THE DEDICATION OF THE NEW CHURCH IN VIRAMGAM, GUJARAT

‘Thou whose unmeasured temple stands
Built over earth and sea,
Accept the walls that human hands
Have raised, O God, to Thee.

And let the Comforter and Friend,
Thy Holy Spirit, meet
With those who here in worship bend
Before Thy mercy-seat.’

—Scottish Psalter, 1615.

‘OCCUPY TILL I COME’
‘Sahib’ said an Indian Christian. ‘Teach me some Geography.’
‘Why, what do you want with Geography at your age?’
‘Sahib,’ was the earnest reply, ‘I wish to study Geography so I may know more about which to pray.’

—The Desire of all Nations.
The Ministry of the Alliance in Gujarat

The Alliance work in the Province of Gujarat is the Alliance's youngest daughter in the mission field in India. It was opened up after the work was begun in Berar and Khandesh—the Marathi speaking areas. Mrs. Fuller paid a visit to Gujarat prior to 1894. There were large untouched fields and the Irish Presbyterian Mission encouraged the Alliance to share some of the large responsibility of Gujarati evangelization. God gave to Mrs. Fuller a vision of the holy waters as described in Ezekiel 47 as a promise of what He would do in Gujarat.

Among the pioneer missionaries who came to Gujarat only thirty-nine years ago were Messrs. Woodward, Back, Andrews and Hamilton. Stations were opened at Kapadvanz and Mehmedabad. A few years later the former place was given over to the Methodist Episcopal Mission who were then also beginning work in Gujarat. At Akalacha, Mehmedabad County, Mr. Woodward gathered some boys together and taught the Christian truths. Miss Smiley opened up work in Kaira where orphan girls were gathered into a home.

Later, a station was opened at Vansar, Matar County, where Mr. Hamilton put in many of his best years of service. The first two Christians to be baptised were from a village not far from Vansar,
and closely following them people were saved in many of the surrounding villages. These, taking their lunch with them, would walk ten to twenty miles to the Sunday services. Later, these little groups increased and built their own churches.

Mr. Andrews opened up the work in the large city of Ahmedabad, and from there he and Mr. Back went about thirty miles south-west by bullock cart and opened up Dholka station. Sanand station was opened by Mr. King, and Viramgam under Mr. Borap’s and Mr. Duckworth’s ministries.

The pioneer missionaries had had but a good start in the language when the great famine of 1899–1900 wrought havoc in Gujarat. Thousands of people died of starvation and hundreds of children were left orphans. Aid was sent from America through the Christian Herald and distributed through our missionaries. Hundreds of people were helped, and whole villages were saved from starvation. Orphans were gathered into roughly built houses and hundreds were sent to other parts of India to be cared for by other missions. The missionaries were taxed night and day ministering to the innumerable needs of the people. Some of them, because of the lack of proper housing and protection, were attacked by fever and to-day their graves are scattered throughout Gujarat. Some were ordered home, but never reached America for they were called to be with the Lord Jesus while on their way home. In those pioneer days the missionaries were without a trained staff of helpers or evangelists. They were called upon to lay the foundations of everything they undertook.

The hundreds of boys at Dholka were brought to the Lord and educated. One of the first things the missionaries did was to open a Bible Training School where they grounded the future leaders in the deep truths of the Scriptures.
Christians were made in many of the towns in Mehmedabad County and these little flocks were cared for by the newly instructed teacher-evangelists. As many of the Christians came from the depressed classes among the Hindus—who were without any social privileges whatsoever—small village schools were opened in their quarters to train the Christian converts and their families in the rudiments of reading and writing so that they would be able to read their own Bibles. Others were gathered into Christian farm colonies where they learned to live an honest life.

During the great Welsh revival in 1907 and 1908 revival also visited our work in Gujarat, and more especially the orphanages where there was systematic Bible instruction and prayer. Dholka and Kaira became famous all over Gujarat, and Christians from all around came to see the working of the Lord. Many of those who went through the revival are our present pastors and evangelists. There is hardly a congregation in Gujarat that does not have among its older members some who experienced that revival.

Upon the good spiritual foundation constructed by the pioneers, as well as those that followed them, the newly organised C. and M A. of India has been laid. We have a Gujarat Synod composed of four Church Councils averaging about four or five Churches each. This month a Central Pastors’ Fund has been started to which the seventeen organised and three unorganised Churches contribute about eighty per cent. of the support for the nine Indian pastors. Within the past few weeks God has again set His seal upon work here and poured out His Spirit upon the Churches. The waters of God are increasing and we are all looking for that deep river of God without which the vision and will of God are incomplete.

We wish that we could have named each missionary who has had a share in this great work of God. Many have been
promoted to their reward, among whom is our greatly esteemed Dr. Walter Turnbull who was Vice-President of the Alliance. We also claim with pride the services of our missionaries who are now in greater service in the homeland, among whom we honour our Brother Snead, our beloved Foreign Secretary. We have reason to believe that our Mother Church in America is not disappointed in her new happy daughter, the Alliance Church in Gujarat, India.

AMIDAS MITHA.

A Village

Nine-tenths of the population of India live in villages, and this is where most of our work is being done. I have worked in the Gujarat villages for over thirty-six years so, of course, the description will be of a Gujarati village.

Nearing the entrance we see a rope tied across from one house to the other, and in the middle of this rope is fastened a small earthen vessel and on either side of the vessel cocoanuts are tied, which have first been offered to idols. This, they tell us, is to prevent the evil spirits from bringing sickness and other trouble on the people living in the village. When we pass along we often hear the cry of little children, ‘There comes the horse cart! There comes the horse cart!’ and soon we have a number of little boys and girls following us up the village road, some of whom are dressed in their birth clothes.

Up the main road we see a few stores. These are open in the front, and the storekeeper sits on the floor in the midst of the boxes which contain his merchandise. If the village is a large one, it will have a Government school where the children (mostly boys)

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1 Mr. Amidas Mitha is a Gujarati evangelist in our mission. The above is an extract and translation from an article written by him in Gujarati.
all study aloud and can be heard quite a distance away. There will also be a Hindu temple surrounded by a wall. Inside the court there will be a shrine for the idols and rooms for the priest and his family.

From the center of the village there are roads leading to the quarters where the different castes live. In most villages the farmer caste is a large one. Should we reach there early in the morning we would find the yards outside their houses filled with cattle, bullocks, buffaloes and calves of all sizes. After these have been sent out to graze and the women have cleaned up the yard it looks very nice and we often have precious meetings with them sitting in the shade of one of the houses, or under a tree. In another part of the village we will find the homes of the shepherds. There are enclosed yards where they keep their flocks at night.

In some villages there are Rajputs, who were at one time the ruling caste of India, and although many of them are now poor they are very proud. Their women never go outside their own neighbourhood. For this reason all the outside work must be done by the men. As a rule the Rajput women are very glad to have us come, but few have a mind to listen to the message of salvation which we bring them. They ask a great many questions about our country and about ourselves. Their chief question is whether we are married or not and how many sons we have. When we tell them that we are not married they look surprised and think that it is a great calamity.

Then there is in most villages the section where the Untouchables live. This may be joined to the rest of the village, or may be a little distance away. These are the people that we read so much about of late, and for whose uplift Mr. Gandhi is willing to give his life by fasting unto death. We who work among the women
find the best way is to visit them in their own homes and when we go to a village we try to reach as many women as we can.

One day last year we went to a village. It was the time of the picking of the cotton. We found very few people at home. Passing a Hindu temple we felt led to go inside the court. There we found an old priest and his wife, their son and his family. Seeing us going into the temple, a few women followed us and there we preached Christ unto them. The old mother was quite ill and her husband asked if we had any medicine we could give her. We told him that we had nothing with us, but if he were willing we would ask God in the name of Jesus to heal her. He was quite willing, and after telling them Jesus healed the sick and suffering while on earth, and that He is the same ‘yesterday, today and for ever,’ we knelt down by her cot and asked the Lord in mercy to heal her body and save her soul. The next day one of our evangelists passed the village and met the old man who said, ‘My wife is all right. Your Jesus answered prayer for her.’

CORA H. HANSEN.

Some Gujarati Christians I Have Known

It is now over thirty-four years since I first came to India. Some one will ask, ‘Does it pay to give your life to such a land and people? Let the following few lines be my answer.

Some years ago there came a weak starved mother to us on hands and knees because she was too weak to walk, seeking a home for her darling child, Hope. She gave us two coppers to give her little girl after her death, for she said, ‘I can’t live.’ What a sight she was to behold—skin and bones covered with festering sores. Her eyes were so sore that the blood trickled down the thin cheeks.
They were cleansed, dressed and fed, but the poor mother was never able to leave her bed again. The Gospel was faithfully given her, and watching the love bestowed upon her child she soon opened her heart to the message. Ten days later she sent for us and when we saw her we knew that her end had come. We asked her whether she was ready to die. She looked up and smilingly said, 'Jesus,' and was gone. It was her dying wish that we should take care of her child. Little Hope improved slowly and when she was able she was sent to our girls' orphanage, that blessed place and haven of rest where many poor heathen girls have come to know the Lord Jesus as Saviour. The child went to school and soon was found of her Lord Jesus. She did well in her studies, as well as in the study of the Bible, receiving many prizes in competitive examinations. She is now a mother and seeks to bring up her children in the fear of the Lord Jesus, as well as teaching other children the way of life.

There is another case that comes to mind. I picture her now as she looked when she came to the orphanage, suffering greatly with scrofula and discharging sores. In the natural course there was no hope for her, but the Lord intervened. While dressing her suffering body daily the odor was so offensive that we could scarcely eat our food afterwards. In God's Providence a Spirit-filled messenger came who gave messages on Christ our Healer. Silver, for that was her name, having sought the Lord for salvation from her sins sought the Lord for healing, promising Him that if He healed her she would give the rest of her days to Him. She was healed and lived a real life of faith. Her testimony of healing became a great blessing to others. If in any way she became lax in her prayer life some old symptom of her former disease immediately appeared, but she would immediately humble herself before
the Lord and He would be entreated of her. After completing her studies she felt the burden of lost souls and decided to do Bible-woman's work. We have worked together and Silver works hard to bring others to Christ. The sin-burdened, as well as the sick in body, send for her knowing that she can show them where they can find peace and forgiveness. I know Silver has stars in her crown.

C. H. Peter.

Work among Children

'She will beat you and carry you off,' and away the village boys and girls scampered to their homes leaving my Bible-woman and me standing alone in the middle of the village! We had just succeeded in gathering around us many of the children to have a meeting with them when suddenly from every side came this cry from the grown-ups: 'She will beat you and carry you off.' It worked like magic, and in a minute or two there was nothing left of our congregation but a cloud of dust raised by fleeing feet. When they were safe by the side of their parents they peeped timidly from behind their mother's skirts to take another look at the white creature from whose clutches they had so narrowly escaped! But we were not going to be defeated like this. We put forth every effort to win the confidence of the children and to encourage them to return to us. We used enticing words, we smiled, we offered picture cards. At last the desire to have the card brought them a little nearer, and after more coaxing and more smiling we won, and they all gathered about us and we had a splendid meeting with them.

How these girls and boys in the villages need Jesus! When we remember the attitude of the Master towards the little ones and His words, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me,' we feel
that it is a real ministry to win them for Him while they are still young. Most of them have had no education and at first we wondered if we would ever be able to awaken their dull minds to understand our message. But patience, love and much prayer has wrought a marvellous change. Now when we return to their village each week, they come running from their homes to greet us. Their smiling faces tell us how sincere is their welcome. They gather eagerly to hear another story about Jesus and His love, they joyfully sing with us, ‘Jesus loves me, this I know,’ they repeat the Scripture verse which they learned the week before; and the faces which at first looked so dull brighten with a new light as they tell us how much they have remembered about Jesus from the story of the previous week. One little fellow was much impressed with the story of the Feeding of the Five Thousand. At the end of the lesson his big black eyes opened wide and he said, ‘If Jesus should come to my house I would give Him savo and lardavas.’ These are expensive Indian dishes and he wanted to give Jesus the best. Now as I look into their eager, earnest faces, as they greet me with a smiling ‘Salaam,’ I praise God for the privilege He has afforded me of working among these village children. I forget their bare feet, their scanty garments—
and often no garments at all—their tumbled, matted hair, forget all, save that Jesus died for them; that He has filled my heart with love for them and that they must be won for Him.

One day while walking through a village I heard a great babble of voices. My Bible-woman and I went in the direction of the noise. Could it be a riot? To our utter amazement the sound was issuing from the village school! The schoolmaster, a weak man, stood at one side in a worried, distressed state of mind unable to cope with the situation. A boy, about twelve years of age, was wildly waving a stick in the air frantically screeching at the unruly youngsters to come to order. But all his good advice fell on deaf ears—the children went blissfully on shouting, laughing and punching the unfortunate one who happened to be near. If you were to go to the school at a time when the students were in a more studious frame of mind, even then before you had reached a radius of a hundred feet you would wonder what possibly could be going on inside. Upon your entrance you would learn that all were studying audibly, each child trying to drown the sound of the other. The Indian custom is that of studying aloud. They do not have chairs and desks, but all sit on the floor in rows, their desks the floor. They sing their A.B.C’s, they put to music all their poems, they count by a tune, they chant their tables, they recite their lessons in a sing-song fashion.

How different are our boys and girls in the boarding schools who have had an opportunity to hear the sweet old story of the Cross, and who have opened their heart’s door and let the Saviour in. You would rejoice to see our girls prepared for school each day. They gather and file one by one into the large schoolroom for chapel. They are so happy, their sardis clean, their hair oiled and neatly combed, their faces bright, so different from the faces of the girls in the village who have had no opportunity. Our girls are saved
from the awful clutches of heathenism, and serve the true and living God instead of bowing before idols of wood and stone. Our girls do not sing obscene songs of worship to idols as the heathen do, but praises to God for His unspeakable gift. They sing praise to Him who is worthy and invite God's blessing and help upon their efforts and work of the day. The girls of each grade march silently to their class room. We thank God for this company—His jewels.

May the ignorance, the helplessness, and the hopelessness of India's village children appeal to you, and by means of your prayers and gifts may they receive the light, by which they may see the 'Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.'

EVA M. KING.
Revival in Gujarat

‘From the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.’

Dan. 10: 12.

For a number of years, the need of a spiritual awakening in Gujarat has been felt, and at different conferences we would disperse with heavy hearts realizing that we had not touched God for this great need. Early this year it was impressed upon many
that we must meet God. A burden of prayer came almost simultaneously upon a number of our congregations, and we ‘set our hearts to understand and to chasten ourselves before the Lord,’ earnestly beseeching Him for revival. For months before the annual Gujarati Conference companies of God’s children met daily for prayer.

The Dholka Church began the new year with the usual watch-night service. The week following, they met in observance of the universal week of prayer. Afterwards they felt reluctant to discontinue the prayer hour as it had already proved a blessing; so supplications for revival were continued until the time of special meetings in February when Rev. A. I. Garrison would arrive as God’s messenger.

On the fiftieth day of prayer, the meeting was about to be closed, when in the rear of the church a young man, who was the headmaster of the boys’ school, suddenly arose and burst forth in strong intercession, asking God to disperse the evil forces which were hindering the members of the congregation. He had barely begun to pray, when the oppression was lifted and, thank God, the Holy Spirit fell upon the group. Men, women and children, with tears running down their cheeks, began simultaneously to plead with God for cleansing, for forgiveness of sins, for enduement with His Spirit. Each prayed according to his individual need. It was their day of Pentecost. This wonderful meeting continued for seven hours. Even the small boys of the school apparently felt no desire to leave the meeting for food. The Bread from Heaven was to all a satisfying portion. A number of these lads found Christ as their Saviour that night. Some of the church members who had been defeated in their spiritual life confessed their sins to God and to men and a new glow came upon their faces and a new song on their lips, and a number were anointed
with the Spirit. Several prayed and praised God in other tongues ‘as the Spirit gave them utterance.’ After such a time of blessing the Church could not consider stopping the daily prayer sessions, and groups in other places also prayed for the mela which was to be held in Mehmedabad two weeks later.

The mela is the annual convention for all the Churches of Gujarat. God visited us as we remained for prayer after the close of heart-searching messages on ‘What is a Christian?’ In one of these meetings a former teacher in the boys’ school arose, trembling under the power of God, and with tears of joy testified that that day was the first of his Christian life. He said that he had considered himself a Christian, but after hearing these messages from the Word of God he had become convinced that through the years he had deceived himself in so thinking, but that by the grace of God, he could witness before all that God had forgiven him, that all things were made new and that he had become a Christian. He went to several of the missionaries and his Indian brethren and asked their forgiveness for the misdeeds of the past.

In one corner of the church two other brothers sobbed out their confessions to one another, letting the Blood cover the past. Here and there among the praying company were to be seen men and women with their arms upraised, lost to their surroundings. Their souls feasted upon heavenly delights such as the world had never dreamed. God was in His Holy Temple, and His presence, oh, how sweet!

We wish you could have heard the earnest prayers that ascended at the break of day. The men met in the church and the women in a tent. In the women’s noon prayer session there were no delays. Prayer poured forth from hungry hearts. Some wept for the salvation of sons and daughters; others shouted praises that
could not be held back, and their faces were beautiful to behold. God had unstopped channels, and rivers of living water were flowing forth unhindered! We trod upon holy ground those days when God was manifestly in our midst.

After the close of this blessed holy convocation, a few village Christians remained to assist in removing the booths which had been erected for the comfort of those who came from a distance. The first evening the men on the compound gathered for prayer in the restaurant booth. That remarkable prayer meeting, continued until one o’clock in the morning. Several of the newly-baptized village men were convicted of sins which they feared to bring to light, but they confessed them openly, weeping aloud for forgiveness as we have never before heard men do. They were desperately under conviction and realized something of the exceeding sinfulness of sin in the sight of a Holy God. Then the burden of guilt and sin was lifted and their souls were flooded with the joy of forgiveness. Several of the younger evangelists were greatly blessed in God’s presence during that meeting.

The Holy Spirit worked markedly, especially where leaders openly acknowledged their failures and sins. Backsliders, who for years had been a hindrance to God’s work, were smitten with deep conviction and confessed their sins to one another and expressed their regret for the years that had been wasted! The young colporteur at Viramgam, while alone in his room in prayer several days after the close of the mela, received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. And the company of believers from the sweeper class of that city were so blessed through hearing God’s messages, that their joy knew no bounds. How they love to testify of Jesus and His love for them. A number of young people in various congregations found Christ as their Saviour.
God has again proved His faithfulness in fulfilling His promises to us and we are greatly encouraged to press on.

‘Burn on! Burn on!
O fire of God, burn on,
’Till all my dross is burned away.
Burn on, burn on!
Prepare me for the testing day.’

EDNA RINGENBERG.

Notes of Praise

For the restoration to health of Miss Blanche Conger and Mr. Lapp.

For a decided improvement in Miss Beardslee’s health. She states that she is now ‘feeling five hundred per cent. better.’

That Mr. Albert Eicher has passed his first examination in Marathi with distinction.

Requests for Prayer

For the Rainy season Bible Schools in our fields when the evangelists gather for intensive study of the Word.

For Miss King and Miss Karner who are being physically tested.

That the revival fire which has begun in our Churches in Gujarat may spread to all our stations.

For Miss King, to whom we extend our sympathies in the bereavement of her father.
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