

The Curse Upon Covetousness.

Ye are cursed with a curse, Mal. 3:9. And he gave them their request, but sent leanness to their souls, Psalm 106:15.

Disobedience to any of God's moral laws must always of necessity be followed by the punishment threatened. The two moral laws, the Sabbath and the paying to God of his tithes, are probably as old as the Garden of Eden, and through every age to the present time the disregard of either of them brought down the curse of God upon the individual, while obedience thereto as surely brought temporal and spiritual prosperity. Christian teachers of late generations are sound on the Sabbath question, but have, I think, misunderstood the intention, scope and application of the doctrine of the tenth, treating it as though it was a part of the ceremonial law that was done away in Christ. I have not yet heard of any one of them furnishing a vestige of proof for the assumption. We stand firmly upon the ground that the paying to God of his tenth is a moral law, binding upon every member of the human race through all time, and that the curse of God, as stated in Mal. 3:9, is in operation even now. This curse may not always be apparent in lack of temporal prosperity, but it is apparent in a thousand-fold worse form, viz., in leanness of soul.

My purpose in this article is to point out as best I may some of the indications of the existence of the curse among us as a denomination. My task is an exceedingly difficult one for the simple reason that as a people we have been always under the curse, having always in a large measure robbed God of his tithes. Then there is no association of churches in modern times whose every member pays the tenth, from which we can get a statement of results for comparison. For good reasons we cannot very successfully find data for comparison of the progress of Christianity in this age with that of the first three centuries, when tithing was universal, though the general conclusion is plain that the early churches had an amazing power with God and men which the churches do not now possess. We have two distinct rays of light on the modern horizon to bear witness to the blessedness of paying to God of his tenth. First, the testimony of tens of thousands of individuals who have escaped from under the curse of robbing God into the light and liberty of honestly living in partnership with Jesus in their business and giving him his tenth. Second, we have as an object lesson the one pastor, Rev. Russell Conwell, of Philadelphia, who dared to build up a church by constantly insisting that every member should give up robbing God of his tenth. Probably it would be quite true to say that his success is manifold greater than the average of our best pastors. I must believe that we are under the curse of God simply because I would honor God by believing his Word.

We shall assume, what is almost self-evident, that covetousness, worldliness and selfishness are the parents of the chief of the ills from which individual Christians suffer. And what afflicts individuals afflicts the church as a whole. Cruden defines covetousness as, "an immoderate desire after earthly things." Covetousness, called idolatry in Col. 3:5, because the covetous man places that love, delight and confidence in riches which are due to God alone. It is worthy of note just here that people in all conditions, as to worldly possessions, may have the spirit of covetousness, with its accompanying ills, just as truly as the very wealthy. God's remedy for covetousness is the paying to him of his tenth. And since no one is likely to pay to God his tenth without a complete surrender to Christ of body, soul, life and business, therefore God's remedy strikes at the root of all the troubles that afflict our churches and nullify the pastors' efforts. What the Lord Christ and the pastor desires most of all is a spiritual church. Spirituality is an impossibility where covetousness and worldliness have possession. What means it when we are told that only a small percentage of the families in connection with our churches maintain family worship. Does it mean that only this small percentage of our membership have effective spiritual life to pray for and hold up the hands of the pastor, or sustain the Sabbath School and prayer meetings? Does it mean that a great majority of the members of the church, being covetous and worldly are really idolaters in God's sight, Col. 3:5, and that while they continue to place their love, delight and confidence in their worldly interests, whether small or great, any spirituality or enjoyment in family worship is an impossibility. Does it mean that this majority of the membership of our churches have simply a name to live and yet are dead. Does it mean that though Satan accomplished much during the dark ages, in slaying fifty million Baptists, yet this transcendent victory was when he stopped the Christians paying to God His tenth, and thus at one stroke taking away God's practical remedy for covetousness? Does it mean that this large portion of the membership of our churches, being bereft of the joy of God's salvation, which is the Christian's strength to fight sin, become an easy prey to Satan's wiles, in the matter of balls and dancing parties at first attending these gotten up by those who never knew our God; then, later, going from bad to worse,

give balls themselves to make returns? Does it mean that these members in a state of unrest and unhappiness seek to fill the aching void by attending theatres and card parties to their own injury and to sorrow of the church which is responsible for their acts? What does it mean when a man in the position of D. L. Moody announces his conviction, "That there is of late years a sensible withdrawal of the Holy Spirit's power from the churches, inasmuch as it was evident that though many churches put forth great efforts in special services, yet the results in souls saved were small?" From this testimony, and much other of like character, we see that Satan has control from the Atlantic to the Pacific through his patent process of cooling off or freezing up Christians by his chemicals of worldliness and covetousness. Say, brothers and sisters, perhaps we all have known that we are cursed on account of our robbing God of his tenth, but does it not now seem plainer to you? We say that the Holy Spirit has withdrawn. Would it not be more accurate to say that by our love, delight and confidence in worldly goods and gains, which is the worship of these things, we have driven the Holy Spirit away from our homes, families and churches. "If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him." No Holy Spirit's power is there in such a heart. Who can estimate the infinite magnitude of the curse that we have brought upon ourselves by robbing God of his tenth? Who can appreciate the sorrow and pain of the Saviour over his own chosen, Jew and Gentile, the Baptists, that they should be found worshipping worldly treasure, real estate, fine houses, costly equipage and fine clothing and other creature comforts? Shall he say, will he say, must he say as of old, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." DIMOCK ARCHIBALD.

The Savaras.*

BY W. V. HIGGINS.

In Southern India, the Savaras occupy an important place among the hill tribes. It is said that there are sixty-four different tribes of hill people in the Madras Presidency, with a total population of 1,273,947. More than one-seventh of these are Savaras, and only one other tribe (the Khonds) have a greater population. The Savaras number 182,285, and are found chiefly in the Ganjam district, upon the hills to the north of Parlakimedi. Originally they belonged to one community but have since become divided and subdivided in various classes, which might be called castes. However, we may divide them for our present purpose into two classes, viz., hill Savaras and Kampu Savaras (who live upon the plains at the foot of the hills). The latter have been much more affected by contact with the Hindus. The hill Savaras still live in very primitive style, and love to roam over the hills picking up a very precarious livelihood. They raise some grains, keep a few cattle, and gather firewood for sale upon the plains; but a good deal of food in the shape of nuts, berries, etc., is picked up in the jungles. The Kampu Savaras, on the other hand, have become more civilized. They have imbibed a good many Hindu ideas, live better and dress better. They live by farming chiefly and consider it quite beneath them to cut wood and carry it to market. If they use their mother tongue it is in a corrupt form and with a good many admixtures of Telugu or Oriya; but they speak the languages of the plains probably more than they do their own.

The Savaras in their native mountains have a nationality, history, religion, system of law and landed property. They used to live independently, giving taxes to no Government. Frequently they made raids upon the plains below and carried off whatever they could. About half a century ago one of the ancestors of the present Parlakimedi Rajah led an expedition against them and appointed men called Bisais here and there to guard the passes and reduce the Savaras to subjection. Since that time the British Government has extended its territory into these hills and draws a revenue from the people. Formerly there were groups of Savara villages under a powerful chief. Even at present there are groups of families closely united and under the government of two chiefs, the Gomang (great man) and Boya. Together they discharge the duties of a magistrate, and the Boya is also high priest. These offices are hereditary and fall to the eldest son. The Boya must be intimately acquainted with the customs and ceremonies to be observed at funerals, marriages, feasts, etc. On all such occasions his presence is indispensable. All cases of dispute, transfer of lands, sale of liquor trees, divorce, etc., are settled in the Council of the Elders under the leadership of the Gomang and Boya. Until forty years ago even cases of murder were tried by these chiefs and they were the sole arbitrators in every transaction among the villages. These chiefs receive no fees and make their living from the soil or forests as others do. But the British Government and the Bisais give distinction to them by presenting occasional gifts. They are

*NOTE.—Pronounce as a u in tub. There is no special accent. In common speech the word is wrongly pronounced Soura.

exempt from personal service which other Savaras are required to render. But the jurisdiction of these Savara chiefs has been largely curtailed by the Government.

It is interesting to note the methods which these chiefs adopted for the punishment of offences. Capital punishment was administered to those who burned villages thus endangering the lives of the community. Many kinds of fines were imposed for different minor offences. These consisted chiefly in liquor and cattle. The life of a woman was considered as worth more than that of a man. In this respect we may consider the Savaras as more civilized than their Hindu neighbors. Hence the fine for the murder of a woman was eight buffaloes, but only seven for a man.

A thief might be shot dead if caught in the act. In cases of adultery it was always the man, not the woman, who was punished. In case of a quarrel the contending parties were required to unite in some religious ceremony and in the offering of a sacrifice. After the appointed fine has been paid and the sacrifice offered, to continue the quarrel would be offensive to the unseen spirits and departed ancestors.

A Savara village, consisting of a row or two of well thatched houses, is often changed (and sometimes upon a slight pretext) to another site. For example if a tiger enters a village and carries off a child, if a case of small-pox occurs, or if some of the cattle die, the village is likely to be deserted and another built in a better place.

Among the Savaras infant marriage is the rule. The girls seldom live unmarried until they reach maturity. There seems to have been no punishment for immorality committed previous to marriage. A man may marry as many wives as he can support; but polyandry does not seem to be practiced. At the father's death the property is divided equally among all the sons of the various wives. In taking to himself so many wives the Savara seems to think that women, like beasts of burden, are useful and valuable property. They can work for him and their children will also in turn be a help to him in his work. His property consists in wives, children and cattle. A wife who does not like her present husband may induce another man whom she likes better to buy her from her husband. In such a case the price to be paid is a buffalo or a pig and some liquor. This prerogative of hers often acts healthfully upon the tyrannical husband, and makes her position more tolerable than that of Hindu women.

When a boy's parents want a wife for him they consult with their relations and then send to the girl's parents some outside parties who make known their request. Soon after they come to the girl's home with liquor. Should they find the door closed it is understood that marriage with their boy is not agreeable. But if consent is obtained the contract is solemnized by all members of the two families drinking liquor together. After drinking the liquor turmeric paste is smeared over certain parts of the body. This smearing is confined to the girl's relations, and is put on by the boy's relatives. Several visits are made, in which music, dancing, singing, liquor drinking, etc., are participated in. Then comes the final marriage ceremony, when various gifts in clothes, brass jewelry, etc., have to be made. One pot of liquor is reserved and after being decorated is worshipped. This is performed by the priest who prays to dead ancestors and unseen spirits generally. He asks for prosperity upon the newly married couple. The sacred liquor is sprinkled over the feet and shoulders of the Elders. Then the girl is asked if she will have the man. She replies: "Have we not drunk the liquor? Are we not Savaras? Why should I not marry him?" Then a festival is proclaimed and all the villages take part, each household giving a present to the bride and groom. After the wedding she is sent as soon as possible to her husband's house and she is supposed to bring enough gifts from her relatives to make up for all the gifts which her husband's relatives had given.

Widows may remarry and they often marry the deceased husband's younger brother who inherits his brother's property if he died without children. If a widow marries a stranger she must leave behind her own and her husband's property. Her new husband must also pay a fine (a buffalo or a pig and some liquor) to the former husband's younger brother. This fine is distributed by the priest among all the villagers. If any one marries a widow he must offer a sacrifice consisting of a pig and some liquor. This is offered to the spirit of the dead husband, and the priest thereby propitiates him so that he will not trouble the widow and her new husband. The husband is at liberty to send off any of his wives if they are extravagant, illtreat the children, quarrel with the other wives, etc.

The Savaras believe that departed spirits hover around and often do much injury to those who displease them. Hence they must often be propitiated and generally they like to be propitiated with liquor, of which they are very fond. In every Savara house there will be found a pot or two daubed with turmeric and covered with a flat plate. These pots are sacred as they are the abode of departed spirits. One of these pots is generally kept in the corner of the room and another is suspended from the roof by a string, down which the spirit is supposed to de-