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*Missionary Council Bulletin V.A.*

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 WORLD CALL  
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THE  
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 AND THE  
 WOMAN  
 MISSIONARY

Pamphlet

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## THE WORLD CALL AND THE WOMAN MISSIONARY\*

THE kinds of work done by missionaries are very various; the nature of the missionary vocation is, and has always been, the same. A missionary of Christ is one called to live among those who do not know Him, in order that He may become known. This can only be through such increasing self-surrender that the life can be made a channel of Christ's self-revelation, and more and more luminous with His light. In attainment, this may indeed be regarded by each individual as out of his or her reach; in ideal and endeavour it is essential not only to every commissioned missionary, but to every Christian who desires to be a true disciple. Abroad or at home, such disciples are needed by the Lord. For the individual, the finding of vocation is the discovery by the spirit seeking to be obedient how and where that obedience is to be given.

The discovery of vocation to any service, whether at home or abroad, comes to us in many different ways. To some people it is by a direct personal intuition of the call of God, coming sometimes after much prayer and uncertainty, sometimes in ways entirely unexpected. To most people, on the other hand, it becomes clear by slow degrees and by more normal channels; an urgent sense of a need to be supplied, an impulse to give much because much has been given to us, a succession of incidents all tending to hold one's mind in one direction, the sudden discovery of some peculiarly appropriate job, a suggestion made by a friend or by a book, coming at a moment when one stands at the cross-roads. Gilmour, the great Scottish missionary, had a matter-of-fact motive—failure to discover any reason why he should stay at home. The call is not always the expected: sometimes those whose lives at home seem fullest, are called abroad, while those who long to go, find their true service at home. One of the rough-and-ready tests of a true vocation is inability to dismiss the subject from one's mind; the call to service abroad, especially, is often extremely alarming when it first presents itself, and the mind tries hard to dismiss it. It is the most reassuring certainty about true vocation that all the phases of life seem, as one looks back upon them, to have moved unconsciously towards that single point.

\* This leaflet is adapted, by kind permission of the S.P.G., from their publication "Women Missionaries and their Work."

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But the missionary is, and has been from the beginning, not called only, but sent. About the call to the increasingly perfect obedience of Christ there cannot be any mistake, but for the final decision whether that obedience is to be given at home or abroad, one has to follow the judgment of the Church which sends. It is the same Spirit Who speaks in the private call to the soul and in the decision of the Church's spokesmen about the sending. The decision of the Church is often expressed by the verdict of an accredited missionary society on a candidate's fitness. Many considerations must carry weight there—health, nerves, temperament, education. Vocations sometimes seem to be thwarted; they never need be so in reality. Some of our Lord's greatest victories overseas are linked with the prayers of those who wanted to be there and could not. Intercession and sacrifice go together.

In the non-Christian world at the present day there are two main types of society in which the missionary may find herself, though the two are often to be found side by side—the people of an old Oriental civilisation on the one hand, the people of a primitive tribal or village society on the other. The former will be found, of course, in such countries as India, China, Japan, Korea, Siam and in the greater part of the Moslem world; the latter, in one form or another, in every part of Africa, in the South Seas, and among the peasant folk and the poor of the great Eastern nations also. Both types make great demands upon the intelligence and adaptability of the missionary, but the demands are in some ways widely different. Among educated Orientals to-day we are faced by the ferment made by the touch of the two very different civilisations, Eastern and Western, and the problems this touch creates are complicated by the ardent nationalism that is so marked a quality of nearly every country in modern Asia. The missionary there must be prepared to make the most strenuous intellectual effort, through study as well as personal intercourse, to share in the modes of thought of an alien people, and to reach a real understanding of them from the inside, as far as a foreigner can, so that Christ may be able to speak to them through her in their own mental language; she goes to them to learn as well as to teach, and will often find her most useful service can be given in working under a leader who is of the country itself. Among primitive and village people the effort of the inspired

imagination can get much less help from literature—generally none from any literature written by the people themselves—and the missionary must depend even more upon the love she is enabled to pour out upon what are often pitifully barren and degraded lives, both for her understanding of them and for their understanding of her message. In both types of society she needs to-day, in the very first place, to free herself from even the most easy and natural assumptions and limitations of race; a knowledge of her religion sufficiently deep and broad to show her what in it is essential and what may be adapted to the needs of a different people; an imagination and sympathy to help towards that adaptation; and always and above all the Divine love through which the touch of Christ may reach the people for whom she gives herself.

The methods by which the work is done will vary with the nature of the task, and the character and talents of the worker. They may be roughly grouped in three classes—evangelistic, medical and educational.

*The evangelist* is doing what may be called the most direct, but not necessarily or always the most effective missionary work. In town or village, visiting in houses or collecting groups of women in the open-air, she is teaching the Word of Christ to those who do not know Him. It is her work to help them to understand Him and His Church; it very often falls to her to prepare them for baptism and for confirmation; she must answer their questions and clear up their difficulties. To her falls also, very largely, the work of befriending them, and of carrying on their teaching after they have come into the Church, and especially the training and supervising of those of them who are called to direct Christian service as evangelists or Bible-women. She must nearly always be something of a teacher, the more adaptable the better. In village districts she is often compelled to be something of a doctor and a health visitor. There are very few talents or capacities which on one side of the work or another she will not be able to use.

*Medical and surgical help* is needed in the non-Christian world to an extent it is difficult even to imagine. In spite of the modern developments of medical study in such countries as India and China, the great majority of their people are still out of reach of any skilled help whatever, and, of course, almost everywhere in the East women can only be reached by women

doctors. It is sometimes asserted that the people of the tropics suffer less from the diseases peculiar to their countries than Europeans do; the exact opposite is the truth, and to this suffering from unhealthy climates and conditions must be added all that comes from cruel and unhygienic customs, and more particularly from child-marriages and traditions and rituals about child-birth, and, in the case of many millions of people, from a poverty greater than most Europeans have ever imagined possible. A doctor in these countries generally makes her headquarters in a hospital, though it is often of the most elementary kind, and visits patients in their own homes as far as she can make time to do so. There is always more to be done than she can do, and there is almost no form of medical or surgical practice which may not come her way.

The nurse ought to hold her three years' general nursing certificate and the C.M.B. certificate, and experience in district nursing is of great value. Her work in a Mission hospital differs from the work she knows at home mainly in that she has, at most, two or three other European nurses to work with, and an important part of her work is generally the training of nurses of the country. Where, as is often the case, hospital equipment is far below the best European standards, and the nurses to be trained are drawn from a community which, even when Christian, disapproves of nursing as a profession for its daughters, the demands this work makes upon love, tact and patience are very great; but the difficulties of the work only emphasise its importance.

The value of medical service, both of doctors and nurses, in almost every part of the Mission Field cannot be over-estimated; it is a practical witness to the compassion of Christ which is surely especially near to His heart, and often opens doors hitherto closely barred.

The work of the *missionary educationist* may be from the professional point of view of almost any grade; there are missionaries working as university lecturers at one end of the scale, and doing the simplest forms of elementary and industrial teaching at the other. In many high schools and middle schools the missionary will spend a great part of her time teaching ordinary secondary school subjects, generally under the direction of a Government school code. In such schools she ought to be a graduate if possible, preferably with a teaching diploma,

or some teaching experience, or both. Such schools are now largely staffed by university women of the country itself, and the European missionary is needed chiefly as an expert helper, whether or not she is at the head. These are nearly always boarding schools, and much of the missionary's most valuable work is done out of school hours. In India and Africa, especially, there is also great need, underlined by the Reports of the World Call to the Church, and by recent Government and other investigations, for missionary teachers who can train teachers for village schools, and follow up and help them when they are at work, and who will build up in big village districts systems of "community education" for the redemption of the whole life of the village. Every kind of practical knowledge and skill, industrial knowledge, dairy and other agricultural work, handicrafts, domestic science, music, phonetics, an interest in folk-lore and in anthropology, will be of value in this; it is probably, of all educational work in the world to-day, that which gives greatest scope for creative ability. Keen and adaptable missionary-hearted women, with elementary or technical teaching qualifications, are most urgently needed to develop it. Experience in helping to train teachers—*e.g.*, by supervising student teachers, is of great value, and so also is experience of resident work in orphanages, industrial schools, or reformatories. It is also in educational work especially that the Christian Church in this country may make its contribution to the often very urgent needs of our own people overseas, and of the populations of mixed European blood in Asia and Africa. Both in Oriental lands and among primitive peoples the missionary educationist has a great part to play in training up and giving ideals to the women of the future.

Christian education in non-Christian countries, reminds us in many of the problems it calls up, of the need to remember always the final aim of the foreign missionary. It has often been said that the best teacher makes himself unnecessary to his pupils. In the same way it is the purpose of missionary work to bring into being a self-governing, self-propagating Church. To bring it to the point at which we can most completely efface ourselves is the truest success. The spirit of humble service in whatever way is needed most, a selfless love—that is the offering we must make to the building of the young Churches in these non-Christian lands. The one funda-

mental demand is for a personality dedicated wholly to God's service, and developed and disciplined so that its very power may be used by Him to the full. We are constantly beset by the danger, which comes from our Western love for efficiency, of thinking of religion in terms of active service primarily—of letting slip the great spiritual values by being immersed in organisation. The life which is effectively to bring the world into touch with God can only be lived by continual contact with Him.

We close by quoting some words of Mother Edith, O.M.S.E. : " God does indeed bless all faithful service. But if the coming of His Kingdom seems to tarry, may it not be because we try so many ways of our own instead of using the utmost endeavour possible to learn in prayer, not only generally, but in details the Way of His Will? Think of the marvellous developments in science since men have learned the wisdom of following the laws of nature. May not equally marvellous and unimagined possibilities of developments in the Mission Field be lying very near to us, only waiting for us to follow better God's laws of spiritual life? "

#### NOTES FOR POSSIBLE CANDIDATES

Anyone desiring to offer as a candidate for missionary work should either write direct to the Candidates' Secretary of the Society of their choice, or call at the Society's office and talk things over. Half-an-hour's talk is very useful to both candidate and secretary, and will clear up many points which the enquirer would like to discuss before coming to a decision. The Societies welcome the frankest discussion by interview or by letter.

As a rule Societies do not recommend women for service abroad under the age of twenty-five, but will accept them for preparation two or three years earlier. Those too young to apply for training, or debarred by circumstances from offering at once, may join Preparation Unions, which will help to equip them for service, while not binding them to a future offer.

Those not yet ready to offer to a Society may seek advice from the Secretary of the *Advisory Committee on Service Overseas*, Missionary Council, Church House, Westminster. Addresses of the various Missionary Societies may be obtained from the Missionary Council, but those of some of the larger Anglican Societies sending out women are given below :—

Cambridge Mission to Delhi, Church House, Westminster, S.W.1 ; Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 27, Chancery Lane, W.C.2 ; Church Missionary Society, Salisbury Square, E.C.4 ; Church Missions to Jews, 16, Lincoln's Inn Fields, W.C.2 ; Melanesian Mission, Church House, Westminster, S.W.1 ; South American Missionary Society, 20, John Street, W.C.1 ; Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 15, Tufton Street, S.W.1 ; Universities Mission to Central Africa, 9, Dartmouth Street, S.W.1.