands there is no desire for the Gospel. The people are satisfied with their own religion. The first work of the Gospel is to create—or rather to *reveal*—the hunger which it alone can satisfy. From such a work as this the Christian mis-

sionary does not shrink, ungrateful though it may at first often be. But in other countries or districts the Spirit Himself seems to have put within the hearts of the people a yearning for truth and life. They welcome the Gospel with avidity, and cry for more teachers to instruct them in its ways. "It is sad to see the grain ripening and to have no reapers to gather it," writes one of our missionaries. "The people seem literally pressing into the Kingdom," writes another. "In one village," says a third, "we have ten converts. We might have had ten times ten if we could have sent a preacher."

This, then, is our second principle: *a cry for the Gospel is a call of the Spirit*. "Give ye them to eat," is the Master's words; and if our provision seem too small to satisfy the hunger of so many, it shall be multiplied miraculously in our hands.

In many other ways the call will come from time to time. But will not these two suffice to guide us for the present? Can it be doubted that here, at least, we have a true calling of the Spirit? And if it be so, what possible attitude can we take up but that of loyal and glad obedience? The character of our response will reveal the measure of the value which we set upon the Cross of Christ.—L. H. G., in *Chronicle of the London Missionary Society*.

"GOD IS CALLING ME."

(Last words of D. L. Moody.)

BY MRS. MARY B. WINGATE.

"God is calling me," he murmured,
As the tide of life ran low,
"To His pure and holy presence
He is calling—let me go!
He is calling, gently calling
To his tender, loving breast,
Oft he called me into service,
Now he calls me into rest.

"God is calling, heaven is opening,
Oh, what visions greet my eyes,
Souls redeemed—a countless number—
Smile and beckon to the skies.
God is calling—He who led me
And upheld me by his grace.
Oh, we've had such sweet communion—
Now I'll see him face to face!"

God is calling, loudly calling,
"To the harvest fields away!"
For the mighty reaper fallen,
Let ten thousand rise to-day.
Let the mantle of Elijah
On the young Elishas fall;
When they hear the Master calling,
May they answer to the call.