

**British women missionaries in India,  
c.1917-1950.**



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## List of Abbreviations

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| AL    | Annual Letter  |
| CEZ   | Church of England Zenana   |
| CEZMS | Church of England Zenana Missionary Society  |
| CIBC  | Church of India, Burma and Ceylon  |
| CIM   | China Inland Mission   |
| CMB   | Central Medical Board (Nursing Certificate)  |
| CMD   | Cambridge Mission to Delhi   |
| CMS   | Church Missionary Society  |
| CSAS  | Centre of South Asian Studies, Cambridge   |
| CSI   | Church of South India  |
| CWW   | Committee for Women's Work   |
| HPU   | Home Preparation Union   |
| ICS   | Indian Civil Service   |
| LMS   | London Missionary Society  |
| MPU   | Missionary Preparation Union   |
| MRA   | Moral Rearmament   |
| MU    | Mothers' Union   |
| NWF   | North West Frontier  |
| QL    | Quarterly Letter   |
| SIUC  | South India United Church  |
| SPCK  | Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge  |
| SPG   | Society for the Propagation of the Gospel  |
| UMCA  | Universities' Mission to Central Africa  |
| UP    | United Provinces   |
| USPG  | United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (formed by the union between SPG and the Universities' Mission to Central Africa in 1965) |
| UTC   | United Theological College, Bangalore  |
| YWCA  | Young Women's Christian Association  |

## Introduction

Literary portrayals of British India are peppered with missionaries. From ‘old Mr Graysford and young Mr Sorley,’ disregarded by the high society of Forster’s Chandrapore,<sup>1</sup> to Mrs Simon, the socially-ambitious American in Bromfield’s Ranchipur,<sup>2</sup> to the ‘awesomely brisk, cheerful and resourceful’ spinster schoolteachers of Desai’s Old Delhi,<sup>3</sup> missionaries are indispensable ingredients in imperial fiction. Women missionaries are familiar characters: most famously depicted as the restless, dissatisfied sisters in Godden’s *Black Narcissus*,<sup>4</sup> the despondent sati, Edwina Crane, and her tragicomic successor, Barbie Bachelor, in Scott’s *The Raj Quartet*.<sup>5</sup> Yet, the realities of their extraordinary experiences, which included rescuing a kidnapped British girl from Afridi tribal territory, performing lifesaving operations on the floor of village mud huts, entertaining Vicereines, and assisting at refugee camps in the midst of post-Partition violence, are far more exciting. An examination of their careers contributes to multiple overlapping historiographies: not only to the history of Church and mission, but also to that of gender, the British Empire, Indian nationalism, and decolonisation.

Missionary work in India began in the early-nineteenth century. An Anglican bishopric of Calcutta was established by the British Parliament in 1813 and missionaries were officially licensed to enter the territories of the East India Company.<sup>6</sup> By 1851, there were approximately 339 ordained Protestant missionaries working in the subcontinent.<sup>7</sup> Due to the perceived dangers of an insanitary climate and unpredictable ‘natives,’ the

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<sup>1</sup> E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India*. (London, 1979). p.30. [First published, 1924].

<sup>2</sup> Louis Bromfield, *The Rains Came: a novel of modern India*. (London, 1937).

<sup>3</sup> Anita Desai, *Clear Light of Day*. (New York, 1980). p.124.

<sup>4</sup> Rumer Godden, *Black Narcissus*. (London, 1994). [First published, 1939].

<sup>5</sup> In particular, Paul Scott, *The Jewel in the Crown & The Towers of Silence*. (London, 1985).

<sup>6</sup> Eyre Chatterton, *A History of the Church of England in India since the early days of the East India Company*. (London, 1924). Chp.VIII.

<sup>7</sup> G.A. Oddie, *Social Protest in India. British Protestant Missionaries and Social Reforms. 1850-1900*. (New Delhi, 1979). p.98.

mission enterprise was a male-dominated project. By the mid-century, however, male missionaries were realising their attempts to propagate the Gospel were hampered by their inability to appeal to Indian women. Female colleagues were required, particularly as they could go 'beyond the veil' and gain access to the zenana quarters of Muslim and high-caste Hindu households. At first, British women entered the mission field as wives. In the words of St John Rivers to Jane Eyre, a missionary wife was to be her husband's 'help-meet and fellow-labourer,' a shining example to the heathen of Christian femininity and domesticity.<sup>8</sup> The beginnings of single women's recruitment did not occur until the late-nineteenth century, coinciding with advances in female education, the increasing employment of unmarried women in nursing, teaching and Church work, and the foundation of Anglican religious communities. Women's missionary societies and ladies' branches of established male societies were inaugurated, including the Indian Female Normal School Society in 1852, the Wesleyan Missionary Society Ladies' Auxiliary in 1859, the Baptist Zenana Missionary Society in 1868, and the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society (CEZMS) in 1880.<sup>9</sup> In the last two decades of the century, female recruitment rocketed, so that by 1900, 62% of the British missionary workforce in South Asia was female.<sup>10</sup>

The largest missionary societies of the Church of England were the high-Church Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) and the evangelical Church Missionary Society (CMS). SPG was the 'official' society of the established Church, founded by Royal Charter in 1701 to provide Anglican clergymen to minister to British colonists in

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<sup>8</sup> Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*. (New York, 1964). p.428. [First published, 1847]. Deborah Kirkwood, 'Protestant Missionary Women: Wives and Spinsters,' in Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood, and Shirley Ardener (eds.), *Women and Missions: Past and Present. Anthropological and Historical Perceptions*. (Oxford, 1993). pp.25-26.

<sup>9</sup> Jeffrey Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise since 1700*. (Oxford, 2008). p.190.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p.269.

North America.<sup>11</sup> By the 1820s, however, work amongst indigenous peoples took priority and the Society sent its first missionaries to India and Africa. In 1866, a Ladies' Association was formed and the first unmarried SPG woman missionary was sent overseas (bound for Madagascar) the following year. The Association was renamed the Committee for Women's Work in 1904.<sup>12</sup> By the early twentieth century, SPG missionaries worked in India, Africa, China, Japan, and North America.<sup>13</sup> CMS had been founded in 1799 by a group of evangelical Churchmen, anxious to spread the Gospel amongst the 'heathen' in foreign lands.<sup>14</sup> Its work in India flourished after 1813. Although the Society had sent two single women to Sierra Leone in 1819, unmarried women's recruitment did not occur on a large scale until the 1880s. Despite the foundation of an Anglican ladies' society, CEZMS, CMS increasingly appointed women directly. Between 1887 and 1894, there was an influx of 214 single women into the Society's ranks, and a Women's Department was founded in 1895 to recruit and train candidates. By 1905, the number of female missionaries equalled that of male clergymen.<sup>15</sup> CMS missionaries worked in Africa, India, China, Japan, and the Near East (Egypt, Palestine and Persia).

The total numbers of SPG and CMS missionaries were similar in 1920, although CMS' presence in India then decreased significantly [see Table I.1.]. Both societies had mission stations all over the subcontinent [see Figure I.1.]. In 1920, SPG worked in nine provinces of India, as well as Rangoon and Ceylon. Its missions were divided into the

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<sup>11</sup> Daniel O'Connor and others, *Three Centuries of Mission. The United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 1701-2000*. (London, 2000). pp.7-8.

<sup>12</sup> Kirkwood, 'Protestant Missionary Women: Wives and Spinsters,' in Bowie, Kirkwood, and Ardener (eds.), *Women and Missions: Past and Present*. pp.32-33.

<sup>13</sup> See C.F. Pascoe, *Two hundred years of the S.P.G.: an historical account of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1701-1900*. (London, 1901).

<sup>14</sup> Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley (eds.), *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999*. (Richmond, 2000). p.1.

<sup>15</sup> Brian Heeney, *The Women's Movement in the Church of England. 1850-1930*. (Oxford, 1988). pp.59-62.

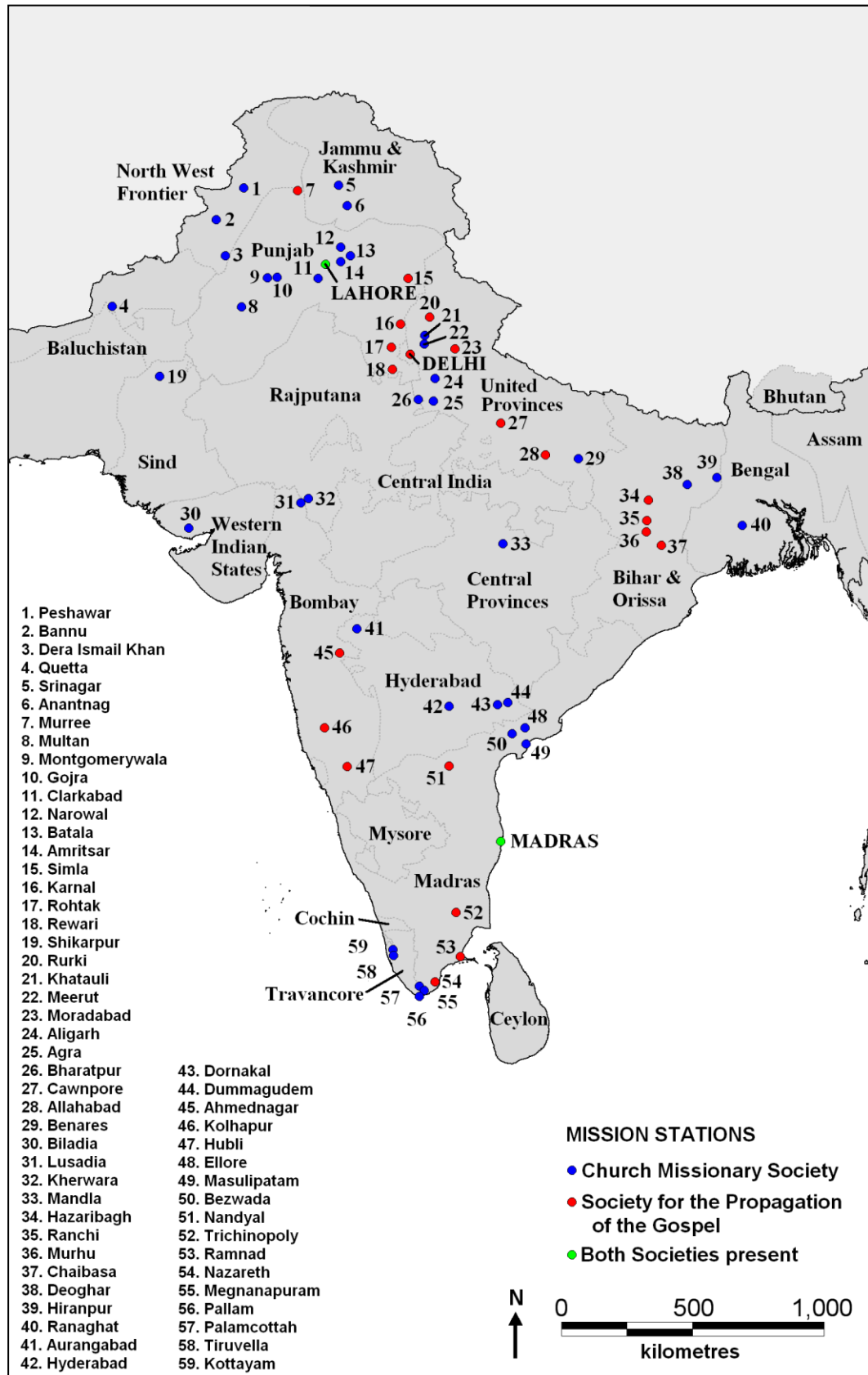
**Table I.1.: Numbers of SPG and CMS missionaries in the field.<sup>16</sup>**

|             | <b>TOTAL<br/>in the<br/>field</b> | <b>TOTAL<br/>in India<br/>(excluding<br/>married<br/>women)</b> | <b>Ordained<br/>men</b> | <b>Laymen</b> | <b>Single<br/>women</b> | <b>Married<br/>women</b> |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>1920</b> |                                   |   |                         |               |                         |                          |
| <b>SPG</b>  | 1338                              | 273   | 102                     | 6             | 165                     | -                        |
| <b>CMS</b>  | 1338                              | 308   | 137                     | 25            | 146                     | 124                      |
| <b>1925</b> |                                   |   |                         |               |                         |                          |
| <b>SPG</b>  | 1470                              | 305   | 89                      | 20            | 196                     | -                        |
| <b>CMS</b>  | 1233                              | 276   | 101                     | 29            | 146                     | 92                       |
| <b>1930</b> |                                   |   |                         |               |                         |                          |
| <b>SPG</b>  | 1415                              | 303   | 87                      | 25            | 191                     | -                        |
| <b>CMS</b>  | 1217                              | 260   | 91                      | 27            | 142                     | 88                       |
| <b>1935</b> |                                   |   |                         |               |                         |                          |
| <b>SPG</b>  | 956                               | 299   | 83                      | 28            | 188                     | -                        |
| <b>CMS</b>  | 1174                              | 229   | 67                      | 30            | 132                     | 64                       |
| <b>1940</b> |                                   |   |                         |               |                         |                          |
| <b>SPG</b>  | -                                 | -   | -                       | -             | -                       | -                        |
| <b>CMS</b>  | 1128                              | 214   | 67                      | 25            | 122                     | 58                       |
| <b>1945</b> |                                   |   |                         |               |                         |                          |
| <b>SPG</b>  | -                                 | -   | -                       | -             | -                       | -                        |
| <b>CMS</b>  | 1115                              | 188   | 59                      | 25            | 104                     | 62                       |
| <b>1950</b> |                                   |   |                         |               |                         |                          |
| <b>SPG</b>  | -                                 | -   | -                       | -             | -                       | -                        |
| <b>CMS</b>  | 920                               | 151   | 47                      | 21            | 83                      | 41                       |

**Sources:** *Annual Report for the Year of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 1920. Churches in Making.* (London, 1921). pp.129-133; *Annual Report etc, 1925. The King's Business.* (London, 1926) p.231; *Annual Report etc, 1930. Instant in Prayer.* (London, 1931). p.109; *Annual Report etc, 1935. Many Members One Body.* (London, 1936). p.224; *Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East, One-Hundred-And-Twenty-First-Year, 1919-20.* (London, 1920). pp.xii-xiii; *The C.M.S. Short Report, 1924-1925. The Open Door.* (London, 1925). pp.90-91; *The C.M.S. Short Report, 1929-30. Unity and Progress.* (London, 1930). pp.30-31; *The C.M.S. Short Report, 1935-1936. The Church that is to be.* (London, 1936). pp.60-61; *The C.M.S. Short Report, 1939-40. Givers of Life.* (London, 1940). pp.68-69; *The C.M.S. Short Report, 1945-5. Planting Men.* (London, 1945). pp.48-49; *Annual Report of the Church Missionary Society. 1949-50. Popular Edition.* (London, 1950). pp.28-29.

<sup>16</sup> There are no statistics in SPG's published reports of 1940-1950. See for example: H.P. Thompson, *Onward. S.P.G. Book of the Year.* (London, 1941) & H.R. Henrich (ed.), *Focus Fifty-One. S.P.G. Review of the Year's Work, 1949-1950.* (London, 1950). CMS statistics for India for 1935 are from the 1935-36 report. CMS totals include Ceylon.

**Figure I.1. Map of major SPG and CMS stations in British India at which women missionaries worked, including significant outstations, 1917-1947.**



dioceses of Assam, Chota Nagpur, Calcutta, Lucknow, Tinnevely and Madura, Bombay, Madras, and Nagpur. The largest diocese for women's work (and work in general) was Lahore with forty-nine missionaries, while there were none in Assam or Nagpur.<sup>17</sup> CMS work was similarly widespread. In 1920, the Society ran seven missions in India and one in Ceylon. These were the Punjab, North West Frontier and Sind Mission, the Western India Mission, the United Provinces Mission, the Central Provinces Mission, the Bengal and Bihar Mission, the Madras, Telugu Country and Tinnevely Mission, and the Travancore and Cochin Mission. The Punjab Mission was the largest with thirty-nine women missionaries and Central Provinces the smallest with seven.<sup>18</sup>

The sheer numbers of women in the missionary enterprise renders them significant subjects for study. Yet, their work and opinions have often been overlooked in historical accounts. This is partly understandable due to the patriarchal, clergy-dominated structures of churches and missionary societies. Few women sat on organisational committees and women's work remained firmly in an auxiliary position at home and in the field. It was not until 1927, for example, that the first woman was appointed a full secretary of CMS.<sup>19</sup> In most societies, wives were not included on lists of workers nor counted in overall missionary numbers. Jeffrey Cox, whose research has done much to counter women's 'invisibility' in mission history, admits he worked 'for months' in the archives of the Cambridge Mission to Delhi 'before realising that the mission was predominately female.'<sup>20</sup> Yet, women's voices are obtainable in mission archives. There are copious

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<sup>17</sup> *Annual Report for the Year of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 1920.* pp.129-133.

<sup>18</sup> *Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society, 1919-20.* pp.xii-xiii.

<sup>19</sup> Gordon Hewitt, *The Problems of Success. A History of the Church Missionary Society, 1910-1942. Vol.I. In Tropical Africa. The Middle East. At Home.* (London, 1971). p.445.

<sup>20</sup> Jeffrey Cox, 'Independent English women in Delhi and Lahore, 1860-1947,' in R.W. Davis and R.J. Helmstadter (eds.), *Religion and Irreligion in Victorian Society.* (London, 1992). p.170. Cox also analyses the work of women missionaries in his *Imperial Fault Lines. Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818-1940.* (Stanford, 2002) and *The British Missionary Enterprise.*

reports, letters, and pamphlets written by women in the field, as well as female candidates' papers, memoirs, and photograph albums waiting to be explored.

Since the 1980s, the rise of feminist scholarship alongside increasing historical interest in mission and Empire, has led historians to use such sources to investigate the work of women missionaries. The latter have been included in studies of British women under the Raj, for example Pat Barr's nostalgic defence of the memsahib, *The Dust in the Balance* (1989), Margaret Strobel's more academic analysis, *European Women and the Second British Empire* (1991), and Nupur Chaudhuri and Strobel's edited volume, *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (1992).<sup>21</sup> They also appear in David Hardiman's investigation of the CMS Bhil medical mission, *Missionaries and their medicine. A Christian modernity for tribal India* (2008).<sup>22</sup> More specific research on female missionaries has led to a number of valuable articles and anthologies, including *Women's work for women* (1989) edited by Leslie Flemming; *Women and Missions. Past and Present. Anthropological and Historical Perceptions* (1993) edited by Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood, and Shirley Ardener; and *Missionary Encounters. Sources and Issues* (1996) edited by Rosemary Seton and Robert A. Bickers.<sup>23</sup> Several books have been published about the experiences of female missionaries of various Christian denominations in Africa, Canada, and China, including Dana Lee Robert's *American Women in Mission* (1996).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Pat Barr, *The Dust in the Balance: British women in India, 1905-1945*. (London, 1989); Margaret Strobel, *European Women and the Second British Empire*. (Indiana, 1991); Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (eds.), *Western Women and Imperialism. Complicity and Resistance*. (Indiana, 1992).

<sup>22</sup> David Hardiman, *Missionaries and their medicine. A Christian modernity for tribal India*. (Manchester, 2008).

<sup>23</sup> Leslie A. Flemming, (ed)., *Women's Work for Women. Missionaries and Social Change in Asia*. (London, 1989); Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood, and Shirley Ardener (eds.), *Women and Missions. Past and Present. Anthropological and Historical Perceptions*. (Oxford, 1993); Rosemary Seton and Robert A. Bickers (eds.), *Missionary Encounters. Sources and Issues*. (Richmond, 1996). See also: Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus, (eds.), *Gendered Missions. Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*. (Michigan, 1999).

<sup>24</sup> Dana Lee Robert, *American women in mission: a social history of their thought and practice*. (Mercer, 1996). See also: Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-*

Almost all work on British women missionaries in India has focused upon the burgeoning of female recruitment in the 1880s and 1890s, examining the characteristics mission societies desired in their applicants. In one of the few detailed monographs exploring British women's work in the subcontinent, *Missionary Women. Gender, Professionalism and the Victorian Idea of Christian Mission* (2005), Rhonda Semple develops themes highlighted in articles by Geraldine Forbes, Kirkwood, and Seton.<sup>25</sup> She compares the recruitment strategies of the London Missionary Society, the China Inland Mission, and the Foreign Mission Committee of the Scots Presbyterians from 1865 to 1910, contrasting the qualities required for male and female recruits, and highlighting the increasing professionalisation of women's missionary service.<sup>26</sup> Articles by Antoinette Burton and Rosemary Fitzgerald have also analysed the expansion of women's medical work in this period.<sup>27</sup>

Although such work has brought women missionaries out from the shadows of mission historiography, it remains unsatisfactorily limited in scope. This thesis will examine British women missionaries in India from 1917 to 1950. It will focus upon unmarried recruits as, unlike wives, they were recognised as independent missionaries by

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*Century China*. (Yale, 1984); Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man's God. Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field*. (UBC, Vancouver, 2002).

<sup>25</sup> Rhonda Anne Semple, *Missionary Women. Gender, Professionalism and the Victorian Idea of Christian Mission*. (Rochester, NY, 2003); Geraldine H. Forbes, 'In Search of the 'Pure Heathen': Missionary Women in Nineteenth Century India,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.21, No.17 (Apr 26, 1986); Kirkwood, 'Protestant Missionary Women: Wives and Spinners,' in Bowie, Kirkwood, and Ardener (eds.), *Women and Missions: Past and Present*; Seton, Rosemary, "'Open doors for female labourers": women candidates of the London Missionary Society, 1875-1914," in Bickers and Seton (eds.), *Missionary Encounters. Sources and Issues*.

<sup>26</sup> Semple, *Missionary Women*.

<sup>27</sup> Antoinette Burton, 'Contesting the Zenana: The Mission to Make "Lady Doctors for India," 1874-1885,' *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 35, No.3. (Jul.1996); Rosemary Fitzgerald, 'A "peculiar and exceptional measure": the call for women medical missionaries for India in the later nineteenth century,' in Bickers and Seton (eds.), *Missionary Encounters*; Rosemary Fitzgerald, 'Rescue and redemption. The rise of female medical missions in colonial India during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' in Anne Marie Rafferty, Jane Robinson & Ruth Elkan (eds.), *Nursing History and the Politics of Welfare*. (London, 1997); and Rosemary Fitzgerald, "'Clinical Christianity': The Emergence of Medical Work as a Missionary Strategy in Colonial India 1800-1914,' in Biswamoy Pati and Mark Harrison (eds), *Health, Medicine and Empire. Perspectives on Colonial India*. (New Delhi, 2001).

CMS and SPG and occupied a distinctive position within the mission enterprise.<sup>28</sup> It will investigate their backgrounds, recruitment and training, and their evangelistic, educational, and medical work in the subcontinent. It will demonstrate the extent to which women's service altered during this period because of new mission strategies, changes in the Church of England, rising Indian nationalism, Independence, and the end of Empire. In so doing, this thesis seeks to expand upon present research. Aside from Jeffrey Cox's brief assessment of missionaries' reactions to the nationalist movement,<sup>29</sup> there is a startling lack of detailed historiography on British women missionaries' service in India between the First World War and Independence. While this period witnessed the 'high noon' of the missionary enterprise, it was also an era of crisis as mission societies struggled with shortages of capital and recruits, the agonies of retrenchment, another World War, and fears of growing secularisation. An investigation of this phase is not only essential to the understanding of mission in the late colonial context, but also allows for the fruitful intersection of several related historiographies, further illuminating a period of unprecedented change in Britain, India, and the worldwide Anglican Communion.

For a start, the study of women missionaries sheds light upon the ambiguities of Empire and decolonisation. On 20<sup>th</sup> August 1917, Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India, made his famous declaration that the ultimate goal of British policy in the subcontinent was 'increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration, and the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive

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<sup>28</sup> Wives' subordinate position also makes it difficult to access their views in mission archives. Deborah Kirkwood has made a start, although further research needs to be undertaken. See Kirkwood, 'Protestant Missionary Women: Wives and Spinsters,' in Bowie, Kirkwood, and Ardener (eds.), *Women and Missions: Past and Present*.

<sup>29</sup> Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*.

realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.’<sup>30</sup> Though vague, this pronouncement marked a ‘new epoch’ in the history of the British Raj, and is hence the starting date of this thesis.<sup>31</sup> For the first time, the possibility of self-government was considered for a non-white dependency. The following decades witnessed various attempts at constitutional reform, rising nationalist protest, Gandhian *satyagraha*, and widespread communal violence. By 1950, the end date of this study, the subcontinent was adjusting to the realisation of Independence, Partition, and the end of Empire. British women missionaries occupy a unique position within the Raj during this period of profound political change. I have chosen to focus upon British Anglican women rather than missionaries of other denominations or nationalities because their links to the Empire were greater and their position more complicated.<sup>32</sup> They were unavoidably associated with India’s imperial rulers by their race and citizenship, and by their membership of what was, until 1930, the established Church in the subcontinent. Yet, their work and relationship with Indians was vastly different to that of the archetypal British memsahib and the average male missionary, whose views have been privileged in studies of women, mission and Empire. Since the 1980s, there has been a considerable amount of work, academic and popular, upon ‘women of the Raj,’ examining the duties of ‘incorporated’ wives and the symbolism of the white colonial female as a guardian of racial purity.<sup>33</sup> There has also been much productive debate regarding missionaries’ complicity in the imperial idea. While some historians, including Jean Comaroff and Gerald Studdert-

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<sup>30</sup> *The Parliamentary Debates (Official Report.) Fifth Series. Vol.XCVII. House of Commons. Eighth Volume of Session 1917.* (London, 1917). 20<sup>th</sup> August 1917, p.1695.

<sup>31</sup> Montagu himself described it as ‘the end of one epoch and the beginning of a new one.’ Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj.* (Cambridge, 1995). p.225.

<sup>32</sup> A few of the missionaries mentioned in this thesis were not born in Britain, but in South Africa or Australia. They were immediately associated with Britain, however, through familial connections and membership of a British missionary society.

<sup>33</sup> See amongst many others: Hilary Callan and Shirley Ardener (eds.), *The Incorporated Wife.* (London, 1984); Ronald Hyam, *Empire and sexuality: the British experience.* (Manchester, 1992); Margaret MacMillan, *Women of the Raj.* (London, 1996); Mary A. Procida, *Married to the empire: gender, politics and imperialism in India. 1883-1947.* (Manchester, 2002).

Kennedy have pointed out links between the mission enterprise and imperialism, others like Brian Stanley and Andrew Porter have emphasised differences in motivation and priorities.<sup>34</sup> While women's work is mentioned in these studies, there has been little analysis of their personal opinions of the imperial project, which merit deeper investigation.

An examination of British women missionaries in India from 1917 to 1950 also develops historical understanding of the Anglican Church and of mission theology. No complete study has been made of women missionaries of the two leading Anglican societies, SPG and CMS, examining in detail their relationship with the Church of England at home and in the field. Women's work is outlined in early histories of both societies, but not analysed in detail.<sup>35</sup> More rigorous articles on women in recent histories focus once again upon their early involvement in overseas service,<sup>36</sup> while Brian Heeneey's work on the women's movement within the Church, and the edited volumes, *Religion in the Lives of English Women, 1760-1930* (1986), *Women, Religion and Feminism in Britain, 1750-1900* (2002), and *Women, Gender and Religious Cultures in Britain, 1800-1940* (2010) do not consider in detail the perspectives of Anglican women missionaries.<sup>37</sup> As well as

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<sup>34</sup> Jean Comaroff, *Of revelation and revolution: Christianity, colonialism, and consciousness in South Africa*. (London, 1991); Gerald Studdert-Kennedy, *Providence and the Raj*. (New Delhi, 1998); Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*. (Leicester, 1990), Andrew Porter, *Religion versus empire?: British Protestant missions and overseas expansion, 1700-1914*. (Manchester, 2004).

<sup>35</sup> For the SPG: Pascoe, *Two Hundred Years of the S.P.G.*; Rev. H.P. Thompson, *Into All Lands: The History of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1701-1950*. (London, 1951). For the CMS: Eugene Stock, *One hundred years: being the short history of the Church Missionary Society*. (London, 1899); Hewitt, *The Problems of Success. A History of the Church Missionary Society, 1910-1942. Vol. I. In tropical Africa; the Middle East; at Home. & Vol. II. Asia. Overseas Partners*. (London, 1977).

<sup>36</sup> Jocelyn Murray, 'The Role of Women in the Church Missionary Society, 1799-1917' in Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley (eds.), *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999*. (Richmond, 2000); Deborah Kirkwood, 'Wives of missionaries working with the Society,' and Rosemary Fitzgerald, 'From medicine chest to mission hospitals: the early history of the Delhi Medical Mission for women and children' in O'Connor, *Three Centuries of Mission*.

<sup>37</sup> Heeneey, *The Women's Movement in the Church of England*; Gail Malmgreen (ed.), *Religion in the Lives of English Women, 1760-1930*. (London, 1986); Sue Morgan (ed.), *Women, Religion and Feminism in Britain, 1750-1900*. (New York, 2002); Sue Morgan and Jacqueline de Vries (eds.), *Women, Gender and Religious Cultures in Britain, 1800-1940*. (Abingdon, 2010).

responding to ever-changing and challenging conditions caused by Indian nationalism, Anglican missionaries in the field confronted great disturbances within their Church at home and overseas between 1917 and 1950. These included the Prayer Book dispute, the disestablishment of the Church in India, the controversial movement towards Church Union in the South, as well as new mission strategies of 'Indianisation' and 'Diocesanisation' in the wake of the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910. Missionaries' accounts of such events enable an exploration of the nature of interaction between sending societies, the home Church and the Church overseas, as well as the effects of missionary service upon women's theological orthodoxy and allegiance to the Church of England.

The study of women in mission is also inescapably connected to the historiography of gender, especially with regards to the evolving position of 'single women' in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century British society. Present studies on women's missionary service, recruitment and training have failed to engage sufficiently with the considerable volume of literature, both primary and secondary, on the position of unmarried woman during this period. The latter includes Martha Vicinus' *Independent Women* (1988), as well the more recent *Singled Out* by Virginia Nicholson (2007) and *The Shadow of Marriage* by Katherine Holden (2007).<sup>38</sup> For women, in particular, the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century was a period of transition with new educational and professional opportunities and the attainment of the vote. This thesis locates the experiences of women missionaries within this context, rendering their study relevant not only to the historiography of gender in Empire, but also of gender in Britain itself.

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<sup>38</sup> Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women. Work and Community for Single Women. 1850-1920*. (London, 1985); Virginia Nicholson, *Singled Out. How Two Million Women Survived Without Men after the First World War*. (London, 2007); Katherine Holden, *The Shadow of Marriage. Singleness in England. 1914-1960*. (Manchester, 2007).

There are manifold primary sources available for the study of Anglican women missionaries. This thesis uses published material, including Church newspapers and mission periodicals like *The Church Times*, *The C.M.S. Outlook* and the *Dornakal Diocesan Magazine*, as well as the annual reports and numerous tracts printed by SPG and CMS to explain and raise money for their work. It also draws upon abundant unpublished material principally from the SPG archives at Rhodes House in Oxford and the CMS archives at the University of Birmingham. The former encompass particulars of enquirers and candidates, missionaries' annual reports and letters to headquarters, photograph albums, and miscellaneous personal collections, containing memoirs, letters, stories, and memorabilia of overseas service. Recruits' personnel files remain closed, however, and kept at SPG's London headquarters. Although some records were destroyed by wartime bombing, the CMS archives house similar material, including candidates' application forms (some of which are open for consultation) and Annual Letters sent by missionaries to the Home Society.

Archival materials have also been consulted in India itself. Further research into the Church of South India has been undertaken in the archives of the United Theological College in Bangalore, which contain pamphlets and personal letters concerning the Union scheme and the organisation of missionary work in the Southern dioceses. During a visit to Delhi, I was also able to study primary material concerning the Community of St Stephen, the female branch of the Cambridge Mission to Delhi, allied to SPG. I was permitted by the present Head of the Community, Dr Molly Joseph, to consult the Community's minute books and collection of photographs at St Stephen's Home. Mrs Neelam Kapur, Principal of Queen Mary's School, one of the Mission's foundations in Delhi, also allowed me to read the school's logbook of Inspectress' reports and a commemorative magazine of its

golden jubilee. I have been fortunate to meet: in Delhi, Sister Vidya Dayal, a nurse at St Stephen's Hospital and later a member of the Community, and in Norwich, Dr Ruth Roseveare, who joined St Stephen's as a doctor in 1946 and was its Head between 1967 and 1980. In interviews and letters, Dr Roseveare has described to me her medical work, community life in Delhi, and her experiences of Partition.<sup>39</sup> With regards to missionary training and recruitment, Jeffrey Cox kindly shared his biographical card file on SPG women in the Punjab,<sup>40</sup> while Dr David Mole, a former staff member of the College of the Ascension, permitted me to read his unpublished research on the Selly Oak foundation.<sup>41</sup>

Though copious, the available primary material on women missionaries is inevitably limited. Frustratingly, there is more information on some years than others, and SPG and CMS sources do not always overlap. While personal letters to the Committee for Women's Work provide a fascinating insight into SPG women missionaries' relationship difficulties in the 1920s, for instance, there are no corresponding letters for CMS, and none from a later period for SPG. Equally, the available material is invariably written from the perspective of those involved in the mission enterprise: members of staff at SPG and CMS headquarters, members of the Anglican clerical hierarchy at home and overseas, and male and female missionaries in the field. Such commentators were unlikely to challenge the legitimacy of mission. The white European voice is also privileged. The views of Indians erupt into the narrative only occasionally and usually indirectly. This is particularly the case with regards to the Indian women with and amongst whom missionaries worked. We know what women missionaries thought of their colleagues but not vice versa. Indian

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<sup>39</sup> Ruth Roseveare, Personal Letters to the Author, July, August 2009. Interviews with the Author, September 2009.

<sup>40</sup> Jeffrey Cox, Card File on S.P.G. Women missionaries in the Punjab. [Unpublished, shared with the author].

<sup>41</sup> David Mole, Unpublished notes on 'Missionary Training' and 'The College of the Ascension.' [Shared with the author, July 2009].

views and motivations are reported only through missionary eyes. On the subject of Church Union, for example, it is relatively easy to uncover the opinions of missionaries and prominent Indian clergymen, but those of the many Indian women in missionary service are rarely present. It is even difficult to access the unqualified opinions of women missionaries. Most of the available letters and reports were written by women to members of SPG and CMS in London. It is likely that missionaries' views were moderated to suit the expectations of their home societies. Successes may have been exaggerated and failures overlooked in the hope of encouraging financial support. Strident criticisms may have been avoided and scandals left unreported for fear of censure. The somewhat formulaic nature of reports and Annual Letters may have prevented personal feelings being expressed.<sup>42</sup>

The language of missionary sources is also problematic. The vocabulary of women missionaries, particularly those of the evangelical CMS, is infused with Biblical references, Anglican theological terminology, and a certainty of Christian (and even religious) belief that is often alien to the historian today. The term 'heathen' is especially strange and offensive to modern ears. The term 'call' can also be difficult for the sceptic or unbeliever to comprehend, describing the repeated mental and physical urge missionaries felt to work overseas, a feeling they believed to reflect the Will of God. Other words, common in missionary and colonial parlance, are contentious. Terms like 'native,' 'untouchable,' and 'criminal tribe' are far from neutral. For some, they are negative labels, signs of oppression, even terms of abuse, which imply difference and inferiority. Mahatma Gandhi acknowledged the potency of names. He sought to liberate the casteless by referring to them as 'harijans' (children of God) rather than 'untouchables.' Yet, even this

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<sup>42</sup> SPG Annual Reports and CMS Annual Letters were sent to Headquarters detailing the year's progress and events. Missionaries were aware that sections could be reproduced in mission periodicals, hence sensitive sections were marked 'not for publication.'

word proved controversial and divisive.<sup>43</sup> Equally, as Christopher Harding points out, the use of some terms ‘distorts the self-ascription of the people themselves.’<sup>44</sup> Those categorised by the British as ‘criminal tribesmen,’ for example, would hardly have perceived themselves as such. In this thesis, contentious terms are not avoided. The term ‘native’ appears particularly frequently, reflecting its constant use by women missionaries. Missionary vocabulary has been placed in context and its contested nature highlighted, however, by the application of such terms in inverted commas.

Taking into account their challenges and limitations, the writings, lives, and work of British women missionaries of CMS and SPG illuminate much about mission, Church, and Empire in an age of transition. The structure of this thesis reflects the career of a woman missionary bound for India. It starts by considering the character and experiences of female recruits prior to passage. Chapter One examines candidates’ familial, educational, and professional backgrounds, recruitment, and training. It assesses the amount of knowledge about Indian customs and conditions they possessed before travelling to their stations. The following chapters analyse women’s lives in the Indian mission field. Chapter Two explores tensions between women missionaries’ sense of vocation and the harsh realities of overseas service. Chapter Three looks in detail at women’s educational, evangelistic and medical work, investigating the changes in this work between 1917 and 1950 and the shifting priorities and aims of the missionary enterprise. Chapters Four and Five continue this theme of change. The former explores women missionaries’ relationship to the Church of England at home and in the mission field, particularly with regards to the formation of the Church of South India in 1947. The latter examines the complex and ambiguous position occupied by women missionaries

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<sup>43</sup> See for example: Christophe Jaffrelot, *Dr Ambedkar and untouchability: analysing and fighting caste*. (London, 2005). p.182.

<sup>44</sup> Harding, *Religious transformation in South Asia*. p.12.

under the British Raj at a time of rising Indian nationalism, highlighting the effects of nationalist campaigns, Indian Independence, and Partition upon women's missionary work.

And so, we begin five thousand miles from the Indian plains with English rectories, Sunday schools, and Bible study unions, with girls' schools and nurses' training, with Tufton Street and Salisbury Square<sup>45</sup>, and with young women hearing an ever-persistent call, 'Go ye into all the world...'

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<sup>45</sup> SPG and CMS Headquarters.

## Chapter One: The Making of A Woman Missionary

In 1905, a fourteen year old girl from a village on the river Mersey applied to be a missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Her offer to SPG was her vicar's idea. 'It seems to me all a big fuss to have to join societies before you can be a missionary,' the girl lamented to her diary, 'I would rather go by myself, and do work by myself, but perhaps I could never save up the boat fare.' The Society in question sent her 'long forms and lots of questions' to answer. The young girl found one question especially 'silly.' It asked her to give three reasons why she wanted to be a missionary. 'A big society like that ought to know that there's only one reason,' she wrote, 'Of course I'm going to be a missionary just so that I can tell little girls and boys and women all about Jesus Christ and how He loves them, and how to make sores better, and how to pray when they are worried. It's hard to explain but it's just that I feel I've got to go.' Needing a third reason, she added: 'I want to be a missionary because I want to be a martyr,' confiding to her diary: 'You see, Lady Jane Grey is the woman I like best in history, and she was a martyr, and Joan of Arc was a martyr, and so I think this would be a good idea. When I've told all the people about Christ, then I can be a martyr. Won't it be nice?'<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately for our young applicant, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel did not share her confidence in the congeniality of her proposed vocation. She was informed by letter she was 'too young at fourteen to be a missionary' and should instead join the Missionary Preparation Union. Most upsettingly, the girl noted, 'they didn't want missionaries to die or be martyrs, but they wanted missionaries to do lots of real hard

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<sup>1</sup> Anon, *A Nurse's Indian Log-Book. Being Actual Incidents in the Life of a Missionary Nurse*. (Westminster, 1924). pp.8-9. [The author was probably Hettie Monkhouse, SPG missionary at Murhu, Chota Nagpur – deduced from USPG, Rhodes House. CWW323. Missionary Preparation Union (Women's Division). Leaflets and Circular Letters c.1920-1940.]

work, and they aren't a bit excited or thankful that I said I would join them.' As a result of this missive, she 'cried all day.'<sup>2</sup>

Fourteen years later, on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1919, following four years of medical training and five months at a religious training home, this girl – now a young woman – sailed for the mission field in India. On 16<sup>th</sup> March 1923, after single-handedly performing operations on patients in outlying villages, running clinics, instructing 'native' dais (midwives), and teaching nursing to uneducated women, she returned regretfully to England as an invalid. Upon her departure, she mused over the magnetism that drew the English to the East – that compelled her to 'help and guide and teach and pour out love on the vast peoples of India.' Her exposition revealed she had lost none of the sense of 'call' which had led her to offer to SPG at the tender age of fourteen: 'Isn't it perhaps the voice of Christ – nay, Christ Himself – within us, urging us to go and make Him known to them [Indians], to go and make that great nation know of the Redeemer who died for them?'<sup>3</sup>

This story from *A Nurse's Indian Log-Book* demonstrates the complexity of answering a 'call' to missionary service. Good intentions were insufficient. Instead, an eager candidate had to satisfy the demands of a missionary society, proving they were rightly motivated and adequately prepared for 'lots of real hard work.' To understand missionaries in the field, one must first understand their formation at home.

### *The ideal candidate*

The procedure of application to a missionary society was long and demanding. SPG and CMS had dedicated Candidates Departments with various subcommittees, responsible for dealing with prospective recruits from their original enquiries to their

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.10.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p.121.

departure for the field. One of the primary functions of the Ladies Association of SPG, formed in 1866, had been to select candidates for overseas. In 1904, a Committee for Women's Work was established to supervise female recruitment and training.<sup>4</sup> The Women Candidates Committee of CMS (known as the Ladies' Candidates Committee until December 1913) had been formed in 1891. From 1920, it reported directly to the Home and Foreign Committee, and from 1923, to the Executive Committee of the Society, which approved its nominations of candidates.<sup>5</sup>

As demonstrated in *A Nurse's Indian Log-Book*, the first step for an aspiring candidate was to make an 'offer of service' to the missionary society best suiting her churchmanship. This 'offer' could simply be a letter, declaring her desire to serve the society in the mission field. The society would then send her its application forms and request personal, spiritual, professional, and medical references. If a candidate's papers were approved, she would be called for interview either at mission headquarters in London – SPG House in Tufton Street, Westminster, or CMS House in Salisbury Square – or at the private residences of members of the Candidates Committee.<sup>6</sup> Irene Birkinshaw, for example, offered herself to CMS on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1913 in a letter of one sentence: 'Under the guidance of God I desire to be considered as a candidate for work abroad under the Church Missionary Society.' Three days later, Mrs Douglas Thornton, Secretary of the Women Candidates Committee, sent her the Society's pamphlet, 'Acceptance and Training of Candidates,' and asked her to write 'rather more fully' about herself and submit three references. These being satisfactory, Miss Birkinshaw was interviewed in December 1913

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<sup>4</sup> Kirkwood, 'Protestant Missionary Women,' in Bowie, Kirkwood, and Ardener (eds.), *Women and Missions: Past and Present*. pp.32-33.

<sup>5</sup> From 1906-1920, the Ladies'/Women Candidates Committee reported first to the Men Candidates Committee rather than directly to the Home and Foreign Committee. See CMS, Birmingham. 'History of the Candidates Department' in *Catalogue of the papers of the Candidates Department, 1846-1949*.

<sup>6</sup> Negotiating the Tube or London buses could be tricky. Interviewers often remarked upon candidates' lateness!

by Mrs Thornton, Mrs Emily Rigg, the Reverend B. Baring-Gould, and the Reverend P.T.R. Kirk, and examined by the Society's physician, Dr D.D. Hill.<sup>7</sup>

The applications procedure did not change during the 1920s and 1930s. In her unpublished autobiography, *Sent out to Serve*, Violet Hayes describes her application to SPG in 1936. Alongside interviews at SPG House, she had a medical check-up at a Park Lane surgery and an appointment with the Chairman of the Women Candidates Committee at the latter's home in Ladbrooke Grove. After all her efforts navigating the Circle Line, her interviewer was not at home!<sup>8</sup> If a candidate impressed her interviewers, following their reports to Committee, she would be accepted as a probationer for a period of missionary training. Throughout this training, she would be constantly reassessed and re-interviewed. A candidate for CMS, for example, could only be recommended to its Executive Committee for acceptance as a full missionary of the Society after a second round of interviews, usually following at least a year's training. This was subject to approval by the Medical Board. It was only at this late stage that the precise location to which a candidate would be sent was decided.<sup>9</sup>

Women would get no further than their offers of service, however, if they failed to convince the missionary society they were ideal material. Candidates Department records reveal SPG and CMS had both spiritual and practical expectations of their applicants. The application forms of both societies are useful sources for identifying recruitment concerns. The SPG application form in use in 1917 asked about a candidate's background – their home obligations and father's profession; the dates of their baptism and confirmation; their educational and professional qualifications, including their facility in learning foreign languages; their parochial experience and membership of organisations like the Girl

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<sup>7</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/ATw2: Candidates papers: white and blue packets. 1893-1941. M. Irene Birkinshaw.

<sup>8</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. X1254: 'Sent out to Serve' by V.M. Hayes. p.1.

<sup>9</sup> See the long process of application undertaken by Elsie Adams, M. Irene Birkinshaw, Dorothy Lyon etc in CMS, Birmingham. C/ATw2: Candidates papers: white and blue packets. 1893-1941.

Guides; their financial circumstances; and their interests. References were required from two clergymen, from those with knowledge of the candidate's professional work (no less than two women), and from two women with regards to health. The Society was obviously eager to learn as much as possible about a candidate's experience and capabilities. It also wished to know why a candidate had applied to SPG, whether she had ever applied to another society, and whether she was interested in service in a particular country.<sup>10</sup> In this, SPG's form was extremely similar to Form A of CMS, also in use in 1917.<sup>11</sup>

The SPG and CMS forms differed with regards to theological questions, however. In December 1923, a debate about missionary recruitment had been sparked when SPG received a letter from Mr R.O. Hall of the Student Christian Movement criticising its application form for women candidates. The Movement's main objection was that the form's theological essay questions discouraged young women from applying to SPG, as they implied a very high standard of knowledge about the Bible, Church doctrine and Church history was required *upon application*. A more minor objection was that its question on financial provision gave (or reinforced) the incorrect notion that it was customary for missionaries to fund themselves. In January 1924, a Women Candidates Sub-Committee of SPG met to discuss these complaints. It was decided that a statement would be issued alongside the form, outlining what was required of a missionary. Three of the form's theological questions (22-24) regarding the regularity of a candidate's Bible study, her reading on the Bible, Church doctrine and history, and her understanding of sin, the atonement, the Holy Spirit, the Church, and the sacraments, would be abolished. Instead, candidates would be asked to submit a personal letter alongside their application detailing their reasons for offering themselves for service (the former question 21) and for choosing SPG (part of the former question 19). The form was also amended to clarify that

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<sup>10</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW309. Women Candidates Department: Papers re. Training and Missionary Recruitment, 1910-1926.

<sup>11</sup> See CMS, Birmingham. C/ATw2: Candidates papers: white and blue packets. 1893-1941.

the Society normally maintained missionaries at a living wage and provided for them in sickness and old age.<sup>12</sup>

The new statement of expectations for women candidates underlined SPG's high-Church ethos, emphasising that its representatives 'must have a high idea of loyalty to the Catholic faith and to the tradition of Sacramental Religion which we inherit in the English Church.' Yet, it discouraged uncompromising denominationalism, stressing the necessity of 'unity and fellowship' between Christians amidst the 'heathenism' of the mission field. Significantly, the statement made no stipulations regarding a candidate's knowledge of the Bible or Anglican doctrine. This, and the removal of theological questions from the application form, suggests the Committee realised such understanding could be developed during training. Otherwise capable candidates should not be deterred from applying. The seriously ill-informed could be weeded out at interview.

The statement highlighted other important characteristics for a future missionary, stressing the 'special consecration and surrender' required by a missionary vocation and the 'supremely difficult' nature of missionary life. Not only would the climate and environment be testing, but a missionary's behaviour would be constantly judged by non-Christians as evidence of the character of Christ. She also had to surrender her 'self-will,' letting the Church decide on the location and character of her work, and commit herself to service for a stated period. It was thus implied that candidates should be free from familial ties and should not arrive in the field with an immediate desire for marriage.<sup>13</sup> As in a 1921 pamphlet of the Society, 'The Call to Serve Overseas,' the possibilities for adventure and

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<sup>12</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW309. Women Candidates Department: Papers re. Training and Missionary Recruitment, 1910-1926.

<sup>13</sup> No candidate who was engaged was accepted by SPG. If a missionary resigned from her post during her first three years of service, for any other reason than for ill-health, she was expected to refund the Society for the amount expended on her preparation, passage, and outfit, a proportion being deducted for each year of service. See USPG, Rhodes House. CWW310. Women Candidates Department: Papers re. Recruitment and Marriage. 1913-1936.

achievement were not ignored.<sup>14</sup> It was stressed, however, that spiritual motivation was of paramount necessity. Only a person with complete confidence in Christ as the ‘only solution of all perplexities for all peoples and all times’ could succeed in the field.

Like the amended application form, the statement explained the financial provision made by SPG for female missionaries. It emphasised, however, that as the Society’s funds were raised ‘at the cost of much self-denial’ to many people, candidates should have a ‘real sense of responsibility’ when utilising such ‘trust money.’ This exhortation indicates SPG was desirous of self-supporting candidates, but realised this type of recruit was rare.

Interestingly, as noted above, the statement did not suggest that a candidate need be a fully formed character when making an offer. Instead, her subsequent period of training would teach her about the challenges of the field and ‘the spirit in which to meet them,’ and provide her with an opportunity to test her vocation for overseas work. Students merely required ‘breadth of outlook, an open mind and a teachable spirit.’ This would enable them to build upon their training in the field, so their missionary careers showed ‘steady growth in understanding, knowledge, sympathy and ever-deepening self-dedication.’ The ideal missionary was not set in her ways.

SPG’s decision to remove theological questions from its application form distanced its application criteria from that of CMS. In 1917, applicants to CMS not only filled in Form A (the white form) about their backgrounds, qualifications, and experience, but also Form B (the blue form), which focused in detail upon their missionary motives, Biblical and doctrinal knowledge, and personal beliefs. Candidates were asked to give reasons why they felt called to missionary service and their opinions of a missionary’s chief aim, as well as details of their own efforts, hitherto, to advance the missionary cause. They were

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<sup>14</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW309. Women Candidates Department: Papers re. Training and Missionary Recruitment, 1910-1926.

questioned about their 'plan and practice' of Bible study, their missionary study, and their reading on theological subjects. The final questions, 13 and 14, required candidates to write either a brief Sunday school lesson plan on the subject of foreign missions or an account of any mission or well-known missionary, and to state what they knew of the chief non-Christian religions. Questions 7 to 12 were explicitly theological. Candidates were requested to give their reasons for membership of the Church of England, their assessments of 'the fundamental doctrines' of the Christian faith, the Thirty-Nine Articles and the Book of Common Prayer, and details of their beliefs and experiences concerning the Fatherhood of God, the Persons and Works of Christ and the Holy Spirit, Sin, the Atonement, and Personal Salvation. No books, except the Bible, could be referred to. CMS was obviously concerned not only with a candidate's knowledge and understanding, but also with her own interpretation and experience of her faith. Question 9c, for example, asked: 'Do you feel any hesitation or doubt with regard to the Articles or the Prayer Book? If so, please mention the point of difficulty.' In contrast to the theological questions originally asked by SPG, the CMS form also asked about a candidate's own experience of Personal Salvation.<sup>15</sup>

CMS does not appear to have been as influenced by the concerns of the Student Christian Movement as SPG. Form B was edited in the 1920s and again in the 1930s, but not at the expense of its theological questions. In fact, new questions were added. Candidates were asked about the place of the Old and New Testaments and the meaning of Prayer and the sacraments (in particular Holy Communion) in their lives.<sup>16</sup> By the 1930s, however, a small concession had been made. A new 'Explanatory Note' introduced the form, impressing upon candidates that it was not intended to be 'anything like an

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<sup>15</sup> For completed forms of successful candidates see CMS, Birmingham. C/ATw2: Candidates papers: white and blue packets. 1893-1941.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Muriel King's papers show the form had been altered by 1927. The papers of Ivy Rumbolds and Joan Simpson reveal further amendments had been made by 1936.

examination needing formal answers.’ Instead, they were instructed to tell the Candidates Committee in complete confidence ‘simply and freely [their] own ideas and convictions.’ The continued presence of complex theological questions in the CMS form is in line with the Society’s evangelical standpoint, which (more so than the high-Church SPG) emphasised the primary importance of the Bible as the Word of God and the significance of an individual’s personal relationship with Christ. In fact, the explanatory note to the 1930s form urged: ‘The subject underlying Question 7(b) [How would you express your personal relationship to our Lord Jesus Christ?] is of vital importance,’ and suggested candidates could answer the question in a letter to the Secretary if they wished. For CMS, the ability to give simple and free testimony regarding this relationship was not a skill to be learnt or developed during training, but a fundamental prerequisite to a genuine missionary call.

The CMS and SPG application forms, as well as SPG’s statement of 1923 outlining ‘what was wanted’ of an ideal candidate, touched upon four themes, which were constantly repeated in CMS and SPG discussions about recruitment in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. Firstly, the importance of selecting candidates with a genuine vocation and spiritual earnestness was persistently emphasised. There had to be consciousness of a call from God.<sup>17</sup> The spirit of adventure, the desire to make a new start or ‘to get rid of humdrum life at home’ was not sufficient.<sup>18</sup> Various comments in SPG’s record books of enquiries to the Candidates Department between 1910 and 1926 confirm a candidate’s motivations were of

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<sup>17</sup> See for example: CMS, Birmingham. C/API: Procedure on selection of candidates, relationships with other departments... ‘Report of the Committee on Recruiting, Selection and Training of Candidates, 1936-37.’ p.8.

<sup>18</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW309. Women Candidates Department: Papers re. Training and Missionary Recruitment, 1910-1926. Draft of pamphlet: ‘The Call to Serve Overseas.’

concern to the Society.<sup>19</sup> In September 1923, for example, it was observed that one particular enquirer ‘desired to get abroad’ but was ‘very definitely not a missionary’ and ‘was using us [SPG] merely as an agency.’<sup>20</sup>

Interestingly, like the Society’s application forms, CMS recruitment papers referred far more frequently to theological knowledge and beliefs than those of SPG. It was imperative that a recruit should love the Bible, be able to explain her beliefs (to some extent at least),<sup>21</sup> and feel ‘spiritually at home’ in the Society.<sup>22</sup> The evangelical nature of CMS was reiterated.<sup>23</sup> Ideal candidates would share its commitment to understand and propagate the Word of God.

The need for recruits to be mentally and physically fit to face the hardships of the mission field was also repeated. ‘The worldwide propagation of the Kingdom of God cannot be attained without heavy cost, and he who is to share in its honoured service must show a willingness to bear its cost,’ stressed the Report of the 1936-7 CMS Committee on Recruiting, Selection and Training of Candidates. Missionaries had to be prepared to live together harmoniously, to face physical separation from their home and friends and from certain interests and occupations.<sup>24</sup>

Both societies were also interested in candidates’ familial backgrounds. Their ‘father’s profession’ was asked on the application forms. The record books of SPG’s Women Candidates Department also noted such information and made comments regarding the social status of enquirers’ families. For instance, in relation to a teacher who

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<sup>19</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW14. Candidates Department Particulars of Enquirers and Candidates. 1910-1920 & CWW19. Candidates Department Particulars of Enquirers and Candidates. 1920-1926.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. CWW19. Candidates Department Particulars. 1920-1926. Rose Fell.

<sup>21</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/API: Procedure on selection of candidates, relationships with other departments... ‘Memorandum on Interviewing.’

<sup>22</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/C2/5 minutes [number 13]: 17 June 1937-19 May 1948. (1 vol). Women Candidates Department. ‘Memorandum following Quiet Day of the Women Candidates Committee,’ July 1943.

<sup>23</sup> See for example: CMS, Birmingham. C/API: Procedure on selection of candidates, relationships with other departments... ‘Report of the Committee on Recruiting, Selection and Training of Candidates, 1936-7.’ p.7.

<sup>24</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Ibid. p.9.

enquired in May 1910, it was remarked: 'Friend of Miss Gay. Looks young and rather common. Father wholesale fishmonger.'<sup>25</sup> Not all recorded occupations were working class: barristers, judges, and chemists were also mentioned. On several occasions before the First World War, it was noted that the enquirer was 'not a lady.' This did not seem to disqualify her from consideration, however, as the phrase often accompanied the verdict: 'Good girl.' Even in the 1920s, it still appeared necessary to note when an enquirer was of a non-middle-class background. In April 1924, for example, it was remarked that the parents of a sixteen year old girl were 'refined working class.'<sup>26</sup> Another enquiry in September 1925 was on behalf of a seventeen year old of 'superior working class parents.'<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, the record books remain closed post 1926, making it impossible to determine whether such comments continued in the later 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. It is clear, however, that candidates were not rejected for being lower class. Enquirers from working class backgrounds seem to have been flagged up in Candidates Department papers as they were merely more unusual and might require educational or financial assistance.

Recruitment discussions and documents of CMS and SPG also continually expressed a desire that candidates should be well-educated and professionally-trained. This is in line with the slow but noticeable shift in the recruitment priorities of LMS, CIM, and the Scots Presbyterian mission in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. As Rhonda Semple highlights, candidates were judged increasingly by professional qualifications rather than vague notions of female respectability.<sup>28</sup> The record books of enquiries to the SPG Candidates Department listed women's teaching and medical

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<sup>25</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW14. Candidates Department Particulars. 1910-1920. Amy J. Beecroft.

<sup>26</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW19. Candidates Department Particulars. 1920-1926. Irene Bland.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. Edith Fanny Spicer.

<sup>28</sup> Semple, *Missionary Women*. pp.17-70.

certificates and professional experience, as well as qualifications in subjects like music, languages, cooking, laundry, and Bible study. University degrees and wartime service were also noted.<sup>29</sup> The importance of professional qualifications seems to have been increasingly appreciated by the 1930s. In an article entitled ‘The Career of a Woman Missionary,’ published by the Women’s Employment Publishing Company in 1935, for example, Mrs M.D. Western, Vice-Chairman of the SPG Women Candidates Committee, stressed the great need in the contemporary mission field for trained teachers, doctors, and nurses, and gave details of the requisite qualifications. Missionary nurses, for example, should have trained at ‘one of the big medical schools’ and possess the CMB certificate, alongside experience in ‘surgical and gynaecological wards, as well as in ante-natal work... infant welfare’ and administration. Mrs Western emphasised that ‘non-institutional’ positions were becoming rare. Not only were missionaries increasingly engaged in training ‘native’ nurses and teachers, but existing hospitals and schools also needed to be staffed and absorbed the majority of mission finances.<sup>30</sup> These sentiments were echoed by the 1936-7 CMS Committee on the Recruiting, Selection and Training of Candidates. Its report stressed that while the Society had previously welcomed into its ranks candidates of lower academic standards, ‘recognizing that, provided they could acquire a foreign language, there was important work for them to do in proclaiming the Gospel and showing an example of Christian discipleship,’ the present day situation was different. The growth of ‘native’ Churches meant this work was now undertaken by nationals and the function of missionaries was more to ‘train and prepare those who will be leaders in their own Church

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<sup>29</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW14. Candidates Department Particulars. 1910-1920 & CWW19. Candidates Department Particulars. 1920-1926.

<sup>30</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW326: ‘The Career of a Woman Missionary.’ Paper by M.D. Western, Vice Chairman, Women Candidates’ Committee, SPG (publ. by Women’s Employment Publishing Co. Ltd). 1935.

and locality.’ Equally, CMS’ policy of accepting government grants in its schools meant educational missionaries needed recognised qualifications.<sup>31</sup>

By the 1930s, changes in the character of the mission field also led CMS and SPG to adopt new criteria for recruits.<sup>32</sup> The CMS Committee of 1936/7 stressed the choice of candidates for overseas service should now be based upon ‘the requirements of younger Churches.’ It argued: ‘The day for foreign missionary domination has gone, and the old classifications of missionary and native must go with it. The missionary will be as much a member of the young Church as the national of the country himself, and will be expected to fit into the whole scheme of the Church’s activities.’ An ideal candidate, therefore, would work in harmony with her Indian colleagues and embrace the emergent Indian Church, finding in it ‘a centre of unity, from which all thought or suggestion of race superiority is eliminated.’<sup>33</sup> She would take an assisting, rather than leading, position. Mrs Western’s article pointed out, for example, that women missionary teachers ‘must nowadays be prepared (specially in China) to serve under a Head of another race.’<sup>34</sup> Recruits in the changing mission field also needed to be ‘alive to the need of unity with other branches of the Christian Church...’<sup>35</sup> Global initiatives towards Church Union meant they could not be narrow denominationalists.

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<sup>31</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/API: Procedure on selection of candidates, relationship with other departments... ‘Report of the Committee on Recruiting, Selection and Training of Candidates, 1936-7.’ p.10.

<sup>32</sup> These sentiments were reiterated in a much later article on ‘The Post-War Missionary Recruit’ by a Church of Scotland missionary, the Reverend Alexander McLeish, in *The National Christian Council India Review* of February 1948. This article is among the papers of the CMS Women Candidates Department. Reverend McLeish emphasised that in the newly-independent India, missionary recruits needed to be prepared to associate themselves as much as possible and without prejudice with Indians and the Indian Church. See CMS, Birmingham. C/API: Procedure on selection of candidates, relationship with other departments... ‘The Post-War Missionary Recruit,’ by Rev. Alexander McLeish.

<sup>33</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/API: Procedure on selection of candidates, relationships with other departments... ‘Report of the Committee on Recruiting, Selection and Training of Candidates, 1936-7.’ p.6.

<sup>34</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW326: ‘The Career of a Woman Missionary.’ Paper by M.D. Western.

<sup>35</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/API: Procedure on selection of candidates, relationships with other departments... ‘Report of the Committee on Recruiting, Selection and Training of Candidates, 1936-7.’ p.7.

Interestingly, SPG and CMS' requirements for female candidates were not dramatically different from those for male applicants. The majority of male missionaries were clergy, though men also served as lay doctors and educationists. Of course, clerical candidates were expected to have a much more sophisticated Biblical and doctrinal knowledge than female recruits. The professional qualifications expected from male educationists were also higher, in line with men's greater access to higher education and the character of male educational establishments in the field. Yet, in general terms, similar qualities were desired in men and women. The CMS application form was the same for both sexes. As with female candidates, both Societies were keen to ensure male recruits were fit, adaptable, professionally-skilled, and of sound vocation. Specifically, men had to demonstrate they were not simply taking advantage of the Society's financial help towards studying for ordination. Men and women's referees were asked to comment upon their familial background and their Christian character.<sup>36</sup>

Application forms and recruitment pamphlets were not the only ways in which potential missionaries could learn about CMS and SPG's expectations. It is important to recognise the 'atmosphere of mission' in the Church of England in the early twentieth century. A young woman, growing up as a practising Anglican, would have heard of mission and missionaries from an early age. Most parishes were affiliated to CMS or SPG, depending upon their churchmanship, and supported and corresponded with an 'own missionary' in the field (perhaps a former parishioner).<sup>37</sup> Missionaries on furlough also visited parishes to lecture on their work. It was in this manner that the author of *A Nurse's Missionary Log-book* first heard of missionary service and was inspired. As a child, she

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid & CMS, Birmingham. C/ATm2. Candidates papers: white and blue packets. USPG, Rhodes House. X513. SPG Candidates Committee Scrapbook, 1923-1939.

<sup>37</sup> See for example Kathleen Bernard's account of visiting her 'own parish' during furlough in her Annual Letter to CMS of 1930: CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Kathleen Bernard. 1930.

had been dressed up as a ‘Mohammedan Indian lady’ by a visiting female missionary, who spoke about the plight of zenana women and widows in India. ‘[S]he said they wanted strong, healthy, sensible people to go to India and teach these women all about our Lord, and how He loves them...’ the young girl confided to her diary. ‘...I’ve thought lots about it, and now I’ve decided I’ll go and tell these women...’<sup>38</sup> Interestingly, Caroline Edwards, a long-serving SPG missionary in the Bombay diocese, was inspired in a similar way. In her autobiography, she recalled going to Church as a child to hear a male missionary speak ‘all about poor children in India.’ ‘He must have been a good speaker for he made a deep impression on us,’ she remembered, ‘and I decided then that when I grew up I would be a missionary...’<sup>39</sup> Children also learnt of missionary work through magazines and games [see Figure 1.1.], at Sunday school and at parish missionary pageants, where they dressed as, and sang songs about, those in need in the mission field. A programme of one such pageant, published by the Missionary Forward Movement in 1913, included a ‘Song of the Esquimaux Children,’ a ‘Red Indians’ Lament,’ and a ‘Procession of Slaves.’ Its ‘Song of Zenana Women’ contained the lines:

‘But we are birds they caught  
And shut up in cages;  
The little brides they bought  
Tho’ childish our ages.  
And he that wedded me  
Shut me up in prison.’<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Anon, *A Nurse’s Indian Log-Book*. pp.5-6.

<sup>39</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. X633. Miss C.M. Edwards, SPG Missionary in Bombay, c.1909-1913, 1919, 1922-1939, 1946-1949. Papers. Box 4. Autobiography. p.2.

<sup>40</sup> Missionary Forward Movement, *Children’s Missionary Pageant*. [Words by Rev J.M. Crum, M.A. Music arranged by Mr G.W. Hedges, A.R.C.O., A.R.C.M.] (High Wycombe?, 1913).

Young women who attended Anglican parishes from childhood would have been aware, therefore, of the existence of missionary societies, the missionary career, and (to some extent at least) the types of work it involved.<sup>41</sup>

**Figure 1.1.**  
**Recruitment tools? Playing card from ‘Snapshots,’ a CMS missionary card game similar to ‘Happy Families’, published c.1920.<sup>42</sup> [Copyright: CMS]**



Candidates' responses to questions about their preparation on the CMS application form indicate other ways in which applicants could obtain information about missionary work, application requirements and procedures.<sup>43</sup> Women reported reading books, pamphlets, magazines, and periodicals published by missionary societies, including the

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<sup>41</sup> The place of missions as an accepted part of middle class social life is shown in E.M. Forster, *Where Angels Fear To Tread*. (Maryland, 2008). p.45. [First published, 1905]. In Italy, Lilia thinks of her family's September activities at home in England: 'There were bicycle gymkhanas and on the 30<sup>th</sup> Mrs Herriton would be holding the annual bazaar in her garden for the C.M.S.'

<sup>42</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Unofficial. Acc.685. Miss M. Dorothy Brand. Snapshots: A Missionary Card Game, published by CMS. c.1920.

<sup>43</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/ATw2: Candidates papers: white and blue packets. 1893-1941.

CMS *Gleaner*, as well as biographies of famous missionaries.<sup>44</sup> Other Anglican newspapers and publications, like *The Church Times*, *The Record*, and *Crockfords* clerical directory also contained reports of missionary work and/or recruitment and fundraising adverts. Even young women who did not read Church literature could learn of the requirements for missionary service via other, more secular, publications. Alongside advice on ‘The Servant Question,’ ‘Honeymoon at A Hydro,’ and ‘A Few Disadvantages Of Steaming,’ for example, the *Every Woman’s Encyclopaedia*, published between 1910 and 1912, included a section entitled ‘How to Become a Missionary’ detailing the qualifications necessary for application to the SPG.<sup>45</sup> Applicants to CMS also wrote of their participation in missionary study circles. Christine Boxall, for example, reported attending sessions on ‘The Way of the Good Physician,’ ‘Christian Discipleship and Social Life in St Luke’s writing,’ and ‘The Word of the Gospel.’<sup>46</sup>

Young women could also learn about the qualities needed for missionary work through membership of the numerous Church unions and guilds which promoted the foreign missionary cause. These included the CMS Gleaners’ Union<sup>47</sup> and Girls’ Movement, the Student Christian Movement,<sup>48</sup> the Student Volunteer Missionary Union, and the Nurses’ Missionary League. Those who were seriously contemplating service with CMS or SPG could also join their special preparatory unions: the Home Preparation Union (CMS) and the Missionary Preparation Union (SPG).

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<sup>44</sup> Some publications dealt explicitly with the requirements for women candidates. See for example G.A. Gollock, *Candidates-in-Waiting: A Manual of Home Preparation for Foreign Missionary Work*. (London, 1892). This was published by CMS and based upon a series of articles on missionary preparation which had appeared in the *Gleaner* in 1892.

<sup>45</sup> *Every Woman’s Encyclopaedia*. (London, 1910-12).

<sup>46</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/ATw2: Candidates papers: white and blue packets. 1893-1941. Christine Boxall.

<sup>47</sup> For details of the Gleaners’ Union see: Irene H. Barnes, *In Salisbury Square*. (London, 1906). pp.215-224.

<sup>48</sup> Several SPG and CMS women missionaries acted as secretaries of this movement, including: Laura Jackson (SPG missionary in Madras and Trichinopoly), Gertrude Mowl (St Stephen’s Community, Delhi), and Lettice Shann (CMS missionary in Amritsar). See Tissington Tatlow, *The Story of the Student Christian Movement of Great Britain and Ireland*. (London, 1933). pp.900-906.

The Home Preparation Union of the CMS provided private study material and support for young men and women between the ages of seventeen and thirty who wished to learn more about and prepare themselves for missionary service prior to making their offer. Members subscribed one shilling per annum and committed to follow a regular curriculum of private missionary study for a minimum of six hours per week. Through correspondence with the Union, they followed courses on the Bible, ‘especially in its missionary aspects,’ Church history, Christian Doctrine, Apologetics, and Non-Christian religions, and were subject to periodic examinations. They were also encouraged to attend lectures and social gatherings at Salisbury Square, as well as any other missionary lectures available to them.<sup>49</sup> The HPU seems to have had a large and diverse membership. The Minutes of the Ladies’ Candidates Committee of 17<sup>th</sup> May 1911 noted there were 304 female members: 69 were teachers, 19 students, 31 nurses, 38 clerks and shop assistants, 31 domestic servants or of factory class, and 94 lived at home. Of these latter, 4 were graduates, 69 had a high or secondary school education, and 21 possessed an elementary school education.<sup>50</sup> By 1933, membership had declined somewhat to 250 women and 30 men. The HPU Notes for the year recorded that 29 members had attended the CMS’ Girls’ house-party at Malvern, and that ‘more than half the numbers of students at Kennaway Hall and St Andrew’s each term have been old H.P.U. members.’ Clearly, the Union was helping to recruit missionary candidates.<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately, there is little record of the later work of the Union amongst the papers of the CMS Candidates Department. From the charred state of the surviving documents, it would appear the HPU records were victims of the bombing of Salisbury Square in 1940. There is a wealth of information, however, in the archives of the SPG Committee for Women’s Work about the MPU.

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<sup>49</sup> See CMS, Birmingham. C/C1/2 minutes: 16 May 1911-2 November 1915. ‘The Home Preparation Union: Proposed Development. July 1911.’

<sup>50</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/C2/4: Ladies Candidates Committee, 1910-1912. Meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> May 1911.

<sup>51</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/AH1: Department reports 1928/9, 1930/1, 1932/33 etc.

SPG's Missionary Preparation Union was founded in 1905. As circumstances for male and female candidates were different, the Men's and Women's Divisions were run on separate lines. In 1934, the Union became a solely female organisation when the Men Candidates Committee decided to reorganise the provision of male fellowships.

Membership of the MPU cost two shillings a year. Its services differed slightly from those of the Home Preparation Union. Members received a Quarterly Leaflet including a letter from the Chairman, a letter from a missionary serving overseas (often a former member), and recent news, and a quarterly Intercession Paper to which they could contribute. They were encouraged to pray for the special subject of the paper and make their communion on the day stipulated. The MPU also held an Annual Day, usually at SPG Headquarters, and an Annual Weekend at a retreat house, where members could meet one another, pray and worship together, and attend lectures by those with experience of missionary life.<sup>52</sup>

MPU members were divided into Groups according to profession or education – the numbers of which altered over time.<sup>53</sup> Each Group had a small number of Correspondents working under its Head. Every member was assigned a Correspondent, who should become 'her particular friend' in the Union, and to whom she should regularly write. The Correspondent's role was to give advice on spiritual development, encouraging the young candidate to deepen her prayer life, assisting her in more thorough Bible study, and recommending books to broaden her knowledge. If desired, the member, in consultation with her Correspondent, could make a commitment to live by the MPU Rule. This involved regular prayer, meditation upon scripture, communion, and worship. The Correspondent would also take a friendly interest in a candidate's daily concerns, ensuring

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<sup>52</sup> Such weekends were replaced in 1938. Members were instead encouraged to attend the annual SPG Summer School.

<sup>53</sup> See USPG, Rhodes House. CWW323. Missionary Preparation Union (Women's Division). Leaflets and Circular Letters c.1920-1940. Letter from Dorothy C. Whitmore, Hon. Secretary of MPU, to new members.

she made constant progress towards realising her vocation, as well as giving comfort and counsel.

By joining the MPU, a young woman did not commit herself to be a missionary. Her membership simply acknowledged her ‘awakening desire to serve God and spread His Gospel.’ She had felt a calling. The MPU was designed to ‘help her to take this Call of God seriously,’ to discern through prayer and study what God required of her and where He wanted her to go, even if this led her away from the mission field.

The MPU also sought to provide the potential missionary candidate with spiritual sustenance in a more communal sense. In her final letter as Chairman of the Union, E. Hester Blagden (wife of the Bishop of Peterborough) emphasised that the friendship and sympathy they received from their Correspondents gave many young women who were ‘singularly lonely in their religious life and aspirations,’ the ‘courage and confidence to go forward.’<sup>54</sup> Other Chairman’s Letters stressed the importance of the Annual Day and Weekends in fostering a sense of fellowship among members. Membership of the Union relieved young women of the loneliness of ‘cherish[ing their] vocations in unsympathetic surroundings, among the indifferent or hostile...’ They could meet others like themselves.<sup>55</sup>

The Union also had practical uses, however. As E. Hester Blagden acknowledged, it brought young girls into contact with ‘a great Missionary Society with all its history of work for Christ overseas.’ It gave them access to SPG’s officers and missionaries, enabling them to obtain ‘first-hand knowledge’ of missionary work, its demands and its difficulties. Such information would help them to decide whether missionary service was truly their vocation.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid. Quarterly Leaflet. Feast of St Michael and All Angels. 1936.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. QL. Advent, 1925.

The Missionary Preparation Union is of particular interest to historians not only as an illustration of the ways in which young women learnt of, and prepared for, missionary service, but also as a device by which they were moulded by the missionary society. It bridged the gap between SPG's concerns over missionary recruitment and their concerns over training. It was a means of attracting and nurturing potential candidates before they made their offer of service. Its mechanisms (the Quarterly Letters, Weekends, Annual Days, Intercession Papers, Rule, and letters from Correspondents) were tools that the Society could use to shape young minds – to encourage in prospective applicants, ideal missionary qualities.

The Quarterly Letters provide especial evidence of this. They teemed with instructions as to how a potential missionary should behave. SPG's desire that missionaries should be prepared to meet difficulties of language, climate and loneliness, and be experienced in all types of useful work, was clearly expressed. Members were reminded that they needed the ability 'to be cheerful to a thoroughly stupid companion on a very hot day.' They were urged to be active in training for service, 'to make an advance forward every term,' rather than hoping everything would automatically become clear.<sup>56</sup> Missionaries could not be too old. In 1924, an age limit of thirty-five was introduced to the MPU. Members were advised to make their offers between the ages of twenty-three and twenty-four, when they would be more capable of coping with a change in culture, food, and climate. They were also repeatedly exhorted to take proper care of their health. Spiritual development through regular prayer, Bible Study and corporate worship was also encouraged, and Chairmen's letters suggested books to deepen religious understanding.

The MPU leaflets also reflected SPG's concern that candidates should be forward-thinking and adaptable. In her letter on the Feast of St Michael and All Angels in 1925,

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. QL. November 1922.

Gwendolen Stephenson emphasised the need for prospective missionaries to ‘really know about the state of the world at the present time.’ She recommended reading newspapers and obtaining information about Indian and Chinese affairs, ‘reading about it, if possible, from different sides.’<sup>57</sup> The ‘fundamental alikeness of human nature,’ and the fact MPU members should not consider themselves essentially different to those amongst whom they would work, was stressed.<sup>58</sup> Much vaunted imperial notions of Self and Other, West and East, were absent. Instead, SPG was keen to engender attitudes more concordant with contemporary moves towards self-determination in India and elsewhere.

The MPU was not only a means of inculcating desirable missionary qualities in young, favourably-disposed minds, however. It was also a means of keeping these minds orientated towards the goal of missionary service during the long process of gaining the requisite qualifications and training. Membership of the MPU coincided with this process. Barbara Goucher, for example, joined in 1932 while working as a governess. Almost immediately, she began a Bible Study course under the direction of her Correspondent and, in 1933, started studying for the London Certificate in Religious Knowledge. She offered to SPG in March 1934 and was accepted. After training at the College of the Ascension, she commenced work as an evangelist in Delhi in 1936.<sup>59</sup> Of course, not all candidates remained interested in missionary service. Between 1920 and 1939, the greatest number of offers per annum received by the Candidates Committee from MPU members was sixteen, not all of which were accepted. On average, only eight members per year offered their services – a mere 15% of the average total membership.<sup>60</sup> The Society was probably hopeful, however, that once in the MPU, a candidate was less likely to be swayed from her

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid. QL. Feast of St Michael and All Angels, 1925.

<sup>58</sup> See for example: Ibid. QL. Feast of St Peter. 1927. QL. Feast of St Peter. 1937.

<sup>59</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW321. Missionary Preparation Union. (Women’s Division). Membership Book. C.1930-1940. Barbara Goucher.

<sup>60</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW323. Missionary Preparation Union (Women’s Division). Leaflets and Circular Letters, c.1920-1940. Average total membership was 184 women.

original desire to be a missionary, if her vocation proved genuine. After all, as a member of the SPG Candidates Department put it, not everybody was called to the field: '[O]nly the twelve Apostles out of the whole mass of disciples were selected.'<sup>61</sup>

### *The realities of recruitment*

An investigation of recruits' backgrounds and the many factors, conscious and subconscious, which encouraged them to offer for missionary service, reveals the extent to which selected candidates met the high expectations and ideals of CMS and SPG. While the Personnel Files of SPG missionaries are closed and remain at the Society's headquarters, the CMS archives include thirty-four open files containing the completed application forms of candidates who eventually sailed to the Indian mission field.<sup>62</sup> Sixteen files also include letters, references, and interview reports, charting candidates' progress from their original offers to their departure for India. Women's responses to question 1(a) of Form B: 'What are the motivations which lead you to desire to be a Missionary, and what are your reasons for thinking that you are called to this work?' are particularly informative.

The majority of women expressed their belief that God was calling them to serve in the mission field. They described feeling a 'compelling force,'<sup>63</sup> an 'impulse in one's heart,'<sup>64</sup> 'often repeated and never silent for long,'<sup>65</sup> and a sense that if they disobeyed this call, they would be 'disregarding the voice of God.'<sup>66</sup> In some cases, the call to service was less tangible. 'I cannot say that I have been conscious of a special call at a special time to this work,' admitted Marguerite Gaze, 'directions seem to have gradually pointed towards

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<sup>61</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW309. Women Candidates Department: Papers re. Training and Missionary Recruitment, 1910-1926.

<sup>62</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/ATw2: Candidates papers: white and blue packets. 1893-1941.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. Christine Boxall.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. Olive Cocks.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. M. Irene Birkinshaw.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. Dora Gough.

it...'<sup>67</sup> In others, it came in a dramatic moment of revelation. Dulcie Sheasby sent a detailed account of her calling to CMS alongside her application forms. Although she had wanted to be a missionary since childhood, she had been uncertain as to where God desired her service. While training for the YWCA Secretariat in Cape Town, she had experienced 'a waking dream': 'I saw the map of India before me and across the Ganges into the United Provinces were a multitude of people calling me to come and teach them.' It was only when Dulcie attended a missionary meeting some weeks later and heard for the first time of the 'mass movements' in the UP that she 'distinctly felt that God was calling me and realised that He had given me a vision of the movement.'<sup>68</sup>

Women also wrote of their desire to respond to the 'crying needs'<sup>69</sup> of the 'heathen' world to hear the Good News, to teach and help those in ignorance, and to build-up the Kingdom of God. Five women quoted Christ's command: 'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature' and stressed their desire to obey it.<sup>70</sup> It was also quoted in the Sunday school lessons composed in response to question 13. Interestingly, this particular reference was emblazoned across the frontage of CMS headquarters in Salisbury Square and was deemed 'the watchword that is the *raison d'être* of its existence and the inspiration of its activities.'<sup>71</sup> Hence, its use by candidates may have been deliberate – a clear sign of concurrence with the Society's outlook and aims. Women applicants also expressed a strong sense of duty: as they were skilled and in good health with no pressing ties, they had 'absolutely no excuse to plead before Him for not going.'<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid. H. Marguerite Gaze.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. Dulcie Sheasby. 'How God called me.' 25.06.18.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. Maud Frost. Letter of 21<sup>st</sup> August 1918.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. M. Irene Birkinshaw, Daphne LaBrooy, Mabel Lewin, Dorothy Lyon, Charlotte Ramsden.

<sup>71</sup> Barnes, *In Salisbury Square*. Frontispiece & p.4.

<sup>72</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/ATw2: Candidates papers: white and blue packets. 1893-1941. Elsie Hunt.

In fact, Agnes Lees believed, God might have given her the former blessings deliberately in order to qualify her for work abroad.<sup>73</sup>

It appears that these women possessed the genuine sense of vocation that CMS expected in its candidates. Certainly, their referees and interviewers seemed convinced of the authenticity of their motivations and call. ‘I am quite satisfied as to her personal piety, as well as to the sincerity of her confidence in a Divine Call to Service,’ wrote the Reverend G.H. Pole, for example, following his interview with Elsie Adams in April 1919. ‘I have no doubt as to the genuineness of her desire to yield herself up wholeheartedly to work in the Foreign Field.’<sup>74</sup>

Genuine as a candidate’s religious ‘calling’ might be, however, many other factors influenced a woman’s decision to offer herself for service. As we have seen, there was a strong mission atmosphere in parishes with numerous study circles and organisations to prepare young women for missionary work. The application forms of CMS missionaries and biographical data about SPG recruits confirm their participation in such activities. A study of their familial backgrounds is also illuminating. As noted, the application forms of both societies asked about candidates’ ‘father’s profession.’ The fathers of CMS missionaries worked as merchants, engineers, army officers, solicitors, and civil servants. Most frequently, however, they were clergymen. Seven of the thirty-three applicants whose files contain such information had clerical fathers, two of whom were CMS missionaries.<sup>75</sup> One candidate’s aunt and uncle were CMS missionaries at Aligarh, and another’s uncles were vicars in Birmingham and Portsmouth.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid. Agnes Lees.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. Elsie Adams. Interview Report by G.H. Pole. 9<sup>th</sup> April 1919.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. Dora Gough & Lilian Wade.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. Elizabeth Laws & Dulcie LaBrooy.

While the fathers of SPG missionaries occupied similar middle class occupations, a considerable number of women were from wealthy upper-middle class and aristocratic families of national standing.<sup>77</sup> These women became ‘honorary missionaries,’ financing their missionary career from their personal wealth. Deaconess Katherine Beynon, Head of St Hilda’s Society in Lahore, was the daughter of Major General William Howell Beynon, Political Resident of Jeypore, Rajputana. Her grandfather was also a General and her great-uncle, Lord Lawrence, was the first Viceroy of India. Her three brothers were also high-ranking army officers. Other missionaries are listed in the peerage. Eva Fiennes, who lived for most of her career in stark austerity among Indian villagers, had been born the Honourable Eva Caroline Twisleton-Wykeham-Fiennes, daughter of a Lieutenant-Colonel and grand-daughter of the 10<sup>th</sup> Baron of Saye and Sele. Another titled missionary, the Honourable Sibylla Frances Baker-Wilbraham, daughter of the 5<sup>th</sup> Baron Baker-Wilbraham, was headmistress of Holy Cross School in Nandyal.

Like CMS missionaries, a considerable number of SPG women came from families in which not only their fathers, but also their grandfathers, uncles, and brothers were clergymen. More so than women of the CMS, however, their relations occupied high positions in the Anglican hierarchy in England and in the mission field. The Head of St Faith’s Society in Madras, Deaconess Beatrice Creighton, was the daughter of Mandell Creighton, Bishop of Peterborough (1891-1896) and London (1897-1901). [See Figure 1.2.]<sup>78</sup> Frances Cockin, an evangelist in the diocese of Lucknow, was the daughter of Charles Cockin, the Rector of Lea, the granddaughter of John Scott, a vicar in Hull, the niece of Charles Perry Scott, Bishop of North China, and the sister of Frederick Arthur Cockin, Bishop of Bristol!

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<sup>77</sup> Author’s database on female missionaries. Information compiled from Ancestry.co.uk, Jeff Cox’s card file, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, *The Times Digital Archive*, and *Who Was Who*.

<sup>78</sup> Beatrice describes her childhood and her relationship with her father in Louise Creighton, *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton, D.D.* (London, 1904). Vol.1. pp.257-260.

**Figure 1.2.**  
**Beatrice Creighton (later Head Deaconess of St Faith's Society, Madras) with her father, Mandell Creighton, later Bishop of London, 1888.<sup>79</sup>**

The image originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright. The image can be found on the cover of James Covert, *A Victorian Marriage: Mandell and Louise Creighton*. (London, 2000) or in the Bodleian hard copy of this thesis.

It is unsurprising that the daughters, granddaughters, nieces, and sisters of clergymen (and missionaries) should have chosen a career in the mission field. Some, it seems, were earmarked for this at birth! In 1917, when Ruth Roseveare was born to Claudia Renton, formerly of St Stephen's Community, and the Reverend Walter Roseveare, formerly of the Cambridge Brotherhood, the Delhi Mission News offered 'congratulations to two former members of the Mission, and to a possible future one!'<sup>80</sup> Walter Roseveare's sister, Eva, was also a member of St Stephen's, which his daughter joined (as predicted) in 1946! Such women would have grown up in an atmosphere where missionary work was discussed, encouraged, and respected. In the first chapter of her autobiography, Caroline Edwards describes making her 'offer of service' to SPG in a strikingly matter-of-fact manner – almost as the inevitable culmination of a childhood as a vicar's daughter, listening to visiting missionaries and helping her aunt tend to the poor of

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<sup>79</sup> James Covert, *A Victorian Marriage: Mandell and Louise Creighton*. (London, 2000). Adapted from cover.

<sup>80</sup> Niren Biswas, *Not Mere Memories: The story of the Community of St Stephen*. (Delhi, 2004). p.70.

the parish.<sup>81</sup> For the children of missionaries, the decision to offer must have been even more natural. '[M]y parents always talked about India and when I was a little girl and they wanted to say something adverse against India or friends of theirs, they'd say it in some sort of language... [Urdu] and I got the gist of it quite quickly,' Dr Roseveare reflected in September 2009, 'So basically from childhood I had been accustomed to talking about India and getting used to this and that, but I didn't know at the time I would be going myself.' As a young woman desiring to work as a doctor overseas, offering to SPG seemed the obvious path since both her mother and aunt had served the Society as medical missionaries.<sup>82</sup>

Of course, for other candidates the decision to offer for the mission field was a radical and unprecedented step, sometimes strongly opposed by their families. In her autobiography, *Between Two Worlds*, for example, Deaconess Carol Graham remembered her mother being 'implacably against' her desire to become a missionary. 'After several months during which the subject was completely taboo,' she recalled, 'one of my sisters remarked: "You couldn't be in worst disgrace if you were going to have a baby," which in those days said a great deal!'<sup>83</sup> Even with the support of their families, young women would have needed great faith, courage, and commitment to pursue a missionary career. To understand them properly, it is essential to place them in the context of the time in which they lived. The women missionaries of SPG and CMS, serving in India between 1917 and 1950, were born between 1860 and 1920. Those occupying leadership positions in the 1920s like Hilda Gould, the Head of St Stephen's Community in Delhi, and Jane Latham, the Head of SPG Women's Work in Ahmednagar, were usually in their fifties or early sixties, children of the 1860s and 1870s.<sup>84</sup> The majority of their colleagues had been

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<sup>81</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. X633. Miss C.M. Edwards Papers. Box 4. Autobiography. pp.1-10.

<sup>82</sup> Transcript of Interviews with Dr Ruth Roseveare. Interview 1. Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

<sup>83</sup> Carol Graham, *Between Two Worlds*. (Madras, 1980). p.16.

<sup>84</sup> Miss Gould was born in 1875 and Miss Latham in 1867.

born in 1880s, while new recruits, usually in their late twenties or early thirties, had been born in 1890s. By the 1940s, the Head of St Stephen's Community was Evelyn Ashdown, who was born in 1886, while new recruits to the Community like Gwen Cousins, Ruth Roseveare, and Ruth Mary Young had been born in the 1900s and 1910s.<sup>85</sup>

Women missionaries of SPG and CMS serving in India in 1920s had grown up in a Britain where the role of women was hotly debated and rapidly changing. It is widely known that the death of nearly three-quarters of a million soldiers in the First World War led to a 'Mutilated Society' in Britain, where, according to the 1921 Census, there were one and three-quarter million 'Surplus Women.'<sup>86</sup> Yet, it is less appreciated that, as historians like Kathrin Levitan have pointed out, the problem of a surplus of women in the population existed, and was anxiously discussed, since the nineteenth century. The Census of 1851 had fuelled this debate, asking for the first time about respondents' marital status. It revealed in a national population of twenty million, there were 500,000 more women than men, and two and a half million unmarried women. The existence of these 'redundant' women challenged the Victorian middle class ideal of a fulfilled woman as a dutiful wife and mother, who occupied a well-managed domestic sphere to which her husband could retire after his day in the public sphere of work. It was feared that in their spinsterhood, such women were failing to be useful to the nation. They posed moral and economic problems due to their dependence upon their male relations for support.<sup>87</sup> This was dangerous, as a lower-middle class man with several unmarried daughters could not

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<sup>85</sup> Author's database.

<sup>86</sup> See for example, Nicholson, *Singled Out*. For the phrase 'the Mutilated Society,' see Ruth Adam, *A Woman's Place, 1910-1975*. (Guildford, 2000).

<sup>87</sup> See Kathrin Levitan, 'Redundancy, the 'Surplus Woman' Problem, and the British Census, 1851-1861,' in *Women's History Review*, Vol.17, No.3., (July 2008), p.363-364.

hope to leave them enough money to maintain a 'respectable' standard of living after his death.<sup>88</sup>

One solution proposed to the problem of 'redundant' women was to encourage their emigration to the settler colonies. The Female Middle Class Emigrant Society was founded in 1862. This was followed by (amongst others) the Women's Emigration Society in 1880, the Colonial Emigration Society, and the British Women's Emigration Association, both in 1884. Between 1884 and 1914, approximately 20,000 women emigrated with the assistance of such societies. As Julia Bush points out, each society differed in its assessment of the purpose of female emigration: while some sent women to the colonies as domestic servants and governesses, others were more explicitly 'marriage-brokers,' providing wives for British colonial men.<sup>89</sup> Female emigration was neither energetically-promoted nor widespread, however. As Elizabeth Friend highlights in her doctoral thesis, attractive professional opportunities were limited and posts remained unfilled.<sup>90</sup> The majority of female emigrants were from working or lower-middle class backgrounds – the latter so-called 'genteel poor.' Yet, in the late-nineteenth century, other options were becoming open to single, middle-class women, who desired purpose *and* respectability.

During the 'pioneer age' from the late 1850s to the late 1880s, teaching and nursing became established in Britain as respectable professions for single women, requiring commitment, sacrifice, and considerable training. Pioneering upper-middle class women, like Constance Maynard and Elizabeth Reid, founded institutions for women's higher

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<sup>88</sup> For a fictional example of this see E.M. Delafield, *Consequences*. (London, 2000). p.227. [First published, 1919]. In the late 1890s, Lady Isabel warns her daughter, Alex, of the consequences of remaining single. 'Your father said, "The girls will marry, of course." There will be a certain sum for each of you on your wedding-day, but there's no question of either of you bein' able to afford to remain unmarried, and live decently. You won't have enough to make it possible...'

<sup>89</sup> Julia Bush, 'The Right Sort of Woman': female emigrators and emigration to the British Empire, 1890-1910,' in *Women's History Review*, Vol.3., No.3. (1994).

<sup>90</sup> Elizabeth Anne Friend, 'Professional Women and the British Empire, 1880-1939.' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Lancaster, January 1998).

education and professional training. Others, like Dorothea Beale and Frances Mary Buss, established reformed, well-organised boarding schools for girls, which required capable and dedicated female teachers. Under the tremendous influence of the ‘standard-bearer’ Florence Nightingale, and women like the ‘Matron of Matrons,’ Eva Lückes and her rival, Ethel Bedford Fenwick, nursing was also transformed into a well-organised and efficient occupation with high moral and professional standards.<sup>91</sup> It is important to recognise, however, that women gained acceptance in teaching and nursing by presenting these as distinctly *feminine* professions – extensions, rather than renunciations, of women’s traditional role as nurturers and carers.<sup>92</sup>

This period also witnessed the foundation of high-Church sisterhoods and the Deaconess movement in the Church of England.<sup>93</sup> Middle class laywomen were equally, and increasingly, involved in philanthropic work in inner-city areas.<sup>94</sup> The extent to which these movements were intertwined has often been overlooked. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, nursing and teaching were not, as Rhonda Semple describes them, ‘secular professions.’<sup>95</sup> Both were historically connected with religious sisterhoods and the famous Miss Nightingale had been a strong supporter of the Deaconess movement.<sup>96</sup> As Martha Vicinus highlights, religion bestowed legitimacy and

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<sup>91</sup> See Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women*.

<sup>92</sup> The same was true for women philanthropists. See Antoinette M. Burton, ‘The White Woman’s Burden. British Feminists and “The Indian Woman,” 1865-1915,’ in Chaudhuri and Strobel (eds.), *Western Women and Imperialism*. Burton argues: ‘Rather than overturning the Victorian feminine ideal, early feminist theorists used it to justify female involvement in the public sphere by claiming the exercise of woman’s moral attributes was crucial to social improvement.’ p.138.

<sup>93</sup> See Henrietta Blackmore (ed.), *The Beginning of Women’s Ministry. The Revival of the Deaconess in the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Church of England*. (Woodbridge, 2007); Heeney, *The Women’s Movement in the Church of England. 1850-1930*; Catherine M. Prelinger, ‘The Female Diaconate in the Anglican Church: What Kind of Ministry for Women,’ in Gail Malmgreen (ed.), *Religion in the Lives of English Women, 1760-1930* & Vicinus, *Independent Women*.

<sup>94</sup> Vicinus, *Independent Women*.

<sup>95</sup> Rhonda A. Semple, ‘Professionalising their faith: women, religion and the cultures of mission and empire,’ in Sue Morgan and Jacqueline de Vries (eds.), *Women, Gender and Religious Cultures in Britain, 1800-1940*. p.126.

<sup>96</sup> Interestingly, Nightingale spent two long periods with the deaconesses of Kaiserswerth in Germany, where the first experiments with a female diaconate had been made in 1830s. She served an ‘apprenticeship’ in Kaiserswerth hospital, wrote a promotional brochure about the institution: *The Institution on the Rhine for*

respectability upon single women, enabling them to enter the public sphere, usually reserved for men. A woman's failure to marry and her non-domestic work (even in undesirable slum areas) was accepted as 'respectable' if she were acting in the service of Christ. Women's entry into the professions was also presented using religious terms of devotion and sacrifice. Quoting Ephesians, Matron Lückes instructed the nurses of 'the London' to 'walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called.'<sup>97</sup>

The campaign for women doctors was also linked inextricably to ideas of femininity and religious, as well as imperial, service. Antoinette Burton and Rosemary Fitzgerald emphasise that the status of female medical missionaries played a key part in early debates about women's medical training.<sup>98</sup> An imperial rationale had been used by campaigners, like the MP, William Cowper-Temple, to justify the need for lady doctors. Women of the Indian zenanas would not be treated by men. Given this specific role, a woman's entrance into the medical profession became less threatening. She would not tread on the toes of male doctors, but operate within an exclusively feminine sphere. By actively ministering to her Indian sisters, she extended the idea of 'imperial motherhood,' much promoted by contemporary female social reformers, like Josephine Butler, who campaigned at home for Indian women's welfare.<sup>99</sup> Once again, therefore, women's entrance into the professions did not radically subvert gender norms. The development of professional medical training for female doctors was linked to debates over the importance

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*the Practical Training of Deaconesses* (1851), and carried out fundraising in England. Nightingale presented the deaconess movement as a solution to middle class English women's lack of occupation. 'In the middle classes, how many there are who feel themselves burdensome to their fathers or brothers but who, not finding husbands, and not having the education to be governesses, do not know what to do with themselves,' she wrote, 'More labourers are wanted [as deaconesses], and more will come. If this be their future, the fear of becoming 'old maids' will disappear...' See Prelinger, 'The Female Diaconate in the Anglican Church.' p.163.

<sup>97</sup> Eva C.E. Lückes, *Lectures on General Nursing*. (London, 1884). p.6.

<sup>98</sup> Burton, 'Contesting the Zenana.' See also: Rosemary Fitzgerald, 'A "peculiar and exceptional measure"' in Bickers and Seton (eds.), *Missionary Encounters*; Fitzgerald, 'Rescue and redemption.' in Rafferty, Robinson & Elkan (eds.), *Nursing History and the Politics of Welfare*; and Fitzgerald, "Clinical Christianity" in Pati and Mark Harrison (eds), *Health, Medicine and Empire*.

<sup>99</sup> See Burton, 'The White Woman's Burden.'

of adequately qualified medical missionaries. Leading female campaigners like Dr Sophia Jex-Blake and Dr Edith Pechey, and the zenana missionary, Dr Elizabeth Beilby, criticised untrained missionaries, feeling their presence fuelled arguments against female medical education and severely limited attempts to give Indian women effective help. The London School of Medicine for Women was opened in 1874. As Rosemary Fitzgerald points out, at the turn of the century as many as 1/3 of its students were studying medicine with a view to working in the mission field. Of the 258 women on the British Medical Register in 1900, 72 were serving as medical missionaries, 45 of whom in India.<sup>100</sup>

In terms of education and professional training, the missionaries of CMS and SPG were ‘women of their time’ – successors to, and beneficiaries of, the first generation of female pioneers in education, nursing, and medicine. Most had attended girls’ boarding or day schools, founded in the latter half of the nineteenth century by the pioneers of female education, or high schools run by the Girls’ Public Day School Company, which had been formed in 1872 to provide an affordable, high quality education to girls of all classes.<sup>101</sup> The former schools included Miss Beale’s Cheltenham Ladies College (1854)<sup>102</sup>, Miss Buss’s North London Collegiate School (1850)<sup>103</sup> and the Alice Ottley School (1883)<sup>104</sup>, while the latter included Streatham High School (1866)<sup>105</sup>, Paddington and Maida Vale High School (1878)<sup>106</sup>, and Clapham High School (1882).<sup>107</sup> Where details of qualifications were given, women missionaries reported passing the Junior and Senior Oxford and Cambridge Examinations.

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<sup>100</sup> Fitzgerald, ‘A “peculiar and exceptional measure”’ p.195.

<sup>101</sup> See Josephine Kamm, *Indicative Past. A Hundred Years of the Girls’ Public Day School Trust*. (London, 1971).

<sup>102</sup> Attended by Edith Fenn and Helen Jerwood of St Stephen’s Community

<sup>103</sup> Attended by Dorothy Lyon, CMS.

<sup>104</sup> Attended by Agnes Payne and Margaret Chignell of St Stephen’s Community.

<sup>105</sup> Attended by Elsie Adams, CMS.

<sup>106</sup> Attended by Mary Woodhouse, CMS.

<sup>107</sup> Attended by Gladys Mowl of St Stephen’s Community.

A smaller, but significant number had taken advantage of advancements in women's higher education. At least ten missionaries of St Stephen's Community and seven of the CMS had attended University. The majority had received bachelor's degrees, and some, master's degrees. Six members of St Stephen's and two CMS missionaries had attended the women's colleges associated with the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge: Lady Margaret Hall (1878) and St Hilda's (founded in 1893 by Dorothea Beale, Headmistress of Cheltenham Ladies College), Newnham (1871) and Homerton (1852).<sup>108</sup> (The latter, it must be remembered, was principally a teacher-training college, although students could take undergraduate examinations.) Interestingly, although the University of Cambridge did not award degrees to women until 1948, in spite of permitting women to sit the tripos examinations in 1881, the women who had attended Newnham College referred to themselves as graduates. In a report of St Hilda's Society for 1923, for example, Evelyn Ashdown, who had obtained a second class in the history tripos in 1908, was listed as 'Ashdown, Miss E., B.A.'<sup>109</sup> Other women attended Bedford College (1849), Westfield College (1882), Royal Holloway (1886), and Owens College, Manchester (which admitted women in 1881), as well as the Universities of St Andrews (which admitted women in 1892), Sheffield (1897) and Birmingham (1900).

The majority of missionaries in the field met CMS and SPG expectations, taking advantage of the professional opportunities available to train as teachers, nurses, and (more rarely) doctors. Of the thirty-four CMS missionaries whose files are available, none were doctors but five served as nurses. All possessed CMB (or equivalent) certificates and had nursing and midwifery experience at several hospitals. Violet Stapleton, for example, had trained at the East Suffolk Hospital in Ipswich, where she had been a sister for over four

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<sup>108</sup> These were: Evelyn Ashdown (Newnham), Agatha DeSausmarez (LMH), Edith Fenn (Newnham), Alice Milward, Gladys Mowll (Newnham), Mary Slack (St Hilda's) of St Stephen's Community. M. Irene Birkinshaw (Homerton) and Christine Boxall (Homerton) of CMS.

<sup>109</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E78c 1924. Lahore. The Society of St Hilda's, Lahore.

years. She had obtained her CMB at the Louise Margaret Hospital in Aldershot and served as sister-in-charge of the labour wards at the same hospital for two years.<sup>110</sup> Following her missionary training, Miss Stapleton worked as a sister at the CMS Hospitals in Bannu, Quetta and Srinagar. Eighteen served the CMS as teachers. All were certificated, possessing qualifications including the Froebel Certificate, the Board of Education Teachers Certificate, and the London Diploma in Pedagogy, as well as teaching experience. Some had even been headmistresses.<sup>111</sup> The remaining undertook evangelical (and administrative) work in the mission field. These usually did not have professional training, although some possessed other qualifications. Kathleen Bernard, for example, an evangelist in the United Provinces, had a second-class cookery diploma and needlework certificate from Gloucester Domestic Science College.<sup>112</sup>

As we have seen, in her 1935 article on ‘The Career of a Woman Missionary,’ Mrs Western of the SPG Women Candidates Department warned that such non-professional positions were becoming rarer in the mission field. This seems to be confirmed by appointments to St Stephen’s Community in the 1930s and 1940s, compared to those for the 1910s to 1920s. According to Niren Biswas, forty-nine women joined St Stephen’s between 1910 and 1930, of whom approximately nine were recruited for evangelistic, parish or welfare work.<sup>113</sup> The remainder were teachers (fourteen), doctors (nine), pharmacists (two), and nurses (fifteen). Between 1930 and 1950, sixteen British women joined the Community. Of these, only three were recruited for evangelistic work.<sup>114</sup> In fact, in her autobiography, one such recruit, Violet Hayes, recorded she had ‘an inner feeling’

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<sup>110</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/ATw2: Candidates papers: white and blue packets. 1893-1941. Violet Stapleton.

<sup>111</sup> Muriel King (Miss King had previously served CMS in Ruanda and been invalided home) and Jessie Taylor.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.* Kathleen Bernard.

<sup>113</sup> Mary Griffith, Marguerite Bengough, Amelia John, Lilian Henderson, Emily Bruford, Ethel Gotch, Irene Lewis, Maud Tidmarsh, Evelyn Turner. See Biswas, *Not Mere Memories*. pp.240-246.

<sup>114</sup> Miss Lewendon stayed only 1933-1934. Miss Kellaway came out in 1937, and Miss Hayes in 1939. Of the remainder, five were teachers, five nurses, one doctor, one dispenser, one unknown.

that she would be rejected by the SPG following her interviews in 1936. 'Everyone had been exceedingly kind and encouraging,' she wrote, 'yet the fact remained that I was not trained as a teacher or a nurse, and posts for people like me were few.'<sup>115</sup>

In E.M. Delafield's *Thank Heaven Fasting*, the unmarried Frederica laments: 'There isn't any work for girls of our kind... The only way is to become religious, and go and do some kind of good works, with a whole crowd of old maids and people who don't belong to one's own class.'<sup>116</sup> Yet, her contemporaries in CMS and SPG do not appear to have 'become religious' and offered as missionaries simply because they were middle class, husbandless, and without other options. For the most part, they were well-educated and qualified professional women, who had benefitted from the new educational and professional opportunities available to them in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain. In becoming missionaries, they were taking one step further the ideals of service and dedication cultivated by the teaching and nursing professions. Their 'missionary spirit' may also have been more directly inculcated. Young women desiring medical training may have been encouraged towards missionary service by the scholarships offered by missionary societies.<sup>117</sup> As Elizabeth Friend highlights, the majority of girls' schools, women's colleges, and medical schools also had popular missionary societies which encouraged fundraising and charitable work. There was a 'Girton' bed, sponsored by student contributions, at the CEZMS Hospital in Peshawar, and meetings to discuss the work of the UMCA and the Oxford Missions were regular features of Gaudies at Lady Margaret Hall.<sup>118</sup> Teachers exerted influence over their pupils. Dame Mary Scharlieb, for

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<sup>115</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. X1254: *Sent out to Serve* by V.M. Hayes. p.1.

<sup>116</sup> E.M. Delafield, *Thank Heaven Fasting*. (London, 1932). p.185.

<sup>117</sup> Friend, 'Professional Women,' p.303. The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, for example, gave scholarships of £75 per annum in the 1890s.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.* pp.104-106.

example, was a strong promoter of missionary service in India while lecturer at the Royal Free Hospital.<sup>119</sup>

It must be remembered, however, that the number of women missionaries was very small. In 1915, only 444 women worked under the auspices of CMS, the largest British missionary society (as opposed to 414 ordained men).<sup>120</sup> In contrast, the 1911 Census had listed 183,298 women as teachers, professors, and lecturers; 83,662 as sick nurses, midwives, or invalid attendants; 7,555 as nuns or sisters of charity, and 5,955 as domestic missionaries, nonconformist scripture readers and preachers.<sup>121</sup> While a significant proportion of female doctors legitimised their existence and obtained greater clinical experience through service in the mission field, the majority of single, middle class women were not attracted to work overseas. It is unlikely that candidates who offered to SPG and CMS as nurses and teachers were motivated solely by a desire for greater professional autonomy and advancement. As Chapter Two will demonstrate, the extent of this was limited, and the hardships of the mission field were surely greater than the professional advantages. Indeed, missionary societies experienced considerable recruitment difficulties. Equally, candidates who did decide to try their luck overseas did not simply offer to SPG or CMS because there were no other options available. Emigration societies and organisations like the Overseas Nursing Association, the Countess of Dufferin's Fund, and the Women's Medical Service for India offered secular employment in the Empire. As with missionary work, however, few women were attracted to such service. The women candidates of SPG and CMS were exceptional. Missionary ideals of devotion, self-sacrifice, charity, and care for those in need were disseminated in parishes, schools, philanthropic work, and the feminine professions. Yet, the number of women who chose to

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid. p.142.

<sup>120</sup> Heeney, *The Women's Movement in the Church of England*. p.62.

<sup>121</sup> Jennifer A. Morawiecki, "'The Peculiar Mission of Christian Womanhood': The Selection and Preparation of Women Missionaries of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1880-1920." Unpublished doctoral thesis. (University of Sussex, July 1998). p.82.

become overseas missionaries remained small. Recruits had not fallen into missionary service because it was the popular, the only, or the inevitable choice for the 'surplus' woman.

### *Recruitment problems*

In fact, between 1917 and 1950, a missionary career became increasingly unusual. When Ruth Roseveare decided to become a missionary in the 1930s, her friends were shocked. 'Oh yes, they thought I was quite mad,' she recalled, 'What do you want to do that for?'<sup>122</sup> The Women Candidates Committees of SPG and CMS faced increasing difficulties in attracting desirable candidates, and missionaries in the field complained of the lack of new recruits. Often, the missionary society itself seemed to be the problem. The papers of SPG's Women Candidates Department, for example, include 'Notes from A Conference on Recruiting for the Mission Field' held at the London Missionary Society's House in October 1919, and the 1923 report of the Recruiting Committee of the Conference of Missionary Societies on the Origin and Development of the Missionary Call.<sup>123</sup> Both documents identified 'widespread ignorance' of foreign missions and a 'very general spirit of estrangement from organised denomination Christianity' amongst university students. Completed questionnaires received by the Recruiting Committee from 262 missionaries of various societies and 99 student volunteers revealed that while missionary societies could 'always be sure of a steady supply' of candidates who had missionary or clerical parents, or were from religious, missionary-orientated homes, their main problem was interesting 'the great middle class of ordinary Christian people.' About one-third of correspondents admitted they had at some time been deterred from missionary service. As well as being put off by overzealous friends, parental opposition, or belief that

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<sup>122</sup> Interview with Dr Ruth Roseveare. Interview 1: Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

<sup>123</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW309. Women Candidates Department: Papers re. Training and Missionary Recruitment, c.1910-1926.

independent financial resources were required, many had been turned away by uninteresting missionary deputations or the aloof, conservative boards of missionary societies. Both documents suggested students were interested in building a new Christian order in the world. They were knowledgeable about international affairs and inspired by global ideals and organisations like the League of Nations, the Labour Movement, and the Christian International Movement. Unfortunately, they did not see missionary work as part of this new world vision.

These and other problems seemed enduring. In a ‘deliberately rather provocative’ memorandum contributed to an SPG discussion on recruitment in March 1930, the Rev E.B. Morgan again highlighted problems with the Society’s image. One student spoke of the ‘pawnish feeling of being under a society.’ Many were deterred by SPG’s ethos of poverty, chastity and obedience, seeing it as an imposition of vows. The CMS was experiencing similar problems in appealing to the present generation of students. The 1936-7 Report of the Committee on Recruiting, Selection and Training of Candidates attributed the decline in the number of CMS recruits since the First World War to changes in the needs of the field (professional qualifications were now essential) and the effects of the Society’s Quota System. This system, restricting the number of missionaries sent overseas, had been reluctantly introduced in 1926 as a necessary means of retrenchment.<sup>124</sup>

By the 1930s, there certainly seems to have been some reluctance even to contemplate a missionary career. The MPU’s Quarterly Letters, for example, began to record a decline in membership. In 1927, the Union had reached a record membership of 263. From this highpoint, numbers declined rapidly. By 1931, there were 208 members, by 1937, 135 (although membership had risen to 149 by the last recorded statistic in 1939). In

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<sup>124</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/API. Procedure on selection of candidates, relationships with other departments...

1935 and 1937, the MPU weekends at the College of the Ascension were cancelled due to the small numbers of members who had applied to attend.<sup>125</sup>

CMS and SPG did not radically alter their recruitment strategies in response to such difficulties, however. Efforts were made to increase cooperation with the Student Christian Movement, University Christian Unions, University Appointment Boards, and the principals of schools and colleges. SPG also acknowledged that ‘a rather different kind of Fellowship’ was wanted by the present generation. The MPU was disbanded in 1942 and a Fellowship of Service was established encompassing both male and female workers. Former MPU members were encouraged to join, though only sixty-five did so, half the Union’s 1942 membership.<sup>126</sup> Women missionaries were becoming an even rarer breed.

### *Training for service*

Young women who were really in earnest and felt themselves to be prepared, spiritually and professionally, for missionary service made their offers to SPG and CMS. If accepted, they embarked upon a period of missionary training. Commission V of the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference had been entirely devoted to the study of missionary training, and the Candidates Departments of CMS and SPG repeatedly discussed its aim and structure.

In 1917, women recruits to SPG were trained at a number of religious houses and deaconess homes: St Andrew’s in Portsmouth, the Home of the Epiphany in Truro, St Michael’s House in Wantage, and St Denys’ College in Warminster.<sup>127</sup> There is limited evidence of the precise curricula at these homes. They appear to have focused primarily upon giving a candidate time for quiet reflection and prayer, allowing her to make sure,

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<sup>125</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW323. Missionary Preparation Union (Women’s Division) Leaflets and Circular Letters, c.1920-1940.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. Letter from Margaret D. Western to Correspondents & Unsigned letter November 1943.

<sup>127</sup> USPG, Rhodes House . CWW309. Women Candidates Department: Papers re. Training and Missionary Recruitment, c.1910-1926.

once and for all, that her 'call' was genuine. Recounting her preparation in 1919, the author of *A Nurse's Indian Log-book*, described a period of rules and quietness, where 'sometimes we must not talk, and several times a day we go into chapel and say prayers and psalms.' Students were given quiet time for reading and attended lectures on the Prayer Book and the New and Old Testament. The writer reflected: 'I have had time to pause and think and learn to know myself, and to learn higher motives and aims for my life.' In the silence, she felt that 'one seems to see the beauty of holiness, and the intense and deep joy of a life of sacrifice.' She was able to learn 'to know and get intimate with God.'<sup>128</sup> In her autobiography, Caroline Edwards wrote very little about her time at St Andrew's Training College in Portsmouth. The candidates did parish work at St Mary's, Portsea in the afternoons, following Greek and Bible study in the mornings. 'Fortunately, the Bishop of Winchester was Ryle,' Miss Edwards commented, 'so we got a good Modern view of the Bible.'<sup>129</sup>

Such training does not seem to have been entirely satisfactory, however. In March 1919, the Standing Committee of SPG had appointed a Committee to consider the methods of work and conditions of service of women workers in its missions.<sup>130</sup> It had come to the Society's attention that several of its workers were unhappy in the field. The Committee met eighteen times between March 1919 and March 1920, collecting evidence from missionaries' letters as well as from the testimonies of missionaries on furlough, of bishops, and of the heads of Training Homes. Although much of the Committee's final report of January 1921 focused upon problems in the mission field itself, certain comments and recommendations were made about missionary preparation. Section 4 dealt with 'Selection, Preparation and Vocation.' It argued that, although training at sisterhoods and

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<sup>128</sup> Anon, *A Nurse's Indian Log-Book*. pp.17-19.

<sup>129</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. X633. Miss C.M. Edwards Papers. Box 4. Autobiography. pp.9-10.

<sup>130</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW312. Advisory Group Papers re Conditions of Service for Women Missionaries. 1921.

Deaconess homes was ‘valuable,’ it needed to be ‘supplemented by a certain time of testing in a freer and more lay atmosphere.’ It was felt that it was difficult for some women to adjust to the spiritual privations and chaos of life in the mission field following the quiet, regimented time spent in religious houses. Women especially needed to learn how to ‘get on well with others, and face the difficulty of working with other women without the help and discipline of a rule...’<sup>131</sup> The report advocated the establishment of an SPG Home for all women candidates at the Selly Oak Missionary Training Settlement in Birmingham.

The idea of a dedicated SPG training centre had been long discussed – the Society had briefly and unsuccessfully experimented with one at Wandsworth from 1904 to 1911. A better environment was needed which allowed students a ‘full and varied life,’ to develop their Catholic faith, learn of conditions in the field, interact with one another and with missionaries on furlough, and engage with modern theological debate.<sup>132</sup> This environment seemed to be provided in Birmingham. The foundation of training colleges at Selly Oak had been a Quaker initiative: Woodbrooke had been established by George Cadbury in 1903, and Kingsmead was founded, specifically for the training of missionaries, in 1905. By the 1920s, there also existed Westhill (a Quaker foundation for the training of teachers), Fircroft (another Quaker foundation for working men), and Carey Hall (a nonconformist home for training women missionaries). In line with the inter-denominationalism promoted by Edinburgh 1910, these colleges operated in Federation. The Selly Oak Settlement began to be recognised in missionary circles as a locus of missionary science and experience, where students of all races could mix freely.

In 1920, a deputation from SPG had visited Selly Oak. Its members were extremely impressed and negotiations proceeded for the establishment of an SPG college in Birmingham. Yet, the Society’s statutes (declaring it the official society of the Church of

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<sup>131</sup> Margaret Western, *The Story of the College of the Ascension*. (Westminster, 1930). pp.13-14.

<sup>132</sup> David Mole, Unpublished notes.

England) prevented the new college from affiliating with the nonconformist colleges in the Selly Oak Foundation. Critics also expressed concern about SPG's ability to stand up for its Catholic principles and traditional churchmanship in an atmosphere of nonconformity. In line with the spirit of cooperation inspired by Edinburgh 1910, however, SPG chose to embrace the advantages of Selly Oak. It was argued 'a faith which could not stand that strain was hardly robust enough to face the mission field.'<sup>133</sup> The College of the Ascension was inaugurated in October 1923 with ten students in residence. A new, purpose-built College was officially opened by Princess Mary on Ascension Day, 5<sup>th</sup> October 1929.<sup>134</sup>

CMS was quicker than SPG to establish its own training centre for women missionaries. In 1917, the Society had closed its home for working class candidates in Highbury and purchased 'The Willows' in Stoke Newington, another institution it had used which had previously belonged to the Mildmay Trust. This was renamed 'Kennaway Hall.' CMS training remained at Kennaway until 1938, when it was transferred to 'Foxbury' in Chislehurst. Disruptions during the Second World War meant that students were housed at Carey Hall in Selly Oak and then at Ridley Hall in Cambridge until Foxbury reopened in February 1946. Unlike SPG, CMS chose not to embrace the opportunities offered by the Selly Oak Settlement. The Society's Candidates Secretary had actually visited Selly Oak days before the SPG delegation of 1920, but nothing materialised.<sup>135</sup>

The time candidates spent in training for CMS and SPG varied. MPU membership records give details of the training of twelve candidates at the College of the Ascension who eventually sailed for the Indian mission field. Their time at the College varied from

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<sup>133</sup> Western, *The Story of the College of the Ascension*. pp.17-20.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.* p.23.

<sup>135</sup> David Mole. Unpublished notes.

**Figure 1.3.**  
**Staff and students of the College of the Ascension during its first term, Autumn 1923.<sup>136</sup> [Copyright: USPG]**



**Back row – Katherine Budden (later teacher, Lahore), Edna Wilson (nurse, Delhi), Norah Finlay (teacher, Madras), Maud Tidmarsh (evangelist, Delhi), Ida Hebron (teacher, unknown)**

**Middle row – Mrs Morgan & son, Rev. E.R. Morgan (Warden), Ada Warden (Principal), Kathleen Alexander (Lecturer), Marjorie Hughes (teacher, Nandyal/Ranchi), Muriel Dashwood (independent student for South Africa)**

**Front row – Hugh & Robert Morgan, Annie Rigby (teacher, Kuching), Mary Gell (doctor, Ping Yin)**

one term to two years. Beryl Burr, a CMB-certified nurse spent just one term in Selly Oak in 1939 before sailing for Tinnevely, whereas Mary Copestake, another nurse with the CMB was there a year. Miss Burr's posting may have been accelerated due to the outbreak of war. Educational and evangelistic missionaries seem to have spent longer at the College than medical students, possibly due to the imperative need for the latter in the field. Edith Marsh, who possessed the Board of Education Training Certificate and the Froebel

<sup>136</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. H113 College of the Ascension. F1: Reports.

Certificates Parts II and III started at the College of the Ascension in October 1936 and did not sail for the diocese of Dornakal until September 1938. Another trained teacher, Constance Peterken, was there for a similar duration.<sup>137</sup> A candidate's time in missionary preparation varied depending on vacancies in the field, the availability of passages, and her standard upon application. This latter is demonstrated in the CMS records. CMS candidates usually spent three to four terms in a training home. Those who spent longer appear to have been those identified at interview as somewhat immature, lacking sophisticated theological knowledge and practical experience of Christian work. They were allowed greater time to develop their character.<sup>138</sup>

There is more evidence about the nature of training at Selly Oak than that at the religious houses, and considerable evidence about the curricula at Kennaway Hall, and later, Foxbury. In her short pamphlet, *The Story of the College of the Ascension*, Margaret Western of the SPG Women Candidates Department described how a candidates' training was tailored to her particular needs.<sup>139</sup> Recruits attended lectures on general missionary subjects and the Bible with members of the other Selly Oak colleges, while specific teaching on Anglican doctrine, prayer, and principles of worship was provided in the College itself. Perhaps for the first time in their lives, therefore, students came into contact with people of different religious beliefs to their own and people of different races. Ruth Roseveare, who attended the College in 1945, did not remember meeting any Indians at Selly Oak, but she did learn about India. She recalled going to lectures on the basics of Islam and Hinduism, the Sikh religion, Buddhism and Jainism, as well as on Indian history, the impact of the Christian Gospels on India, and the spread of Christianity among

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<sup>137</sup> See USPG, Rhodes House. CWW 321. Missionary Preparation Union (Women's Division) Membership Book, c.1930-1940.

<sup>138</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/ATw2: Candidates papers: white and blue packets. 1893-1941. M. Irene Birkinshaw, Elsie Douglas, Winifred Holdom, Mary Woodhouse.

<sup>139</sup> Western, *The Story of the College of the Ascension*. p.24.

Muslims. She and her contemporaries were also introduced to elements of Hindi and Urdu, and attended Bible study classes at Woodbrooke. ‘I was a bit sleepy in many of these [lectures] and so not able to take advantage of the expertise available!’ she recollected.<sup>140</sup> Violet Hayes, who attended the College in 1936, seems to have been a more conscientious student! She remembered being ‘fascinated’ by her lectures on doctrine, the Old and New Testaments, and comparative religions, which ‘opened up a fresh understanding of the faith for me.’<sup>141</sup>

Outside lectures, recruits’ lives were packed with activity. They had the opportunity to gain experience in a wide range of practical work, such as nursing and infant welfare at Birmingham Medical Centre, teaching Sunday school, visiting local parishes and a slum clearance estate, guiding, and organising clubs. ‘As far as I can see,’ one of Violet Hayes’ contemporaries observed, ‘you do what you have never done before.’ For Violet, teaching Sunday school to six and seven year olds from a nearby estate was an eye-opening ‘nightmare’ as she struggled to understand the ‘brogue’ of her charges and they failed to understand her Surrey accent! In the summer, she and a friend from the College joined the Bishop of Hereford’s Mission to hop-pickers.<sup>142</sup> A candidate was also given the chance to develop personally and spiritually. Holy Communion was celebrated daily in the College chapel, and recruits were able to spend time ‘sifting and testing,’ assessing the veracity of their missionary vocations. The College also sought to teach students from a variety of backgrounds and experiences to live a ‘corporate life,’ so they would be able to cohabit harmoniously with others in the field.<sup>143</sup> The spiritual and social side of life at the College is described by the French historian and novelist, Zoé Oldenbourg in her *Le procès du rêve*. Miss Oldenbourg studied in Selly Oak in 1938 as

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<sup>140</sup> Letter to author from Dr Ruth Roseveare. 8<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

<sup>141</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. X1254: ‘Sent out to Serve’ by V.M. Hayes. p.2.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Western, *The Story of the College of the Ascension*. p.24.

part of an ecumenical Anglo-Orthodox initiative, by which SPG allowed one Orthodox student a year to attend its College. She recollected: <<[J]e découvrais le bonheur d'un équilibre moral que je n'avais jamais encore connu, m'habituant à une vie presque luxueuse, et réglée comme celle d'un couvent : prières à la chapelle cinq fois par jour, séminaires, jeux (basket-ball), promenades le dimanche dans la superbe lumière automnale... et camaraderie encore superficielle mais chaleureuse, avec une trentaine de filles qui – très différentes les unes des autres – me semblaient toutes très dignes d'affection.>><sup>144</sup>

Women's training at Kennaway and Foxbury was similar to that at Selly Oak, though perhaps more insular as candidates did not mix with nonconformist students. A printed curriculum for 1937-8 shows detailed lecture programmes on the Old and New Testaments, 'The Bible and Modern Problems,' Church History, CMS History, Comparative Religion, Anthropology, and Educational Methods, amongst other subjects. Special lectures by visiting missionaries, clergymen or members of other Christian denominations are also listed. These include lectures on such varied topics as 'That Stiff First Year,' 'Gambling as it affects the Life of the Nation,' and 'The Present Political Situation in Exile.' Study circles on Jesus' teachings, prayer, and personal relationships also existed. Like SPG recruits, CMS candidates also undertook practical work. While at Kennaway Hall, they helped with Guides and girls' clubs, particularly St Andrew's Girls' Club in Stoke Newington, and ran a 'Coloured Care Committee' and 'Coloured Camps' for mixed race families in the Victoria Docks area. They also gained medical experience at the Islington Medical Mission, Bermondsey Medical Mission, and Shoreditch Infant Welfare and Ante-Natal Clinic. After the move to Foxbury, students carried on their work

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<sup>144</sup> Zoé Oldenbourg, *Le procès du rêve*. (Paris, 1982), p.162.

in the Tidal Basin area and visited residents in the overcrowded Downham London County Council Estate.<sup>145</sup>

**Figure 1.4.**  
**Staff and students at Foxbury, 1939.<sup>146</sup> [Copyright: CMS]**



**An Indian student is seated at the front.**

In the summer, like their contemporaries in SPG, CMS candidates took part in the Hereford Diocesan mission to the hop-fields, as well as attending summer schools at Malvern, Keswick, Swanwick and Cromer, which allowed them ‘to meet other students and come in contact with other minds.’<sup>147</sup> Training in the vacation was considered just as important as training during term. ‘[B]y living amongst a different ‘set’ of people and in

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<sup>145</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/AT1 Foxbury: women’s training college: correspondence, memoranda and papers... CMS Women’s Training College. Curriculum. 1937-38.

<sup>146</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Acc.676. Z1. Postcard: CMS Women’s Training College, Chistlehurst [Foxbury]: staff and students, Summer 1939.

<sup>147</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/AT1 Foxbury: women’s training college: correspondence, memoranda and papers... CMS Women’s Training College. Curriculum. 1937-38.

new surroundings [a candidate] might gain confidence and poise and enlarge her sympathy and understanding of other people's way of life and thought,' explained a training document on 'the Aims of Practical Work.' Even visiting the homes of her fellow students, she could learn much about people of different backgrounds and opinions.<sup>148</sup>

Significantly, women's missionary training was far more systematic than that of male candidates, whether clerical or lay. SPG had no male training home. Instead, recruits were granted studentships from the Society to finance their study at Oxford or Cambridge, at medical school, or at a number of theological colleges and seminaries like St Augustine's in Canterbury and St Boniface's in Warminster.<sup>149</sup> CMS retrenchment led to the closure of its male residential home between 1922 and the opening of the Henry Venn Hostel in 1926. Training moved to St Andrew's, Stoke Newington, in 1934, and to Liskeard Lodge, Blackheath, in 1946. Residents were not taught at these Hostels, however, but attended courses on phonetics, history, education, the Bible, and non-Christian religions at SOAS, the School of Economics, and other London institutions.<sup>150</sup> Yet, the urgent demands of the field meant many men, including sixty of the hundred recruits between 1932 and 1936, sailed without any specialised missionary training.<sup>151</sup> Other than highlighting the more pressing need for male (particularly clerical) recruits, SPG and CMS recruitment documents do not explain why women's training was much longer than men's. Perhaps the Societies expected a College or University-educated man to be far better informed about overseas affairs, as well as far more worldly and capable of coping abroad than a female recruit.

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid. 'Shortened Explanation of Some of the Aims of Practical Work.'

<sup>149</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. X205c. Missionary Candidates Sub-Committee Book, 1924-29. (Men Only).

<sup>150</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/AT2. Liskeard Lodge: men's training college: correspondence, memoranda and papers. See also Hewitt, *The Problems of Success. Vol.I.* pp.455-456.

<sup>151</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/API: Procedure on selection of candidates, relationships with other departments... 'Report of the Committee on Recruiting, Selection and Training of Candidates, 1936-37.' p.34.

As noted, neither SPG nor CMS expected a female candidate to be fully formed upon application. Indeed, both Societies were surprisingly adaptable in their selection and training of applicants. A particularly striking example of this is the case of Dorothy Lyon. Miss Lyon made her offer to CMS on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1918 at the age of twenty-five. She was from a London-based Scots Presbyterian family. Her father worked at a wholesale paper merchant's. After attending Baptist Churches, she had been drawn to the Church of England. Miss Lyon was highly-educated and professionally-trained. She held an MA honours degree from the University of St Andrews and the London Diploma in Pedagogy from Bedford College, and was working as a teacher at the Red Maids' Secondary School in Bristol. In her application forms, Miss Lyon showed herself to be thoughtful, opinionated, and 'modern' in her views.<sup>152</sup> She suggested in answer to question 9, for example, that 'the Prayer Book needs revision in some places.' She disagreed with talk about 'everlasting fire' in the Athanasian Creed and in Article XVIII, suggesting 'there is much in the Prayer Book and the Articles to mislead those who are ignorant of the history of their compilation and the circumstances leading thereto.' In describing the Person and Work of Christ, she wrote: 'He may be judge at His 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming,' then added 'but I do not understand that.' Miss Lyon's references were extremely positive. Her old headmistress emphasised her 'above average' intellectual powers, while her vicar highlighted her 'indomitable spirit of enterprise in the service of our Lord' and above ordinary 'force of character.' It was also stressed that she was 'easy to work with and liked' by fellow students and workers, and had undertaken much self-examination 'in view of her home circumstances' before offering for missionary work.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> The term 'modern' was used by E.M. Hooper and Constance Richardson, Principals of Kennaway Hall, to describe Miss Lyon's views. To some extent at least, Miss Lyon advocated a liberal interpretation of the Bible in line with that of the 'modernist' movement in the contemporary Church of England. See Chapter Four.

<sup>153</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/ATw2: Candidates papers: white and blue packets. 1893-1941. Dorothy Lyon.

Miss Lyon was interviewed by CMS at the end of April 1918. She seems to have made a profound impact upon her interviewers. '[I]t is difficult to know what to say,' reported the Reverend D. Harford. 'She was, I think, quite the most difficult candidate to interview whom you have yet sent to me.' He signed his report: 'yours somewhat perplexedly.' Another interviewer, Catherine Porter echoed: 'I do not think I have ever found a candidate so difficult to interview as Miss Dorothy Lyon.' The interviewers found Miss Lyon 'thoroughly Scotch in her reserve,' socially awkward, and ill at ease speaking of her spiritual experiences. She was 'unwilling to commit herself to dogmatic definitions of the faith,' stressing the unformed nature of her views. '[I]t may be that her taciturnity is a sort of camouflage to avoid disclosing the nature of her unorthodoxy, if any,' Reverend Harford speculated. Interestingly, he added: 'Still, we agree that we are not to expect too great a development of doctrinal correctness in candidates; so we will pass that by.' Despite these difficulties, however, all three interviewers believed Miss Lyon possessed a genuine calling and should be accepted for probationary missionary training. This would provide the Society with the opportunity to 'learn to know her better' and give her a chance to develop. 'We want people of independent outlook, and we must experiment,' Reverend Harford reiterated.<sup>154</sup>

The reports of Dorothy Lyon's three terms of training at Kennaway Hall reveal it was a challenging and often upsetting time. The Principal, Mrs E.M. Hooper, described Miss Lyon's 'aggressive and unsympathetic manner,' her 'overruling spirit,' her unpopularity, and her 'very "modern" views.' She had 'hindered' her juniors by propagating her ideas amongst them that there existed no personal devil and that heaven was only a state. In March 1919, Miss Lyon demonstrated a change, apologising for her former attitude: 'now, instead of feeling that she is too good for this place, she is feeling

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

that the place is too good for her.’ In May, she faced a second round of interviews. Once again, her interviewers were perplexed by her difficult personality. Three expressed reservations but recommended her acceptance as a full missionary. The Punjab and Sind Secretary, Reverend E.J.E. Wigram typified their rather mixed opinions. Miss Lyon ‘does not appear to me to be one of whom, as in the case of some, one can confidently prophesy success in the missionary calling,’ he wrote. ‘But on the other hand she maintained her own belief that she has the call, and she comes I think quite within our limits in respect of her views, and under these circumstances and in face of our tremendous needs I don’t think we could dare reject her.’ The Reverend G.T. Manley, however, felt compelled to demand Miss Lyon spend a longer period in training. He believed she had an unhealthy sense of intellectual superiority, even though her progressive views on the Bible seemed to be based upon ‘tenacious pride’ rather than critical reading.<sup>155</sup>

Throughout June of 1919, there was much debate about what to do with Miss Lyon! For Constance Richardson, the incoming Principal of Kennaway Hall, the decision was agonising. ‘I am praying very much about this – it is so very difficult to know what is right,’ she told the Women Candidates Secretary, Mrs Thornton. Grace Robson and Rebe King, missionaries in the Indian field, were asked to give their opinions of Miss Lyon’s suitability for her proposed post as a teacher at the Alexandra School in Amritsar. In a letter of 6<sup>th</sup> July, Miss Richardson gave her final verdict to Mrs Thornton. Since May, she had made great efforts to know Miss Lyon better, spending Whit Monday in her home and having ‘many long talks’ with her, and had come to realise Dorothy’s ‘deep and real’ spiritual life and the sacrifice she was making in leaving home. Her going abroad was opposed by her parents, especially her father to whom she was devoted. Miss Lyon possessed ‘great intellectual gifts and a very strong personality,’ but now understood the

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

need for humility and patience. Her views were ‘modern,’ but not, in Miss Richardson’s opinion, different from others whom CMS had accepted or against the ethos of the Society. Miss Lyon knew she was unpopular and her case was in doubt. She was (and recognised she had been) completely misunderstood by Mrs Hooper and by one of her interviewers. ‘She is not an ordinary girl at all,’ Miss Richardson concluded, ‘but a girl of quite exceptional powers and I can’t help feeling there is a great work for God before her. In a sense, it may be a venture of faith to accept her – but I believe the faith will be justified.’ On 13<sup>th</sup> August 1919, Dorothy Lyon was sent a letter confirming her acceptance as a full missionary of CMS and locating her to the Alexandra School in Amritsar.<sup>156</sup>

CMS’ ‘venture of faith’ was indeed justified. In a missionary career of twenty-five years, Dorothy Lyon rose to Vice-Principal of the Alexandra School (serving temporarily as Acting Principal) and taught at Kinnaird College in Lahore. Her Annual Letters were animated and thoughtful, showing her to be enthusiastic, hardworking, forward-thinking, and adaptable.<sup>157</sup> Her skills and enthusiasm were much appreciated by her colleagues.<sup>158</sup> Miss Lyon’s story reveals the realities of missionary recruitment. Candidates were hardly submissive, saintly, or easily compliant to the desires of the missionary society. Yet, CMS displayed flexibility and perseverance. Miss Lyon was educated, professionally-trained, and clearly inspired by a desire to serve God. She was intelligent with a capacity to lead and to think for herself. For CMS, her evident qualities and her willingness to adapt in response to training overcame any difficulties of character. The Society’s evangelical standpoint was sufficiently broad to accommodate her religious views, though ‘modern’ and evolving. In such cases, CMS was also prepared to gamble owing to the tremendous needs of the field. Dorothy Lyon may have been far from the ideal candidate, but her

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934; AL. ASW. 1935-39, 1940-49. Dorothy Lyon.

<sup>158</sup> See CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Grace Robson, 1923.

genuine vocation, strength of character, and professional skills made her impossible to refuse.

Although candidates seemed to benefit from their time in training, SPG and CMS continued to discuss the character of women's missionary preparation in the 1930s and 1940s. In February 1933, for example, the Secretary of SPG received a request for evidence from the Bishop of Peterborough on behalf of the Archbishops' Commission on the Ministry of Women. The Commission was investigating the use of women in the mission field, the limitations (if any) under which they worked, and the possibility of an extension in their duties. In response to this request, SPG sent a questionnaire to its members. The first question asked about missionary preparation: 'At what points do you feel your ministry most severely handicapped by lack of training? What improvements would you suggest in training?' A Memorandum was drawn up from the evidence collected and submitted to the Commission in June 1933. This Memorandum, and missionaries' individual responses to the questionnaire, give particular insight into perceived weaknesses in missionary training.<sup>159</sup>

Problems with training were divided into the 'personal' and the 'practical.' In terms of the personal, some missionaries believed candidates' knowledge of the best ways of prayer and meditation should not be presumed, and 'more definite and elementary education' was needed. There was 'universal demand' for practical training for non-teachers in teaching methods, particularly in the preparation of candidates for the Sacraments, the instruction of non-Christian enquirers, and in demonstrating the Biblical origins of the Catechism. Others felt more practical experience of pastoral, preventative and rescue work would have been helpful. Practical training in non-religious subjects was

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<sup>159</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW313. Replies to Questionnaire on the Ministry of Women. 1933.

also advocated. 'Almost all' replies stressed the desirability of training in 'simple book-keeping and accounts, simple...medicine, first-aid, home-nursing and sanitation... cooking, and washing without gas or electricity and with only the simplest apparatus.'<sup>160</sup> Of course, it must be remembered that the questionnaires were answered by missionaries already in the field. These were not women who had benefitted from training at the new College of the Ascension. Many of the problems highlighted were being dealt with.

In two areas, however, missionaries' comments are particularly interesting. Firstly, many believed training should continue during a missionary's first year in the field and be supplemented in her first furlough. This had already been suggested by the five female missionaries from the dioceses of Chota Nagpur, Luknow, Madras, and Tinnevely, who had written to SPG in May 1917 calling for change, and by Hilda Gould, the Head of St Stephen's Community, in her testimony to the consequent Committee on Conditions of Service. Miss Gould had proposed the establishment of a training centre in India.<sup>161</sup> Such recommendations do not seem to have been acted upon, however, and as Chapter Two reveals, the teething problems of new missionaries continued to be commented upon in letters and reports.

Secondly, a remark by Miss A.F. Schenkel of All Saints' SPG Training School in Trichinopoly is noteworthy.<sup>162</sup> Miss Schenkel believed first-hand missionary experience was essential for those involved in training. The Society also needed instructors 'who firmly believe in the paramount need of identifying ourselves on an equality with those among whom we work,' and could accustom candidates to such thinking.<sup>163</sup> This is significant for a number of reasons. For a start, it demonstrates Miss Schenkel's conviction

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW312. Advisory Group Papers re Conditions of Service for Women Missionaries 1921.

<sup>162</sup> 'Schenkel' may have been an error or a deliberate pseudonym. The missionary at All Saints' was actually Miss A.F. Schubert.

<sup>163</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW313. Replies to Questionnaire on the Ministry of Women. 1933.

that training needed to be changed in line with developments in the mission field. It implies training was, or at least was feared to be, out of date – perhaps candidates were arriving in India with superior, imperialistic attitudes towards Indian Christians. Such attitudes would not advance the missionary society’s aims of building an independent Indian Church, and training Indian teachers and nurses. Miss Schenkel’s comments suggest instructors at the College of the Ascension may have had little idea of contemporary priorities and realities in the field, especially of the importance of ‘Indianising’ missionary work.

Miss Schenkel’s fears may have been misplaced. Candidates at the College of the Ascension did attend lectures on the contemporary mission field. Nevertheless, her comments draw useful attention to the identities of the instructors at Selly Oak, Kennaway Hall and Foxbury. The Principals of CMS and SPG training homes were usually retired missionaries. The founding Principal of the College of the Ascension, Ada Warden, had been Head of Women’s Work in Edmonton under the Archbishop’s Mission to Western Canada.<sup>164</sup> Constance Richardson, Principal of Kennaway Hall from 1919 to 1928, had been a CMS missionary in Japan between 1911 and 1917.<sup>165</sup> Other tutors were clergymen or women possessing training in theology or Church work. At Kennaway Hall in 1937, for example, the Principal was Florence Allshorn, a former missionary headmistress of Iganga School in West Africa. The Vice Principal, Miss Gray, (B.A. London), possessed the Lambeth Diploma in Theology and had been licensed by the Archbishop of Canterbury as a theology teacher. The other resident tutor, Miss Holmes, (B.A. London), was a recognised Church worker of the diocese of London and a trained social worker. The non-resident tutors included six clergymen and a (female) doctor of theology.<sup>166</sup> While it is

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<sup>164</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. H113 College of the Ascension. F1: Reports.

<sup>165</sup> Cambridge Alumni Database. Miss Richardson attended Girton from 1899-1902.

<sup>166</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/AT1 Foxbury: women’s training college: correspondence, memoranda and papers... CMS Women’s Training College. Curriculum. 1937-38.

possible that such teachers might have been unaware or ill-informed of contemporary conditions overseas, (or, in the case of retired missionaries, entrenched in old views and methods) Kennaway was also visited by current missionaries on furlough. Moreover, the College of the Ascension's location at Selly Oak meant SPG students (and teachers) were at the hub of modern missionary thought. It is unlikely they would have been entirely ignorant of the present needs of the field.

The nature of CMS training was particularly discussed in the 1940s. A medical survey of missionaries in the field and the subsequent Women's Health Advisory Group led the Society to seriously consider the physical and mental wellbeing of its candidates. Any psychological imbalances in candidates were to be immediately flagged up and assessed by a doctor.<sup>167</sup> Moves were also made to improve the quality of the training available at Foxbury. An undated CMS Memorandum on the Selection of Candidates (probably from 1946) lamented that Foxbury was not being used to its best advantage due to the great differences in character, ability, education, and background of the twenty-nine students in training. Time, energy, and money were being wasted as the gap between candidates' spiritual and mental outlooks was too wide to be gulfed. The result was 'an ill-assorted variety of people, who inevitably hinder and retard each other...' The Memorandum divided students into five groups. The best candidates (fifteen) fell into groups (a) and (b). They were of an educational (and social) background which enabled them to understand lectures and to profit by study. Candidates in group (b) possessed a limited outlook and Bible knowledge on entry to Foxbury, but could learn easily. The candidates in groups (c), (d), and (e) hindered the progress of the former. Those in group (c) lacked education and cultural background, so could not understand the training

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<sup>167</sup> See CMS, Birmingham. C/C2/5 minutes [number 13]: 17 June 1937-19 May 1948. (1 vol.) Women Candidates Department.

provided. Those in group (d) were ‘overcome by their own social and other deficiencies’ and unable to ‘meet their contemporaries on a natural level.’ Finally, those in group (e) were ‘such perplexing characters’ that they were not suitable for Foxbury but needed ‘help in disentangling personal problems and conflicts which they are unable to articulate by word or action.’ The candidates in the latter two groups were so overwhelmed and confused by the atmosphere of the training home that they suffered rather than gained by it. The Memorandum proposed the use of residential Selection Boards at Foxbury. Over five or six days, applicants would meet and be observed by the Candidates Secretary, two members of the Candidates Committee, a member of training staff, and an academic coach. Several current students would assist with housework and give the selectors an opportunity to analyse candidates’ interaction with their contemporaries. Selection Boards would enable CMS to better assess ‘the spiritual, mental and general potentialities’ of applicants than in interviews and to root out those unsuitable for training.<sup>168</sup>

### *Knowledge of India*

Throughout the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, missionary recruitment and training clearly concerned not only the Candidates Departments of CMS and SPG, but also missionaries in the field, who had strong opinions about the characteristics desirable in their successors. Upon departure for the mission field, therefore, was a candidate truly prepared?

A young woman preparing for the Indian mission field could have learnt about India in a number of ways. She might have heard tales of India from missionary relations or from missionary biographies and periodicals. Lectures and parish pageants told of the conditions of *pardahnashins*, child brides and widows. Missionary study circles and

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<sup>168</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/AT1 Foxbury: women’s training college... ‘The Selection of Candidates.’

preparation unions could also inform her about the subcontinent. The conscientious MPU member, for example, could have gleaned much knowledge from the Union's Quarterly Leaflets. Between 1919 and 1942, they included twenty letters from missionaries about work in India, a letter from a former member serving in Government Hospital, and a letter from an Indian recruiter, Mary Sorabji.<sup>169</sup> Four quarterlies in a row – from Advent 1929 to St Michael and All Angles 1930 – were from the subcontinent. These letters described in great detail missionary educational, evangelistic and medical work, its successes and its frustrations. They told of preaching trips to outlying villages, women's Bible classes, industrial and boarding schools, small and large hospitals, and 'nursing in mud huts of the jungle.' MPU members were instructed to become 'a "Jack" of many trades,' as any experience and skills could come in useful.<sup>170</sup> Members also learnt about contemporary Indian customs and issues. Agnes Payne's remark upon her adeptness at 'sitting on the floor crosslegged and eating with my fingers!' would have informed the unknowledgeable about Indian eating habits.<sup>171</sup> Phyllis Tollit's comments about the poverty and 'uppish'-ness of the Anglo-Indian community would have drawn members' attention to its peculiar position under the Raj. She also described the Indian scenery – the heat, the noise and smells of the bazaar, the pye dogs, the beggars, and the coolies.<sup>172</sup>

Members who read these letters could not fail to realise that missionary work was extremely difficult and often disheartening. 'It is very hard to make any *apparent* headway in village work,' admitted Agnes Payne in 1927. 'I feel as if I teach the women nothing at all; it is difficult to know what to teach and how to teach...'<sup>173</sup> Members were also informed of the frustrations of medical work. In 1937, Mary Carter of St Catherine's

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<sup>169</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW 323. Missionary Preparation Union (Women's Division) Leaflets and Circular Letters, c.1920-1940.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. QL. Feast of St Michael and All Angels, 1934.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. QL. Feast of St Peter, 1927.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. QL. Feast of St Michael and All Angels, 1937.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid. QL. Feast of St Peter, 1927.

Hospital in Cawnpore described the ‘very naughty and difficult’ character of some Indian nurses. She attributed this to the fact girls were treated ‘as outcasts’ by some Indians, who looked down upon the nursing profession.<sup>174</sup> Other missionaries, like Marjorie Petty of St Monica’s School and Training College in Ahmednagar, also wrote of the difficulties in training Indian girls, as ‘it takes so long for them and for us to get inside the other’s mind and know how it works.’ She stressed, however, that she and her fellow missionaries were ‘always learning from our Indian colleagues, our pupils, and from our mistakes.’<sup>175</sup>

Missionaries warned about the difficulties of language study and of finding time, privacy, and energy to pray. The privileges of worship available at home were often absent in the field. In 1930, Mary Kirby acknowledged her spiritual difficulties due to the geographical isolation of Sevanandapuram, the urgent demands of work, the climate, insects, and fatigue. Although the Indian priest was ‘very nice,’ he had had little education and experience outside his village and ‘naturally only preaches sermons which can be understood by illiterate village folk.’ Miss Kirby yearned for the ‘really good sermon such as one possibly didn’t bother to listen to when at home!’<sup>176</sup> She was able to receive the Blessed Sacrament on Thursdays and one Sunday in a month – a sharp contrast to the regular ministrations to which MPU members in England would have been accustomed.

Missionary letters in the Quarterly Leaflet were not the only ways in which MPU members could obtain knowledge about the Indian field. Speakers with experience in India gave talks at MPU Weekends in 1924, 1926, 1928, 1930, 1931, and 1936. In October 1926, India was the subject of the MPU Annual Gathering at Lambeth Palace, and at the Annual Day in 1932, the Honorary Secretary, Miss Whitmore, spoke of her recent trip to India, during which she had visited missionaries in Hubli, Ranchi, Barisal, and Sevanandapuram. At the Annual Day in 1928, Miss Stuttaford from Ahmednagar

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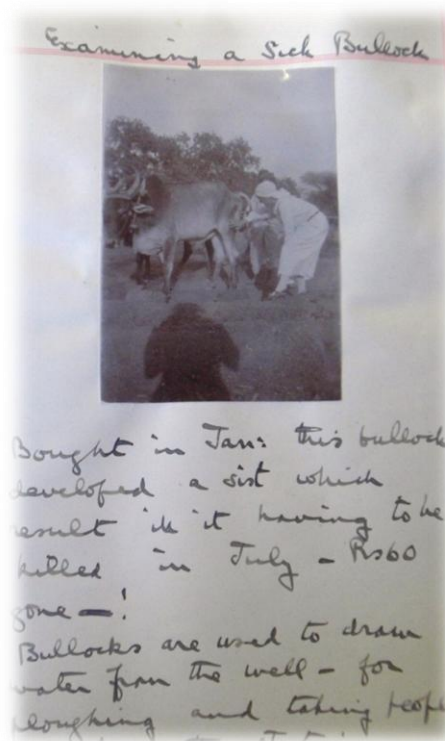
<sup>174</sup> Ibid. QL. Feast of the Annunciation, 1937.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. QL. Feast of St Michael and All Angels, 1934.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid. QL. Feast of St Michael and All Angels, 1930.

described 'A day in the life of a district wallah,' taking questions afterwards. The following year, the speaker was Miss Cockin of the diocese of Lucknow. The quarterly Intercession Paper of the MPU also included frequent prayers for contemporary issues in the Indian mission field. On the Feast of the Annunciation in 1931, for example, there was a prayer of thanksgiving 'for the improved outlook in India and for the services rendered by Lord Irwin as Viceroy,' and a prayer of intercession 'for India in her unrest; and for guidance and wisdom at the present time to those on whom rests the responsibility for her future.' Such prayers assumed MPU members would have some knowledge, at least, of Indian conditions.<sup>177</sup>

**Figure 1.5.**  
**'Examining a Sick Bullock' – one of the required skills for a missionary!**  
**Page from Jacqueline Tupper-Carey's 'A Missionary at Work or Qualifications Needed by a Missionary.' c.1920s.<sup>178</sup> [Copyright: USPG]**



<sup>177</sup> Ibid. Intercession Paper. Feast of the Annunciation, 1931.

<sup>178</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. H113 College of the Ascension. F7: A Missionary at Work or Qualifications needed by a Missionary. By J.M. Tupper-Carey.

A conscientious member of a missionary preparation union could learn much about the Indian mission field, therefore, even before attending missionary training college. Of course, it is difficult to determine whether CMS and SPG candidates actually absorbed any of the information presented to them. In her Chairman's letter of Advent 1923, for example, Constance Bunyon complained that only two of the two-hundred-and-fifty members of the MPU had replied to her request for their opinions of the Intercession Paper. 'I often wonder whether you read your Chairman's letter when it arrives,' she commented tartly, 'or whether it lights a cigarette.'<sup>179</sup> CMS application forms suggest, however, that most candidates possessed a considerable amount of knowledge about India and Indian missions on offering to the Society.

Outline Sunday school lessons on the subject of foreign missions, composed in answer to question 13 of Form B, made reference to the position of Hindu and Muslim women, including the evils of purdah, arranged marriage, and child widowhood. One candidate, Rose Hill, composed a lesson on the life of Pundita Ramabai and her work for girl widows. In answer to question 14: 'Mention the chief non-Christian religions, and state quite briefly what you know about any of them,' most applicants listed Hinduism, Mohammedanism, Shintoism, Animism, and Buddhism, and the majority gave basic (largely accurate) information about their key beliefs. Very few claimed no knowledge at all. A couple gave especially sophisticated answers, providing details of the geographical bases of various religions and biographical information about the Prophet Mohammed.<sup>180</sup> Such knowledge would have been supplemented during training through the study of comparative religions, contemporary issues and conditions in the field.

Of course, as Ruth Roseveare suggests, missionaries at training colleges were not always attentive to their studies. Equally, the majority of candidates did not know the

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid. QL. Advent, 1923.

<sup>180</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/ATw2: Candidates papers: white and blue packets. 1893-1941. See especially Olive Cocks and Dulcie Sheasby.

location of their posting until their training was nearly complete. CMS usually remained faithful to a candidate's 'special calling' to a particular country (identified in question 8(c) of their white application form), but there were exceptions. Violet Stapleton, for example, felt especially called to the CMS Uganda Mission, but was located, not without 'a pang of disappointment' to India's North West Frontier.<sup>181</sup> Even a general knowledge of India would not prepare candidates for specific conditions in mission stations across such a geographically and culturally diverse country. Nevertheless, it is possible to conclude that earnest and hardworking recruits were hardly ignorant of the nature of the Indian mission field prior to departure. Yet, as Chapter Two will demonstrate, no amount of pre-passage training could prepare candidates for their experiences upon arrival. The SPG archives contain an undated, humorously-labelled photo album entitled 'A Missionary at Work or Qualifications needed by a Missionary,' compiled by Jacqueline Tupper-Carey, a missionary at Madras and Hubli in the 1920s [Figure 1.5.]. Miss Tupper-Carey assembled photographs of missionaries carrying out a variety of tasks from the stereotypical to the unexpected: tending the sick, teaching Sunday school, weaving, checking accounts, and milking buffalo! She listed fourteen 'Qualifications or what a missionary should be': farmer, accountant, doctor, nurse, veterinary surgeon, cook, gardener, needlewoman, caterer, weaver, dressmaker, and 'last but not least she should have A sense of Humour.'<sup>182</sup> It would have been difficult, if not impossible, for a recruit to prepare for everything!

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<sup>181</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/ATw2: Candidates papers: white and blue packets. 1893-1941. Violet Stapleton.

<sup>182</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. H113 College of the Ascension. F7: A Missionary at Work.

## Chapter Two: The Missionary Vocation

Before travelling to the mission field, every female recruit had to sign her approval of the mission society's regulations. SPG missionaries also had to sign a declaration of purpose. This stated:

I desire, if it be God's will, to devote myself to His service in the Foreign Mission Field in connection with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. At the end of my preparation I am willing to go to any post for which the Society may think me fitted.

I purpose, with God's help, to give myself entirely to this life and work during the time for which I may be appointed, and not to give it up for any reason within my own control before the end of that time.<sup>1</sup>

For those going to India, the initial term of service was five years. A missionary of CMS or SPG could not return (for any other reason than ill-health) before three years were over without having to refund the Society a percentage of her training, outfit, and passage expenses. Subsequent terms of service were more open to negotiation but were usually five years, followed by a year's furlough. Although contracts were short, it seems to have been assumed by both Societies, and by their workers, that missionary service was a lifelong career, not to be given up before retirement 'for any reason within [a missionary's] own control.'<sup>2</sup>

It was recognised, however, that new missionaries needed time to adjust to the field. Probationary periods existed for membership of St Stephen's Community in Delhi

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<sup>1</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW309. Women Candidates Department: Papers re. Training and Missionary Recruitment. 1910-1926.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

and St Hilda's Society in Lahore, after which a recruit, in consultation with her superiors, could decide whether to become a 'full member' and commit to the communities' Rules of Life.<sup>3</sup> All new missionaries of CMS were 'on probation' for two to three years of their first term of service. Their colleagues and the Head of Mission were asked by the Parent Committee to fill in forms, reporting upon their 'missionary usefulness,' adherence to CMS principles, health, progress in language study, relations with and attitudes towards European and 'native' co-workers. Missionaries themselves were asked to comment upon their own probation, physical fitness, and any difficulties they had found in attaining missionary qualifications, especially as a result of regulations or instructions imposed upon them by superiors. The first question on Probation Form B also sought to confirm that a woman missionary remained as committed to her vocation as upon arrival in India: 'Have you retained your conviction that as a C.M.S. Missionary you will be carrying out God's purpose for you?'<sup>4</sup>

For some missionaries, the promise to devote themselves entirely to work overseas for their period of employment proved difficult to fulfil. For a start, actual arrival in the Indian mission field could be a tremendous shock. 'First impressions' – what shall I say,' mused Cona Fielding-Smith in her initial report from Delhi in 1920, 'Sunshine – glares – mosquitoes – fever – meetings with strange people (with what awe I shook hands with the Senior Members of the Community and felt their loftiness pierce me) – and underneath all lay the idea that it was all a bad dream and soon I must surely wake up.'<sup>5</sup> Her fellow missionaries of SPG and CMS had similar 'jumbled impressions' of the 'new and

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<sup>3</sup> See for example: Archives of St Stephen's Community, Delhi. Minute Books.

<sup>4</sup> For completed probation forms see for example: CMS, Birmingham. Overseas G2 I4/O Punjab and Sindh. Original Papers Incoming. 1918-1920.

<sup>5</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. MM470. St Stephen's Hospital, Delhi. Reports, circular letters etc. 1919-1925. Cona Fielding-Smith.

bewildering country'<sup>6</sup> which was to become their workplace and home. Despite their training, their reports and letters reveal they were confused, appalled, frightened, and utterly overwhelmed by India's vastness, her dust, dirt, disease, heat, poverty, and ignorance.<sup>7</sup> Writing of her first sixteen months in her Annual Letter of 1947, Evelyn Stocken admitted 'time and time again there comes the most awful moments of fear and depression and an overwhelming sense of one's utter inadequacy...'<sup>8</sup> Yet, despite feeling intimidated, women missionaries were conscious of the 'abiding and upholding presence of Our Lord, Himself' and eager to start work in India. 'Much as I should love to see my family and friends,' reflected M.P. Mallinson in 1923, 'I'm far too thrilled with my job here to want to go home now. It's such a privilege to have the chance of trying to do one's little bit to relieve the suffering of these people and to lead them out of the hopeless denures of their superstitious ideas into the light of knowledge and truth.'<sup>9</sup>

While many frightened and homesick recruits went on to have long and fulfilling careers in the mission field, the life of a missionary was often taxing, frustrating, and disappointing: a story of 'many and various "ups and downs," of hopes and disappointments,'<sup>10</sup> where sometimes the 'shadows stand out more clearly than the sunshine.'<sup>11</sup> A woman's experience differed greatly depending upon where she was sent. The character of, and types of work undertaken by, each mission varied. Women missionaries worked as teachers, nurses, doctors, and evangelists. In 1920, for example, the Punjab, NWF and Sind Mission of the CMS had twenty-nine stations. Some like

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<sup>6</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Violet Salmon, 1932.

<sup>7</sup> See for example: CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. M.P. Mallinson, 1923. Nancy Knight, 1932. AL ASW. 1935-1939. Margery Treanor, 1938. USPG, Rhodes House. CWW142. Original Letters Received. 1920. p.57.

<sup>8</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Evelyn Stocken, 1947.

<sup>9</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. M.P. Mallinson, 1923.

<sup>10</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E77b 1922. Lahore. Lilian Henderson.

<sup>11</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Mabel Lewin, 1925.

Jandiala and Sukkur were out-stations occupied by one clergyman (often Indian). Others were much larger and based in towns. Nineteen CMS employees were posted at Srinagar, for example, although six were on furlough: two of these were priests, five lay male missionaries (doctors), five wives, and four single women (three of whom were nursing sisters, one a teacher). The Punjab, NWF and Sind Mission encompassed a huge medical mission with hospitals at Multan, Quetta, Dera Ismail Khan, Bannu, Peshawar, Srinagar, and Amritsar, as well as Kinnaird College in Lahore and various middle and high schools in Amritsar, Gojra, and Clarkabad etc.<sup>12</sup> Other missions were much smaller and focused upon educational and evangelistic work, although CMS did employ women of the Western Indian and the Bengal and Bihar Missions in hospitals at Lusadia, Ranaghat and Hiranpur.<sup>13</sup> In the Madras, Telugu and Tinnevely Mission, for example, women missionaries worked largely in educational establishments like the Alexander Girls' High School in Ellore and the Sharkey School in Masulipatam.<sup>14</sup>

SPG missions were similar in structure, though the Society's missionaries were predominately involved in educational work. SPG ran fewer hospitals than CMS and these were scattered across its various dioceses. Women medical missionaries worked, amongst other places, at St Stephen's in Delhi in the Lahore diocese; St Luke's Hospital at Murhu in the Chota Nagpur diocese; St Catherine's at Cawnpore in the Lucknow diocese; and from the 1930s, at St Werburgh's in Nandyal in the Dornakal diocese.<sup>15</sup> Equally, unlike those of CMS, the SPG hospitals at which women missionaries worked were usually solely for women patients and the training of Indian women nurses, and were run and staffed by

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<sup>12</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL.G2. 1916-1934. Punjab, NWF and Sind Mission Letters.

<sup>13</sup> As Gordon Hewitt notes, 'Punjab – and the rest' would not be an unfair description of CMS medical missionary work. In 1910, there were 4 CMS doctors, 1 nurse, and 33 hospital beds in the rest of India, compared with 21 doctors, 7 nurses, and 678 beds in the Punjab mission. The disproportion was smaller but still obvious in 1942 with 13 doctors and 13 nurses in the Punjab compared with 7 doctors and 8 nurses elsewhere. Gordon Hewitt, *The Problems of Success. Vol.II.* p.151.

<sup>14</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL.G2. 1916-1934. Madras, Telugu and Tinnevely Mission letters.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example: 'Staff of Hospitals and Dispensaries assisted by S.P.G. with Statistics for 1925,' *Annual Report for the Year of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 1925.* pp.264-265.

women. In 1925, for example, the entire administration of St Stephen's Hospital 'for women and children' in Delhi was female. It had a British missionary staff of ten members of St Stephen's Community (though two were on furlough and one on sick leave). There were four women doctors, including the Medical Superintendent, five nurses, and a dispenser-evangelist.<sup>16</sup> In most CMS hospitals, for example at the Afghan Mission Hospital in Peshawar, women missionaries worked alongside, and under the authority of, male medical missionaries in treating male and female patients and training male and female nurses.<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 2.1.**  
**The Community of St Stephen, Delhi, c.1914.<sup>18</sup>**

The image originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright. The image can be found at the Archives of St Stephen's Community, Delhi, or in the Bodleian hard copy of this thesis.

Unlike CMS, there were several women's communities under the auspices of SPG including St Stephen's Community in Delhi, St Hilda's Society in Lahore, and St Faith's in Madras. These varied considerably in style. St Stephen's was not a religious order. Its

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> See CMS, Birmingham. Annual Letters.

<sup>18</sup> Archives of St Stephen's Community, Delhi. Miscellaneous photographs of the Community.

lay members made no vows, although they agreed to follow a Rule of Life and (if not engaged in outstation work) to live together in St Stephen's Home. They carried out educational, medical, and evangelistic work. [see Figure 2.1.]<sup>19</sup> St Hilda's in Lahore, in comparison, was a community of ordained deaconesses and lay workers. Members also followed a Rule and had obligations to share in communal life at the Mother House in Lahore, although some lived for large parts of the year at schools in Simla and Murree. The work of St Hilda's was educational and usually amongst the Anglo-Indian and wealthy Indian communities.<sup>20</sup>

The experience of CMS and SPG women missionaries was certainly distinctive from that of men. Male colleagues are rarely mentioned in women's letters and reports. The majority of women lived and worked in a predominately female environment, encountering their male colleagues only at Church services, and more rarely at retreats and diocesan meetings. In spite of complaints at the lack of interaction and coordination between the sexes, for example in SPG's 1921 Report on Conditions of Service,<sup>21</sup> women's work was still distinguished as a separate branch of mission work in the late 1940s, requiring its own subcommittees.<sup>22</sup>

The living conditions of women missionaries took a number of forms, each posing particular challenges. Women lived in large and small stations, in bustling cities and remote villages. Some lived in community at a Mother House. Others lived in pairs or threes at their workplace, either in nurses' quarters, school boarding houses, or mission bungalows. Evangelistic missionaries, unconnected with institutions, sometimes lived in small huts in a central village or itinerated between villages, camping in tents. Women also began to live simply in ashrams on a level with their Indian co-workers. The comfort of

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<sup>19</sup> Archives of St Stephen's Community, Delhi. Minutes 1928-38. Meeting January 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> 1928.

<sup>20</sup> See USPG, Rhodes House. E series reports.

<sup>21</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW312. Advisory Group Papers re Conditions of Service for Women Missionaries, 1921.

<sup>22</sup> For example the Women's Auxiliary of the Lahore Diocese – see Chapter Four.

missionary accommodation ranged from large, airy bungalows to damp and smelly mud huts. Companionship also varied. While it was considered undesirable in the 1920s for female missionaries to live alone (without fellow Europeans), this became increasingly common due to shortages of workers and 'Indianisation.' Some missionaries interacted with many (male and female) fellow missionaries on a station. Others had only Indian colleagues.

Women missionaries' experiences were also influenced by the organisational structure of their missionary society. Before the onset of 'Diocesanisation' (see Chapter Four), SPG and CMS were organised differently. Both had London headquarters, which acted as final arbiters of all decisions. CMS was a far more 'metropolitan' society, however. Its headquarters financed and directed all activity. Missionaries were under the immediate jurisdiction of the Mission Secretary for their area, who was directly answerable to Salisbury Square.<sup>23</sup> SPG acted as the 'handmaid' of overseas dioceses. Its missionaries were financed by the Society, but looked to the bishop of their diocese 'for the organisation of their work, for pastoral care and for advice.'<sup>24</sup> The provision of SPG finances to specific stations was not determined by Tufton Street. Instead, 'block grants' were given to dioceses and allocated by bishops. As we shall see, this caused difficulties when the latter appeared in opposition to SPG.

Women missionaries' participation in the administration of the mission enterprise in the field varied. Although dioceses had a variety of Women's Boards and Subcommittees,<sup>25</sup> these remained subordinate to male-dominated Executives. From 1929 to 1930, for example, three CMS women missionaries (and one Indian woman worker) sat

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<sup>23</sup> Hewitt, *The Problems of Success. Vol.II.* pp.65-68.

<sup>24</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW312: Advisory Group Papers re Conditions of Service. 'Draft Report of the Committee.'

<sup>25</sup> For example the Women's Joint Conference of CMS and CEZMS in the Punjab and the Women's Sub-Committee of the Lucknow Diocesan Council. See CMS, Birmingham. Home I. 12/6. Lucknow Diocesan Council. Women's Work Sub-Committee.

upon the Executive Committee of the Church and Mission Central Council for the Punjab compared to fourteen men. Women were also members of other mission bodies including the Pastoral and Evangelistic, the Medical Executive, and the Language Committees, although all but the Ladies' Committee had a majority of male members.<sup>26</sup> Women's representation upon diocesan bodies was also small. Zoe Walford, Principal of St Ebba's School, was the only SPG woman missionary to regularly attend meetings of the Madras Diocesan Council in the 1920s. By the 1940s, there were still only two or three female attendees.<sup>27</sup> Female board members were usually employed in the immediate vicinity as travelling from remote outstations to diocesan councils was tricky. The nature of Minute books makes it difficult to determine the extent of women's personal involvement in committee's discussions and decision-making. A significant development did occur in the CMS Punjab and Sindh Mission in the early 1940s, however. Olive Cocks, an educational missionary, was appointed Mission Secretary, responsible for the administration of all men's and women's work. Although she was succeeded by a male missionary after her death in 1943, Winifred Creed Meredith became Assistant Secretary.<sup>28</sup> For the first time, women were appointed to positions of responsibility in the upper echelons of the Mission's administrative hierarchy.

### *Difficulties of living conditions*

The difficulties faced by new recruits in adjusting to the mission field were exacerbated by their need to learn the language of the people amongst whom they would work. Most missionaries did not work in English and many required several languages. Alongside Urdu or Hindi, they had to understand numerous local dialects. Noel Fletcher of

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<sup>26</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Overseas. G2 I4/O Punjab and Sindh. Original Papers Incoming, 1930.

<sup>27</sup> UTC, Bangalore. Proceedings of Monthly Meetings of the Madras Diocesan Committee, 1826-1947.

<sup>28</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949.

the CMS Hospital in Anantnag, for example, spoke Urdu, Kashmiri and Jakti.<sup>29</sup> Language training did not commence in earnest until missionaries arrived in the field. During their first years in India, women of SPG and CMS attended missionary language schools for three months, usually at the hill station of Landour. Here, missionaries from as many as thirty societies were given daily instruction on vernacular Gospel reading and teaching, ordinary conversational classes, and phrases to memorise.<sup>30</sup> They also studied independently, and with private *munshis*, for two examinations. Such work could be difficult and demoralising, and missionaries struggled to find the time and the energy. In some cases, older missionaries allowed recruits to concentrate upon language learning, assuming full duties after their examinations.<sup>31</sup> For others, this was impossible. ‘Language study has become rather a burden because through pressure of work and lack of teachers I have had to do it at the end of [a] busy day when one’s brain seems quite muddled,’ wrote Elizabeth Law, a teacher at the CMS Normal School, Benares in 1921.<sup>32</sup> In the early 1940s, the Women’s Health Advisory Committee of CMS identified language study as a particular problem for nurses who were thrown into work from the beginning in trying tropical conditions.<sup>33</sup> Women missionaries’ regularly reported feelings of inadequacy and humiliation owing to their lack of language skills. “‘Why does she talk like a mad woman?’” commented one Telugu woman on Katharine Wood’s linguistic prowess.<sup>34</sup> Despite missionaries’ humorous tone, serious worries were also expressed. Dorothea Brooke, for example, bemoaned her inability to communicate with ‘one or two of the listeners [on her preaching expeditions] to whom I feel it might just make all the difference

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<sup>29</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL. ASW. 1940-1949. Beatrice Noel Fletcher, 1948.

<sup>30</sup> See for example: CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Dora Perry, 1924. USPG, Rhodes House. X1254. ‘Sent out to Serve’ by V.M. Hayes. pp.8-10.

<sup>31</sup> Theodora Barton much appreciated this at Gojra in 1926. CMS, Birmingham. AL. G2.1916-1934. Theodora Barton, 1926.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. Elizabeth Law, 1921.

<sup>33</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/AM1 Women’s Advisory Health Group: minutes: comments including living conditions abroad.

<sup>34</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW323. Missionary Preparation Union (Women’s Division) Leaflets and Circular Letters, c.1920-1940. QL. Feast of St Michael and All Angels, 1933.

if I could speak a word to them afterwards.’ ‘Why are not missionaries still given the gift of tongues?’ she asked.<sup>35</sup>

New missionaries were not the only ones who struggled. Missionary service could be gruelling, disheartening and seemingly fruitless. The reality of life was very different from the images of the all-conquering, all-converting missionary pioneer in children’s literature,<sup>36</sup> and perhaps from missionaries’ original ideas of propagating the Gospel overseas.<sup>37</sup> Women readily admitted tangible progress was minimal, converts were few, and successes could abruptly turn to failures.<sup>38</sup> Promising young Christians in whom they had invested great love, time, and effort could prove heartbreaking disappointments.<sup>39</sup> Even in the longest, most productive careers, there were moments of hopelessness, doubt and spiritual desolation. The Annual Letter for 1928 of Alice Steward, who served CMS in the United Provinces until she was over seventy, reveals one spiritual struggle. After struggling alone for several years, she had finally received a ‘most devoted, capable and promising’ co-worker and ‘true friend’ in Lois Lodge.<sup>40</sup> Less than two years after her arrival, however, Miss Lodge died suddenly while on holiday in Kashmir. Over a year after her death, Miss Steward admitted ‘it seems like yesterday, and the gap left here is very fresh and very large – and “unfill-able” – one cannot help continually wondering

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. QL. Holy Week, 1920.

<sup>36</sup> See Anthony Kearney, ‘The missionary hero in children’s literature,’ *Children’s Literature in Education*. Vol.14, no.2. (June 1983).

<sup>37</sup> See CMS, Birmingham. C/ATw2: Candidates papers: white and blue packets.

<sup>38</sup> ‘Sometimes it is asked; And have you any converts?’ wrote Mary Griffith, a missionary of St Stephen’s Community in 1921. ‘To answer in the negative does not hurt as much as it did.’ USPG, Rhodes House. E76c 1921. Lahore. Mary Griffith.

<sup>39</sup> Jean Simpson’s Annual Letters tell of her sorrow when the first Kashmiri woman to be baptised in Srinagar, Mokti/Mariam married a Muslim man. CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1935-1939 & 1940-1949. Jean Simpson.

<sup>40</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Alice Steward, 1927.

“Why” it was allowed, and yet one knows He could never make a mistake and needed her more elsewhere.’<sup>41</sup>

Missionaries commonly suffered from overwork and tiredness owing to the heavy burden of their responsibilities and increasing shortages of finances and recruits. Their letters and reports show some were driven to the edge of breakdown. In a letter of January 1920 to Hilda Saunders, SPG Foreign Secretary in London, Katharine Peacey expressed concern about her colleague in Nandyal, Sibylla Wilbraham. ‘Sybil must get home, and as quickly as possible,’ she wrote. ‘She is absolutely finished. It is pathetic I think to see such a strong person so tired. She cannot remember things and twice when the contractors [building Holy Cross School] have been more worrying than usual she has been on the verge of tears!! Fancy Sybil!’ As Miss Peacey was being transferred and another colleague was on furlough, Miss Wilbraham had ‘3 peoples [sic] work to do... and a new one to train!’<sup>42</sup>

The case of Grace Robson, Principal of the Alexandra High School in Amritsar, further demonstrates the debilitating effects of missionary service. In her Annual Letter of 1921, she wrote ‘very strongly’ to CMS about her difficulties, ‘as I feel that people at home have no idea how little missionary work is being done in a school like this.’ The tone of the letter suggests Miss Robson was overworked, exhausted and depressed. The Principalship of the Alexandra was an extremely difficult job, particularly in the aftermath of the Amritsar violence of 1919 which had closed the school. She reported facing interference in schoolwork from wealthy Indians, and criticism from parents and Indians connected with the mission, who seemed to ‘resent having an Englishwoman as Principal.’

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid. Alice Steward, 1928.

<sup>42</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW142. Original Letters Received. 1920. p.102.

Miss Robson had little missionary support: one colleague was on sick leave and the other, a new recruit, was teaching part-time while studying language. ‘In no school in England would one person be put in charge of a high school which has to be kept up to govt standards and a boarding house of 50 girls with no House mistress and a large compound comprising vegetable garden, fruit garden, with 23 servants and their families living on it,’ Miss Robson told CMS. ‘In this country too, everything needs more supervision than it would in England.’ ‘I have felt the strain tremendously,’ she admitted. Financial anxieties, the burden of administrative work, and shortages of staff meant she and her colleagues were ‘worn-out’ and lacking in the ‘freshness and vitality’ so important for dealing with children.

Like many missionaries, Grace Robson’s concerns at her inability to carry out her work efficiently were augmented by a sense of spiritual inadequacy. ‘As far as direct missionary work goes, we are not justifying our existence,’ she argued. Staff had neither the time nor the energy to interact with the Indian Christian community or non-Christian parents, and she, as Principal, ‘after working from early morning’ had ‘no mental or spiritual energy left at night’ to prepare for her Scripture lessons, prayers, communicants and confirmation classes. The postscript to her letter reveals her despondency at being unable to devote real time to her students’ spiritual welfare. One of the Indian teachers had reported that some of the prefects had confided: “‘Miss Robson used to be so fond of us, and we loved her so much. She was always with us, and interested in all we did. Now she doesn’t love us at all – she never speaks to us and is never with us – she is quite changed, she despises and dislikes all Indians.’” ‘There was no bitterness in this,’ Grace Robson commented, ‘only sorrow and distress.’ Her own concluding sentences were perhaps a reflection of both, as well as a cry for help to CMS. ‘These are the children I have known since they were quite small and whom, as Prefects, I ought to be helping and influencing,’

she wrote. 'This is all the result to show from our constant work at accounts, organising and correspondence.'<sup>43</sup>

Significantly, Miss Robson's missive did not go unheard. Copies of her Annual Letter were given to the CMS Delegation to India of 1921-22 and surely influenced its discussion on the future of the Amritsar schools, resulting in the decision to amalgamate the Alexandra and the CMS Girls' Middle School in 1924.<sup>44</sup> Yet, for Miss Robson personally, the strain was too much. '[V]erging on a nervous breakdown,' she took six months sick leave in 1922 to little avail.<sup>45</sup> '[S]he became less and less able to cope with things,' and was ordered home in November 1923, never to return.<sup>46</sup>

Grace Robson's case was not unusual. Illness was the most major and frequent disrupter of missionary work. A survey of the health of CMS missionaries in the field, 1925-1929, calculated an average of 21 missionaries per year (1.78% of the total) or 2.43% of those in the field were invalided. This figure was 50% higher among new missionaries – 3.48% - largely owing to the ill-health of female recruits.<sup>47</sup> Throughout the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, missionaries are reported as suffering from numerous maladies including appendicitis, colitis, cancer, amoebic dysentery, malaria, and tuberculosis. Several underwent operations. Many others suffered from exhaustion and nervous breakdown. SPG letters for the 1920s alone record twelve deaths from illness. Ill-health posed great difficulties to missionary societies. They did not penalise workers who were forced to abandon their work, but continued to support them financially and pay their medical

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<sup>43</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Grace Robson, 1921.

<sup>44</sup> See correspondence about the Alexandra School and Miss Robson in CMS, Birmingham. Overseas G2 I4/O Punjab and Sindh. 1920-1923.

<sup>45</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Ada Simmonds, 1922. Grace Robson, 1922.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. Dorothy Lyon, 1924 & CMS, Birmingham. Overseas. G2 I4/O Punjab and Sindh. 1923.

<sup>47</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/AM1 Women's Health Advisory Group. 'A survey of the Health of C.M.S. Missionaries in the Field. 1925-1939.' p.4.

expenses. Workers were often sent for sick leave at hill stations. Others were ordered home.

Although ill-health was considered a genuine reason for breaking one's contract and leaving the mission field, it caused much frustration in mission circles owing to difficulties in replacing incapacitated workers. In July 1920, for example, the Bishop of Bombay complained to Miss Saunders, the SPG Foreign Secretary, about 'the wastefulness of employing 'half-timers' in the Mission Field.' He considered one of his workers, Miss Kidd, to be a 'bad investment,' as she had 'never done more than half work all the time she has been with us' and was unable to 'stand the strain or carry the burden of work in India.'<sup>48</sup> Missionaries were also critical of co-workers who did not seem to be pulling their weight.<sup>49</sup> Sick women felt ashamed and stigmatised. '[I]f you are ill in the mission it is considered a disgrace,' claimed Alice Stemson in her resignation letter of 1923.<sup>50</sup> 'Is it any use apologising for being a useless crock? I'm afraid not,' asked another SPG missionary, Caroline Edwards, in 1920. She hoped to return to work in Hubli when she was 'patched up.'<sup>51</sup> Twenty-eight years later, Noel Fletcher's Annual Letter was less light-hearted in tone. She described enduring physical and spiritual darkness – '[f]loundering in the Slough of Despond' – when her furlough was extended due to prolonged illness. She felt 'a complete failure' and 'somewhat "cut off",' and was much comforted by letters of sympathy from CMS Headquarters, reassuring her she was 'still very much one of the family.'<sup>52</sup>

Giving the trying climate of India, it is unsurprising that women missionaries were frequently indisposed. Yet, as the CMS health survey acknowledged, 'physical breakdown abroad is only secondarily a failure to respond to the stresses of physical environment. The

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<sup>48</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW142. Original Letters Received. 1920. p.44.

<sup>49</sup> See Sylvia Dale and Katharine Peacey's criticisms of Miss Swain. Ibid. p.97 & p.102.

<sup>50</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW146. Original Letters Received. 1924. p.13.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p.48.

<sup>52</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Beatrice Noel Fletcher, 1948.

human environment and the individual's reactions to it is usually the sphere in which the primary cause... must be sought.<sup>53</sup> Pressures of work, personal relationships, and the need to conform to the 'missionary ideal' influenced women's health. It is equally likely that sick women's recovery was not aided by depression and anxiety at being unable to continue their work. This, and missionary ideals of sacrifice and self-denial, meant some women persevered with work in spite of illness, often exacerbating their complaints and inducing total breakdown. Eva Fiennes was one such example. Approaching seventy, she lived at a punishing pace, alone in a remote and austere Indian house on a starvation diet.<sup>54</sup> On one evangelistic visit, she collapsed at the roadside, but insisted her colleague, Violet Hayes, continue to the village to give the lesson. 'We walked back to the car;' recalled Violet, 'how she managed it, I shall never know except that for years she had lived by sheer will power, self denial and disregard of her physical comfort.' Violet disobeyed Miss Fiennes' orders to keep her illness from the other members of St Stephen's, and the Community's Head and another senior travelled to Gurgaon to bring her to Delhi for treatment. 'But they returned without her,' Violet recorded, 'she utterly refused to give up even though she had been unable to do any work. When she did allow herself to be brought in, she was quite ill, and was invalided back to England. Thus I was left the sole village worker among the European women missionaries in Delhi.'<sup>55</sup> Like many missionaries, Miss Fiennes' indomitable will overcame her physical afflictions. She continued in missionary service until 1961, when she was eighty-eight!<sup>56</sup>

For some missionaries, feelings of disappointment, failure and spiritual darkness led to complete physical and psychological breakdown. The papers of CMS' Punjab and

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<sup>53</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/AM1 Women's Health Advisory Group. 'Recommendations on Medical Survey.'

<sup>54</sup> Miss Fiennes' asceticism is especially interesting given that she was the 'honourable' granddaughter of a Baronet. She was not the only missionary with extreme ideals of self-denial. Jane Latham, for example, ended her missionary career living for two years in absolute poverty alongside Bhil villagers. 'At last, half starved herself, she fell seriously ill' and died at the age of seventy. Thompson, *Into All Lands*. p.625.

<sup>55</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. X1254. 'Sent out to serve' by V.M. Hayes. pp.12-14.

<sup>56</sup> Biswas, *Not Mere Memories*. p.242.

Sind Mission, for example, tell of the mental illness and death of Violet Fitze, a fifty-year-old educational missionary at Srinagar. Following her return from furlough in December 1920, Miss Fitze was reported as suffering from ‘quiet delusional insanity,’ refusing food and believing herself ‘possessed of an evil spirit.’ She died soon after. Her breakdown seems to have been triggered by bitter disappointment at the collapse of her schools during her absence, as well as at the dismissal of a servant ‘in whom she put great faith, but who, in the opinion of others, had gained very great control over her.’ ‘Her mental depression took the form of the idea that she had committed the unpardonable sin and that she was suffering the torments of hell,’ wrote her colleague, Reverend Bomford. ‘...God was not blessing her work – as she expected and He was not using her – therefore she was not fit for the work and not fit for life etc etc.’<sup>57</sup> For evangelical missionaries in particular, the desire for a personal relationship with the Divine could have negative effects. In moments of doubt and failure, it was all too easy to question: ‘Am I really saved?’

Indeed, spiritual sustenance was often scarce. In her testimony to SPG’s Committee on Conditions of Service in 1921, for example, Mary Western complained that missionaries who put prayer first were ‘almost certain’ to face comments from their overworked colleagues like “‘well of course, I had to do your work as you were praying.’”<sup>58</sup> Quiet Days, Retreats, and even regular services and ministrations of the sacraments were sometimes in short supply. The number of ordained male missionaries, particularly of the CMS, decreased significantly in the interwar period. There were 101 CMS clergymen in India in 1925 and only 65 by 1940. Although the number of Indian clergy increased from 266 to 317 over the same period, numbers were insufficient to care adequately for remote outstations. In 1930, for example, Alice Steward, a CMS missionary

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<sup>57</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Overseas. G2 I4/O Punjab and Sindh. 1921.

<sup>58</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. Advisory Group Papers re Conditions of Service.

at Jeyi in the U.P., devoted her entire Annual Letter to emphasising ‘the absolute crying Need’ for a resident clergyman: ‘A Need which has become a real burden on one’s soul and spiritual life...’ As one (Indian) priest was in charge of the whole Meerut district, Holy Communion services occurred only once a month or once every six weeks.<sup>59</sup> The answers to SPG’s 1933 questionnaire on women’s ministry expressed similar concern. While female ordination to the priesthood was deemed unnecessary, some missionaries suggested that in special instances bishops should grant licenses to deaconesses to conduct particular duties like administering the reserved sacrament, ‘churching women and preaching in the absence of a priest,’ and carrying out ‘baptisms in the cases of emergency or the prolonged absence of a priest.’<sup>60</sup>

Women missionaries of CMS and SPG made various attempts to overcome spiritual and physical loneliness. The papers of Canon William Elphick, an SPG missionary at Bishop’s College in Bangalore, reveal the existence in the late 1940s of a small group established by women to provide ‘a source of fellowship and stability to people who for one reason or another, feel isolated and lonely and only too often are misfits and suffering accordingly.’<sup>61</sup> ‘The Company of the Way’ had been initiated twenty years previously by Deaconess Carol Graham, based upon a similar group to which she had belonged in England. Its membership was deliberately limited to twelve women on scattered mission stations. Members observed a Rule of Prayer and pledged themselves to constant remembrance of one another, sharing letters in a round robin and meeting whenever possible.<sup>62</sup> They filled in reports of their progress and sent them to the Director

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<sup>59</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Alice Steward. 1930.

<sup>60</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW313: Replies to Questionnaire on the Ministry of Women. Deaconess J.J. Lewis, Deaconess Ethel Shepherd, Deaconess Maud Favell, Anonymous from Ranchi etc.

<sup>61</sup> UTC, Bangalore. VPC William Elphick. E6. Letters from SPG bishops, co-workers, and friends with carbon copies of replies Deaconess Carol Graham. March 10<sup>th</sup> 1947.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. Enclosed copy of Ideal and Rule. A. Dorothea Teale. 13<sup>th</sup> February 1947.

of the Company – the Bishop of Madras.<sup>63</sup> As Deaconess Graham suggested, the Company gave women a sense of belonging and friendship, allowing those of isolated stations to reap some of the benefits of Community life. They were not forgotten but part of a spiritual family, who prayed and cared about them, sharing in the joys and sorrows of their work. Of course, missionaries were supposed to feel such fellowship as members of the Society itself – the SPG ‘family.’ Yet, as we shall see, the Society at home often seemed large, distant, and uncomprehending. The Company of the Way was a far more intimate fellowship, whose members knew and understood each other’s perspectives and way of life.

Evangelical CMS missionaries sought spiritual nourishment in other ways. In the 1930s, for example, several sought inspiration from ‘Oxford Group’ meetings and house-parties. The Oxford Group, or Moral Rearmament (MRA) as it was later known, was a controversial global movement, founded by an American Lutheran pastor, Frank Buchman. It focused upon the individual’s relationship with God: the need for complete surrender, an acceptance of personal sinfulness, and a constant willingness to change.<sup>64</sup> In spite of this focus, Group meetings and house-parties also provided opportunities for social and spiritual fellowship. Dr Beryl Burt, a CMS missionary at Bannu, was particularly influenced by the Group’s ideas of refreshment and renewal. She and her colleague, Anna Steenstrup, attended (the first ever) Oxford Group house-party in Lahore in December 1936, returning ‘with a new vision for Bannu.’ They formed a Nurse’s Fellowship as a result.<sup>65</sup> During her subsequent furlough, she worked further with the Group and spent twelve days at Interlaken with its World Assembly. She relished the opportunities ‘of

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid. Elizabeth Zwinger. 5<sup>th</sup> March 1947.

<sup>64</sup> See for example: Moral Re-armament Organisation, *The Oxford Group and its work of moral re-armament*. (London, 1954).

<sup>65</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1935-1939. Beryl Burt. 1937.

receiving team training, and of having complete fellowship with many other people.’<sup>66</sup> In 1940, Dr Burt and Sister Steenstrup attended a MRA Camp in Nasim Bagh, returning again ‘stimulated to make fresh efforts in Bannu over winning others, and creating complete unity and friendship amongst our Christian staff.’<sup>67</sup> Yet, the Group also inspired Dr Burt towards (potentially dangerous) self-analysis and criticism of her previous missionary experience. At the end of her Annual Letter for 1938, she told CMS: ‘I wish to apologise to the Society for the time I have wasted during my first 4 years, over allowing personal relationships and other problems to come between God, the work and me.’<sup>68</sup>

### *Difficulties in the common life*

As well as encountering multiple difficulties connected to their work, missionaries faced troubles relating to their fellow workers. In her 1934 article, ‘Corporate Life on a Mission Station,’ published in the *International Review of Missions*, the head of CMS women’s training, Florence Allshorn, attested to ‘a queer dark core of shame that undoubtedly lies rankling in our hearts when we think of our human relationships in the missions.’<sup>69</sup> Apart from those assigned to large communities like St Hilda’s in Lahore, women missionaries usually lived and worked in very small groups. Given the lack of alternative companionship, cooperation was essential. An SPG statement from 1924 on ‘the essential features for missionary preparation’ stressed that ‘training in the art of living a common life and adjusting themselves to the everyday claims of their fellow workers’ should be second only in importance to the devotional side of a candidates’ preparation.<sup>70</sup> Another paper of the same year emphasised that some missionaries were ‘such a mass of

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid. 1938 & 1939.

<sup>67</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Beryl Burt. 1940.

<sup>68</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1935-1939. Beryl Burt. 1938.

<sup>69</sup> F. Allshorn, ‘Corporate Life in the Missions,’ *International Review of Missions*. Vol.XXIII. (1934). p.498.

<sup>70</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW309. Women Candidates Department: Papers re. Training and Missionary Recruitment. 1910-1926.

uncontrolled and undirected emotions' that they had 'no chance in a tropical climate where emotions tend to come easily to the service.' There was a danger of 'hyper-emotional friendships' developing with 'corresponding jealousies.'<sup>71</sup> In the early 1940s, the CMS Women's Advisory Health Group also noted that 'difficult situations' arose from 'incompatibility of temperament' and the 'inability of colleagues to work together.'<sup>72</sup>

Women missionaries' relationships could certainly become difficult and highly emotional. In accordance with the predominately female environment in which they worked, the vast majority of disputes occurred between female colleagues, rather than between male and female missionaries. It is likely that many more disagreements took place than were reported to home authorities. There is evidence in letters and reports of a reluctance to disclose such matters, perhaps owing to shame at falling below expected standards of behaviour or fear at seeming petty. This probably explains the contradictory accounts of the transfer of Majorie Hughes from Nandyal to Ranchi in February 1920, for example. Reporting this to SPG, Katharine Peacey commented: 'Miss Hughes has found Miss Lamb's zeal and Christianity a trial.'<sup>73</sup> Yet, such tension was not mentioned in Miss Hughes' own letters or those of Miss Wilbraham, the senior missionary at Nandyal. Indeed, the latter informed Miss Saunders that Misses Hughes and Lamb were 'very happy and friendly together' and reported Miss Hughes 'very sorry to leave.'<sup>74</sup> Miss Wilbraham may have considered the clash of personalities insignificant, or perhaps her silence stemmed from a belief that SPG would disapprove of such squabbles.

Sometimes tensions were referred to indirectly. 'I do wish Miss Holcroft could come back, she is such a charming, loving woman!' moaned Lily Norton to SPG in a letter of 1925. 'Oh if you only knew what a difference it makes having nice people to live

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<sup>71</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW310. Women Candidates Department: Papers re Recruitment and Marriage. 1913-1936.

<sup>72</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/AM1 Women's Advisory Health Group.

<sup>73</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW142. Original Letters Received 1920. p.60.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. p.107.

with...'<sup>75</sup> Three years later, beginning life alone at the Sharkey School in Masulipatam, E.M. Barksworth remarked to CMS: 'In point of fact it may be better to be alone than to set up a deliberate search for a possibly uncongenial companion a deux!'<sup>76</sup> The *Delhi* quarterly of the Cambridge Mission of January 1937 includes a particularly interesting and rather curious 'Open Letter' to Hilda Gould, the retiring Head of St Stephen's Community. As well as celebrating Miss Gould's qualities and achievements, the letter – apparently from 'the Community past and present' – was extraordinarily frank about her failings, albeit in a light-hearted tone. 'Perhaps your outstanding quality is your selflessness – at once our admiration and our despair!' it told her. 'Our despair, because being so single-minded, so independent yourself of human praise or blame, you did not always realize that others were hungering for a word of encouragement or appreciation.' 'Dear Miss Gould!' it later confided. 'We may not always have seen eye to eye with you. We have been through stormy and difficult times together. But that we *have* come through, and that you have won the devotion of many and kept the affection of us all to the end argues something great in you for which we thank God.'<sup>77</sup> Miss Gould was clearly loved and respected but, perhaps inevitably as Head of the Community, she had not pleased everyone. Interestingly, from the point of view of missionary disagreements, the subsequent edition of the quarterly published a correction stating the 'Open Letter' had not been submitted to all members before publication. The Community's minutes also deprecated the association of the letter, written by one member, with the membership as a whole.<sup>78</sup> The letter-writer was right to suggest members did not always see eye to eye!

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<sup>75</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW280. Letters Received (India, Burma) 1925. p.21.

<sup>76</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. E.M. Barksworth, 1928.

<sup>77</sup> *Delhi*. Vol XV. No.1. (January 1937). pp.10-14.

<sup>78</sup> *Delhi*. Vol. XV. No.2, (April 1937). p.40. See also St Stephen's Community Archives, Delhi. Minutes 1928-1938. March 1937.

On other occasions, however, disagreements were so serious that they were explicitly expressed and missionaries turned to the Home Society for help. These took various forms. Generational tensions sometimes emerged between older and younger missionaries on a station. 'It really isn't fair to expect one young one to work with old fogies like us!' the fifty-four year old Deaconess Katharine Hall told SPG in 1926 with extraordinary perceptiveness. '[W]e older ones are only a drag in the forward work and our methods are old fashioned.'<sup>79</sup> Other ageing missionaries were more oblivious to these problems and 'made it a little difficult' for their co-workers.<sup>80</sup> Through no fault of her own in the opinion of the Mission Secretary and the Acting Secretary, Ruth Salmon of the CMS spent a 'very unhappy' first few months with Mrs Ellen Inglis at the Women's Rescue Home in Lahore. She was not a trained rescue worker and had failed to meet her older colleague's expectations. Her problems were compounded by the sterling qualities of her predecessor and Mrs Inglis' dire need of furlough.<sup>81</sup> In 1934, Florence Allshorn also highlighted the problem of older missionaries who regarded young recruits simply as 'someone to help me in the job' or, less consciously perhaps, as 'someone on whom I can lavish my mothering instinct.' Her correspondents from the field complained at being made to feel 'childish' or a 'nonentity' by older co-workers, who were so busy and tired that they ordered recruits about rather than allowing them to experiment and learn from their mistakes.<sup>82</sup>

The SPG letters give details of a particularly fascinating contretemps involving Alice Swain and Dorothea Teale of All Saints' Girls' School in Trichinopoly. Miss Swain, who was in her sixties, had served in India since 1901 and at Trichy since 1909. Miss Teale, who was in her early thirties, had been transferred to All Saints' in 1923, after being

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<sup>79</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW282. Letters Received (India, Burma) 1926. p.27.

<sup>80</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Overseas. G2 I4/O Punjab and Sindh. 1920-1921.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Allshorn, 'The Corporate Life,' *International Review of Missions*. pp.500-501.

unhappy in her original positing as a probationer of St Hilda's Society. It was only following Alice Swain's departure for furlough in January 1926 that problems in the two missionaries' relationship were revealed. Her replacement, Sylvia Dale, informed SPG that she had found Dorothea extremely unhappy, 'repressed,' 'unnatural,' and in need of 'more scope – not so much in matters of work as of daily life.'<sup>83</sup> After arriving home for her own furlough in November, Dorothea refused to return to Trichinopoly unless she was allowed more freedom. She emphasised to Miss Saunders that even an apparently 'petty incident' at SPG House, when her shortened hairstyle had been remarked upon by Miss Swain, was evidence of her colleague's controlling nature: 'It may have sounded playful to you, but before she left India she was much against my having it cut...'<sup>84</sup>

Interestingly, Alice Swain appears to have been unaware of her colleague's distress. 'She does not, even yet, I feel sure, understand that there is any reason why you should not return as far as your relationship with her goes...' Miss Saunders reported to Dorothea after a meeting with Miss Swain at headquarters. 'I had to be quite brutal and tell her that the office here must know when she intended to retire...'<sup>85</sup> Indeed, a letter from Miss Swain implies she believed the Society itself was preventing her colleague's return.<sup>86</sup> It is easy to see how Alice Swain could have been, quite inadvertently, difficult to work with and have developed a tendency to treat her colleagues as 'young children.'<sup>87</sup> She was much older than Miss Teale and had been used to working on her own. She had also been at her post for a long time, describing it as 'a work so dear to me and so much part of myself for nearly 20 years, that life will seem empty without it.'<sup>88</sup> It was only natural that she should develop her own methods of organising the work and wish to enforce these on a

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<sup>83</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW282. Letters Received (India, Burma) 1926. p.75.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. p.80.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. p.9.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. p.8.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

new and inexperienced colleague. As Sylvia Dale noted, these methods were efficient, albeit old-fashioned, and may have irked a young missionary with new ideas.<sup>89</sup> Although the young and uncertain Dorothea Teale was probably especially susceptible to Miss Swain's controlling nature, she was not the only missionary who had problems. Her predecessor, Margaret Cramphorn, also young but far more self-confident, had intended to put her difficulties before a Committee of the Society before her premature death from malaria in 1921.<sup>90</sup> Another missionary, Mary Western, who had spent a week observing the work at Trichy, commented that Miss Swain was naturally 'energetic and able,' but 'cannot give liberty to others.'<sup>91</sup> Miss Swain also appears to have been a stickler for missionary discipline and self-sacrifice. She replied to Miss Dale's allegations that the bungalow at Trichy was inadequately furnished with the tart comment that these probably reflected 'the different views which she and I have – as to what a missionary may expect.'<sup>92</sup> Such austerity cannot have made her easy to live with.

SPG's actions in this case are also interesting. For a start, it is clear that the Home Society was extremely supportive of Miss Teale, in spite of the Bishop of Madras' disapproval at her refusal to return to Trichinopoly. Miss Saunders even joked it was 'rather hard lines' that because SPG had cut his diocesan grant two years previously, the Bishop 'should not try to see whether there is some good sense in any of our suggestions!'<sup>93</sup> The Foreign Secretary's support is particularly notable given Miss Teale's chequered career with SPG – she had, after all, been transferred already owing to unhappiness in her work. Perhaps her initial perseverance at Trichinopoly helped her cause. The negative opinions of Miss Swain from other sources would also have shown she was not unnecessarily troublemaking. Furthermore, the tone of Miss Saunders' letters

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<sup>89</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW282. Letters Received (India, Burma) 1926. p.75.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> SPG, Rhodes House, CWW142. Original Letters Received 1921. p.42.

<sup>92</sup> SPG, Rhodes House, CWW275/1-2. Original Letters Received (Lucknow, Madras). 1927-29. p.8.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. p.9.

implies she had great personal liking for Dorothea. As we shall see in other cases, winning the sympathy of the Foreign Secretary was vital. Ultimately, however, SPG did little more than press Alice Swain to finalise plans for her retirement. She had already suggested that once her furlough was over, she would only serve for a short period.<sup>94</sup> In June 1927, it was decided that Fanny Schubert would become head of work in Trichinopoly the following July, Miss Teale would take her place at St Ebba's High School in Madras, and Miss Swain would then retire. Dorothea finally agreed to return to work with her until this date.<sup>95</sup> If Alice Swain had not been so near retirement, her colleague's situation might have been far more complicated. It would have been difficult (and undesirable) for SPG to remove her from Trichinopoly without this excuse and it may have proven too much hassle to transfer Miss Teale once again.

A major dispute between the missionaries of St Ebba's Girls' School in Madras further illustrates the complex factors at play in a missionary disagreement. In February 1921, Jacqueline Tupper-Carey and Fanny Schubert wrote to SPG resigning from their posts at the school. They explained they had learnt with 'very great distress' from their colleague, Miss B.M.W. Beatty, that she had come to St Ebba's in September 1920 'with the request of C.W.W. to teach that the sacrament of absolution is no sacrament of which we had no cognisance whatever.' As they supposed SPG was taking such a line with the consent of the Bishop of Madras, and as they fervently believed in the sacrament's importance, they felt they had no alternative.<sup>96</sup> A strong opponent of Anglican elitism in the Indian mission field,<sup>97</sup> Bishop Henry Whitehead did support Miss Beatty's stance,

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<sup>94</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW280. Letters Received (India, Burma), 1926. p.71.

<sup>95</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW 275/1-2. Original Letters Received (Lucknow, Madras). 1927-29. p.9.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Henry Whitehead, Bishop of Madras.

emphasising that as St Ebba's was a diocesan school, its teaching should not be Anglo-Catholic but simply follow the lines of the Prayer Book.<sup>98</sup>

For a start, the dispute at St Ebba's highlights the vulnerability of missionaries in the field, particularly new recruits. Miss Tupper-Carey and Miss Schubert had clearly become extremely attached to Miss Beatty's predecessor, Katharine Peacey, depending upon her for practical and emotional support.<sup>99</sup> Regardless of her religious views, therefore, it is unsurprising that her new colleagues faced difficulties. The young missionaries' emotional distress was probably augmented by their fear of upsetting SPG. Miss Tupper-Carey was driven to near breakdown and ordered to return to England.<sup>100</sup> In shock, Miss Schubert offered to withdraw her resignation.<sup>101</sup> There are striking parallels between her experience and Florence Allshorn's description of problems in CMS corporate life. Miss Allshorn argued that a missionary's appreciation of the 'vital need' of working in harmony in the field inevitably produced a 'miserable sense of guilt' and a 'crushing weight of defeat in herself' if this was not achieved. Not only did this lead to 'bitterness,' but also to 'taming down to 'getting on with the job''<sup>102</sup> Fanny Schubert was certainly distraught and wracked with guilt at her actions. 'It's very sad, and I feel I've let you down and been so useless,' she told Miss Saunders. The vocabulary of her letter of 29<sup>th</sup> December 1921 is particularly significant. She admitted her 'pride and self-will' had taken a 'crushing,' and declared her preparedness to soldier on at St Ebba's. She recognised the difficult realities of the mission field: 'I think we should not expect to be happy in the same sense as when we were going. There does come an increased sense of loneliness, not

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<sup>98</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW142. Original Letters Received. 1921. p.41.

<sup>99</sup> See Ibid. 1920. pp.104 & 106.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. 1921. p.41.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. p.46.

<sup>102</sup> Allshorn, 'The Corporate Life,' *International Review of Missions*. p.499.

that it connotes either homesickness or unhappiness – it’s a sort of dimly spiritual thing...<sup>103</sup>

The fact that the dispute revolved around Sacramental Confession also highlights the awkward theological position of SPG missionaries in India, especially in the South. As subsequent chapters will demonstrate, Western denominational differences meant little and the majority of Indians did not share the high-Church tradition of the Society. Missionaries of this tradition inevitably faced problems of conscience. Miss Schubert and Miss Tupper-Carey were not the first to question the religious teaching offered at St Ebba’s. Sylvia Dale (Katharine Peacey’s predecessor as Principal) had quarrelled frequently with the Bishop on this matter, sending him five letters on the subject!<sup>104</sup> Her insistence on Sacramental Confession had apparently discouraged parents from sending their children to the school.<sup>105</sup> In March 1922, Mary Western assessed the dilemma as part of her survey of SPG work. While St Ebba’s was more popular and acceptable to parents due to Miss Beatty’s Protestant outlook,<sup>106</sup> if the Society was true to its Anglo-Catholic principles, she would have to be dismissed.<sup>107</sup>

The debate regarding Miss Beatty also draws attention to a wider conflict (and potential flaw) in the organisational structure of SPG. As already noted, missionaries of the Society were subject to the authority of bishops in the field. This could prove problematic as the ideals of the latter were not necessarily concomitant with those of the former. In a letter to Miss Saunders of March 1923, for example, Bishop Whitehead concluded: ‘the moral [of the St Ebba’s dispute] appears to be that there must be only one person directing the internal affairs of an institution and according to the Society’s principle, that should be

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<sup>103</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW146. Original Letters Received. 1922. p.32.

<sup>104</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW142. Original Letters Received. 1920. p.97.

<sup>105</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW146. Original Letters Received. 1922. p.35.

<sup>106</sup> As the Diocesan Secretary, Reverend Kenneth McPherson noted Miss Beatty’s Churchmanship had been acquired in Protestant Ireland and was probably more in line with CMS. USPG Rhodes House, CWW146. Original Letters Received. 1922. p.31.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. p.35.

the authority of the local Church.’<sup>108</sup> He subtly reminded Miss Saunders that SPG was supposed to be the handmaiden of the diocese. If it could not sacrifice extreme denominational principles for the sake of the work, it was of little use. The Society did not entirely submit to the Bishop’s wishes, however. In November 1922, Miss Beatty was sent a resolution informing her that the term of service for which she had offered was terminating and a new worker would be appointed in her place.<sup>109</sup>

Miss Beatty’s response to such action also illuminates the complicated nature of missionary communications. According to the Bishop, she felt ‘ill used by the Society,’ and considered the home authorities to have dealt with her in an ‘exceedingly strange way.’ She believed she had agreed to no fixed term of service upon offering to go to St Ebba’s (and indeed her letters from 1920 show this to have been the case).<sup>110</sup> Miss Beatty was convinced that ‘private pressure must have been put upon [her successor] Miss Walford to ask for this post and for this post alone,’ and alleged that home authorities often acted upon ‘unofficial information.’<sup>111</sup> This grievance had also been aired in April 1922 when Miss Beatty had received a letter from SPG containing the ‘extraordinary misapprehension’ that she had appointed a nonconformist Indian lady as Principal or Vice-Principal of St Ebba’s. Although she was ‘loth to believe it,’ she implied that facts had been ‘purposely misrepresented’ by one of the Society’s possible informants, who had been ‘in full possession’ of the truth ‘from the outset.’<sup>112</sup> Miss Beatty’s contention that an ‘unofficial’ personage was working against her is extremely interesting. While the existence of any deliberate campaign against her is hard to prove, gossip in mission circles

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<sup>108</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW146. Original Letters Received. 1923. p.96.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW142. Original Letters Received. 1920. p.95.

<sup>111</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW146. Original Letters Received. 1923. p.96.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. 1922. p.29. It is impossible to prove to whom she was referring, although there are clues that the source might have been Katharine Peacey. Recently installed at St Ebba’s in January 1921, Miss Beatty noted a letter from Miss Saunders had contained ‘vague accusations’ from Miss Peacey that she was ignoring reforms already made at the school. Miss Tupper-Carey’s letter of 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1921 also suggests Miss Peacey was not favourably disposed towards her successor. ‘Miss B is most impossible, you have only to ask K. Peacey...’ USPG, Rhodes House. CWW142. Original Letters Received. 1921. pp.40-41.

was rife and potentially-damaging. Before arriving in India, she had been the victim of a mistaken rumour concerning her mental health.<sup>113</sup> Her strident Protestantism and strong personality would have certainly provoked comment. When asking for a fourth worker for Nandyal in May 1924, for example, Emily Wardle urged Miss Saunders: ‘Please don’t send Miss Beatty.’ It is unclear whether she actually knew the latter or had simply heard of her difficult character.<sup>114</sup> Gossip easily percolated into official circles. Given the long delays in communication between England and the field, it was only natural that the Home Society should have attempted to glean any available information about the situation overseas, even from unofficial (and possibly unreliable) sources. Miss Beatty may have been right to suspect some mistreatment, however. While the misunderstanding over the length of her original contract could be evidence of SPG’s lack of organisation, the CWW letters suggest that the Society may have been aware no definite period of service had been agreed, but conveniently overlooked this in order to remove her from her post. She was replaced by Zoe Walford in October 1923.

Women missionaries’ relationship difficulties did not always stem from disagreements, however. Sometimes friendships formed in the field could be painful and problematic. Missionaries were often greatly upset at being transferred away from a beloved colleague. In 1920, for example, Sibylla Wilbraham admitted the news of Katharine Peacey’s transfer from Nandyal to Madras ‘came as a dreadful blow to us both.’<sup>115</sup> As the CMS Women’s Advisory Health Group noted in the early 1940s, ‘acute mental strain’ could also be suffered by newcomers to a mission due to the ‘exclusive

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<sup>113</sup> There had been discussion of her mental suitability for the post of Principal of St Ebba’s as she had been confused with another ‘Miss Beattie’ who had left India due to nervous breakdown. See the letters of Sylvia Dale, Katharine Peacey, and Beatrice Creighton. USPG, Rhodes House, CWW142. Original Letters Received. 1920. p.92, 102, 108.

<sup>114</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW146. Original Letters Received. 1924. p.48.

<sup>115</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW142. Original Letters Received. 1920. p.107.

friendship' of two women already on the station.<sup>116</sup> Sir Henry Holland described this more fully in his letter to the Committee. 'From my personal experience of about 41 years,' he wrote, 'on looking back I can trace the breakdown of many a woman missionary's health to the fact that in that mission in which she has been working, there have been two fellow workers who have such a passion one for the other that the third individual feels absolutely left out. These two feed together, have their secrets together, take their off duty times together, take their leave together and in some cases arrange and take their furlough together. The unfortunate third person becomes more and more depressed and is extremely likely to break down...' Sir Henry declared he could give 'several concrete instances' of this, two of which had occurred in the Punjab in the previous two or three years.<sup>117</sup>

One friendship described in the SPG letters penetrated far beyond the internal politics of the mission, however, touching the upper echelons of the Raj itself. It was not between two missionaries, but between Dorothy Carty, a probationer of St Hilda's Society, and the wife of the Governor-Designate of the Punjab, Lady Alexandra Hailey. At the end of her two years' probation in February 1923, Dorothy informed the Head Deaconess, Katherine Beynon, that she did not wish to join the Society. She was forbidden from continuing work at St Denys' School in Murree until December, as she wished, after refusing to continue wearing the grey uniform of St Hilda's.<sup>118</sup> While her own letters give few other details of her departure, the letters of Deaconess Katherine and Deaconess Ella Thomson reveal circumstances were far more complicated than a dispute over regulations.

In March 1923, Deaconess Katherine informed SPG that Dorothy had 'accepted the post of private Secretary to Lady Hailey, wife of the Governor Designate of the Punjab,' Sir Malcolm Hailey. Her 'overwhelming friendship' with this august personage had begun through Girl Guide work at Simla, which Alexandra Hailey had carried on after the sudden

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<sup>116</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/AM1 Women's Advisory Health Group.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW146. Original Letters Received. 1924. p.17.

death of her teenage daughter, Gemma, from a burst appendix in October 1922. ‘I am quite sure that Miss Carty entered into it with the best of motives, thinking she could be a comfort to the parents in their terrible loss,’ Deaconess Katherine wrote. ‘I sincerely hope that it may work out rightly, but it is a perpetual strain and it will take time for her to recover.’<sup>119</sup> Deaconess Ella was more critical, explaining Dorothy had been transferred from Simla to Murree due to the ‘unsettling effect’ of this ‘most unwholesome’ friendship. Despite this, she had arranged to spend almost her entire winter holiday with Lady Hailey in Delhi, only coming to Lahore for the Society’s Retreat. ‘She gave herself to this work only two or three years ago and now she suddenly gives it all up and takes up secular work with a family who are not even of her own church and there is no excuse from a financial point of view in her case,’ the mystified Deaconess told SPG. ‘Above all, there is no excuse for leaving her mother who is devoted to her, in this anxiety. It looks as if she is too ashamed of herself to explain what she is going to do.’<sup>120</sup>

The two Deaconesses’ concern about Dorothy’s relationship with Lady Hailey is hardly surprising. For centuries, male and female religious orders had disapproved of ‘exclusive’ and ‘particular friendships’ between their members, believing they harmed devotion and corporate life.<sup>121</sup> How much worse, therefore, if this friendship was with an outsider! Deaconess Ella informed Miss Saunders: ‘I cannot tell you all I know of the unwholesomeness of the influence which is at work on Miss Carty in a letter, but can give you a few more details in a personal interview.’<sup>122</sup> Her use of the word ‘unwholesome’ is especially interesting. Lady Hailey was certainly a controversial personality. In his biography of her husband, John W. Cell describes her as beautiful, athletic and musically

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid. p.19.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. p.21.

<sup>121</sup> This can be inferred in the Rule of St Benedict. See: Michael Hill, *The Religious Order. A study of virtuoso religion and its legitimation in the nineteenth-century Church of England*. (London, 1973). p.45.

<sup>122</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW146. Original Letters Received. 1924. p.21.

talented, but also eccentric and emotionally scarred.<sup>123</sup> Her unconventional exploits provoked much gossip. As Margaret MacMillan recounts in *Women of the Raj*, she took her pet bear for rickshaw rides and picked canna lilies using a revolver!<sup>124</sup> Struggling to cope after her daughter's death, she also suffered from acute and sometimes suicidal depression and alcoholism. Her behaviour was commonly believed to have prevented her husband's appointment as Viceroy. There were plenty of reasons, therefore, for Deaconess Ella to consider her friendship with Dorothy Carty 'unwholesome.' Naturally, she would lament that Dorothy had been swayed from her missionary calling by the bright lights of imperial society. If Alexandra Hailey was a misfit in the Raj, she was an even stranger figure to the missionaries of St Hilda's. She was also foreign (the daughter of an Italian count) and Roman Catholic, a fact indirectly noted by the Deaconess who was perhaps concerned at the potential threat to Dorothy's religious beliefs.

Interestingly, it seems that missionary societies were confronting issues in the 1920s which were only publicly debated in Britain following the publication and subsequent prohibition of Radclyffe Hall's 'lesbian novel,' *The Well of Loneliness* in 1928. As Katherine Holden has shown, the resultant controversy stimulated the publication of a range of other novels and manuals examining the relationships of 'surplus,' unmarried women in British society.<sup>125</sup> It is unlikely that Deaconess Ella's use of the word 'unwholesome' held sexual connotations. The relationship between Lady Hailey and Dorothy Carty appears to have been somewhat akin to mother and daughter. The grief-stricken Lady Hailey, who was in her fifties, probably depended emotionally upon thirty-year-old Dorothy in a manner which the Deaconess considered unhealthy, perhaps regarding her as a surrogate daughter. Such 'obsessive friendships' in which there was

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<sup>123</sup> John W. Cell, *Hailey. A Study in British Imperialism, 1872-1969*. (Cambridge, 1992). pp.94-95.

<sup>124</sup> MacMillan, *Women of the Raj*. p.201.

<sup>125</sup> Holden, *The Shadow of Marriage*. pp.100-101. The character of the 'surplus woman' even permeated contemporary detective literature! See Miss Agatha Milsom in Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Documents in the Case*. (London, 2003). [First published, 1930].

considerable disparity in ages between the women were also much discussed.<sup>126</sup> In her 1929 work, *The Bachelor Woman and Her Problems*, Dame Mary Scharlieb (a notable supporter of missions) described them as ‘a somewhat unexpected consequence of the want of natural and desirable outlets for love and all the motherly virtues.’ She believed they could be successful if the older woman received the younger’s love with ‘wisdom and unselfishness’ without ‘losing her balance’ and submitting to ‘the foam and fury of passion.’<sup>127</sup> Other doctors and psychologists, like Laura Hutton<sup>128</sup> and Mary Chadwick, considered such relationships more harmful, even products of ‘repressed and perverted sexual desire on the part of the older woman.’<sup>129</sup> Although SPG and CMS did not identify sexual reasons behind ‘exclusive friendships’ in the mission field, they also regarded them as physically and emotionally debilitating. By the 1940s, however, contemporary psychological vocabulary regarding ‘sex starvation’ had percolated into mission discussions. The CMS Women’s Health Advisory Group maintained that through allowing their homes to be places ‘where young people of both sexes could meet naturally,’ missionaries’ wives could ‘minimize the inhibitions due to sex starvation’ felt by their single women colleagues.<sup>130</sup> The Society acknowledged a life of celibate solitude was psychologically and physically demanding.

#### *Difficulties with the missionary society*

Another factor in missionaries’ problems in the field was, of course, the missionary society itself. Although missionaries were supposed to be part of the ‘family’ of their Society, their Annual Letters and reports are peppered with indications that they often felt abandoned, ignored, and misunderstood by CMS and SPG. In 1917, five women

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<sup>126</sup> See Marguerite Steen, *The Wise and Foolish Virgins*. (London, 1932).

<sup>127</sup> Dame Mary Scharlieb, *The Bachelor Woman and Her Problems*. (London, 1929). pp.49-53.

<sup>128</sup> Dr Laura Hutton, *The Single Woman and Her Emotional Problems*. (London, 1935).

<sup>129</sup> Holden, *The Shadow of Marriage*. p.101.

<sup>130</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/AM1 Women’s Advisory Health Group.

missionaries of SPG: Frances Cockin (Lucknow), Eliza Knott (Chota Nagpur), Katherine Peacey (Madras), Ethelwyn Walters (Tinnevely) and Mary Williams (Chota Nagpur) had written to the Society advocating the creation of Diocesan Missionary Fellowships to ‘prevent the isolation, loneliness, and consequent deadening and depression of scattered missionaries...’ Interestingly, the women placed part of the blame for such problems upon SPG itself. They highlighted serious defects in its organisational structure, arguing that it ‘lacks knowledge of the needs and conditions abroad, and power to enforce rules’ and that ‘the Bishop is unable to give sufficient supervision.’ In one of the missionaries’ stations, the Bishop had visited only four times in six years and the Diocesan Secretary only twice in five years, neither had inspected the women’s work.<sup>131</sup> The different organisational structure of CMS does not seem to have prevented a similar feeling of isolation and neglect.<sup>132</sup> In the aftermath of World War Two, for example, CMS headquarters complained about the declining numbers of missionaries who were sending their required Annual Letter from the Field. In response, Deaconess Beatrice Weston conceded it was unfair to expect CMS ‘to supply the ammunition without the news.’ Yet, she added a complaint of her own: ‘Sending of annual letters always seems rather like throwing a bottle into the ocean, one never heard anything more about them!! Perhaps mine have not been interesting enough. But is it too much to ask for a wee note of reply...’<sup>133</sup>

Women missionaries continually lamented that their work was hampered by lack of finances and staff. In December 1920, for example, Alice Stemson complained to SPG about the impossibility of carrying out medical work in Ahmednagar without a doctor. ‘But surely the medical Committee could supply us with one...’ she demanded, ‘if only some of you people at home could come out and go round the difficult villages you would

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<sup>131</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW312: Advisory Group Papers re Conditions of Service.

<sup>132</sup> Gordon Hewitt notes differences of outlook between the field and Salisbury Square. Hewitt, *The Problems of Success. Vol.I. p.408. Vol.II. pp.90-91.*

<sup>133</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Deaconess Beatrice Weston, 1946.

be horrified [sic] at the condition these people live under when ill and the methods they use...<sup>134</sup> This was a common refrain. Women missionaries subtly implied their Society's home employees could not fully understand the urgency of sending more money and workers, if they had not seen the realities of the mission field.

Shortage of finance and recruits was an increasing problem in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. The First World War had had a devastating effect on missionary funds, necessitating concerted attempts at retrenchment. Post-war inflation, steeply-rising prices and heavy losses on sterling exchange rates led to a CMS budget deficit of £145,000 in 1920.<sup>135</sup> Both societies also suffered in the Great Depression. SPG reduced overseas grants by £10,000 in 1931 and made further severe cuts in 1933.<sup>136</sup> It was not until 1941 that CMS was able to record no deficit in the previous year's expenditure.<sup>137</sup> As Gordon Hewitt notes, owing to the outcry caused by closing mission stations, cuts tended to be applied in 'the area most directly under headquarters control': recruitment.<sup>138</sup> CMS' Quota System, introduced in 1926, meant one third of losses in the field were not rectified. Complaints were increasingly made in missionary letters and reports. Arriving back at Multan in 1934, for example, Dr Noel Fletcher was reminded of Canon Force-Jones' quip that the CMS medical magazine, *Mercy and Truth*, may have contained mercy but not always truth. Although 'in print, our staff stood at high water mark,' Sister Weeks was actually conducting nursing lectures alone since Dr Hart and Sister Simmonds had been transferred and another sister was preoccupied with language study.<sup>139</sup> Frustrations increased by the 1940s. In 1949, Kathleen Weatherhead, a CMS nurse at Peshawar, attached a postcard of a haloed girl scrubbing a floor to her Annual Letter with the caption: 'Can't get a soul to

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<sup>134</sup>USPG, Rhodes House. CWW142. Original Letters Received. 1920. p.57.

<sup>135</sup> Hewitt, *The Problems of Success. Vol.I.* p.432.

<sup>136</sup> H.P. Thompson, *Into All Lands.* p.493.

<sup>137</sup> Hewitt, *The Problems of Success. Vol.I.* p.432.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid. Vol.II.* pp.90-91.

<sup>139</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL. G2. 1916-1934. Beatrice Noel Fletcher, 1934.

help me – so – I’m helping my jolly ole self!’ [Figure 2.2]. Underneath this, she wrote: ‘BUT THERE SOON WON’T EVEN BE A SELF TO HELP!?? – LET ALONE TRAIN OTHERS TO HELP.’ Sister Weatherhead stressed CMS’ ‘complacent’ lack of policy – ‘just making shift with personel [sic] as though they were wooden pawns in a game’ – would no longer work as ‘the pawns aren’t there to shift.’ She drew a table of the thirteen nurses who had been serving on the North West Frontier when she had arrived in 1940. Only two remained. Five had retired, three had died, two had resigned, and one had been invalided home. Of the six sisters in current service, one (who was on furlough) was loaned by CEZMS, two were due for furlough the following spring, and one was resigning to get married. Sister Weatherhead wondered whether ‘the situation is so critical here that if we don’t reinforce the Church SOON with leaders it will be too late – Demonic Powers will be in control...’ She finished with more capitals: ‘WILL IT SOON BE TOO LATE?’<sup>140</sup>

Missionaries sometimes felt mistreated owing to the organisational failings of their societies. Given the great need for recruits, it could be extremely frustrating when their sailing was postponed or retracted. In February 1926, for example, Ella Thomson, now Head Deaconess of St Hilda’s, informed Miss Saunders that Kathleen Tanqueray had offered to SPG with a view to working in Lahore.<sup>141</sup> She was officially appointed in June and had booked her passage to India for September.<sup>142</sup> In July, however, the Deaconess was incensed at the withdrawal of the appointment by SPG. ‘[A]ll our plans are made on the expectation of having her with us...’ she complained. ‘It seems so unnecessary for us to have had this disappointment and difficulty thrust upon us. We already have a good many unavoidable ones.’<sup>143</sup> Her sister, Lettice, also wrote to SPG, commenting ‘it does look as if

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<sup>140</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Kathleen Weatherhead, 1949.

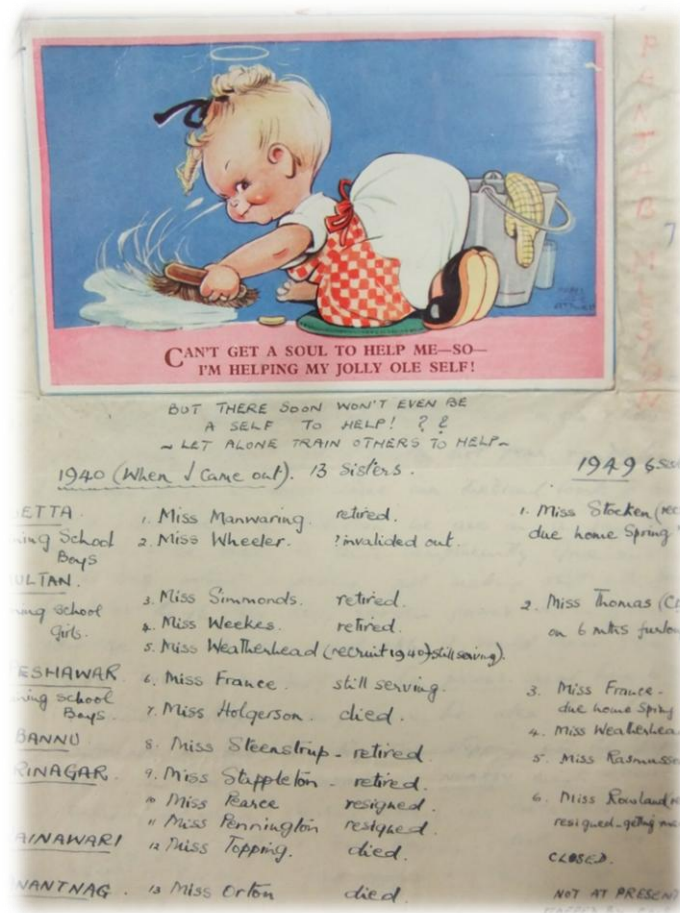
<sup>141</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW282. Letters Received (India, Burma). 1926. p.99.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. p.107.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. p.99.

the Society was ready to play fast and loose with St Hilda's.' She stressed the feeling that she lacked support from the Home Society 'weigh[ed] most heavily' upon her sister.<sup>144</sup> Deaconess Ella was further aggrieved the following year when another missionary's sailing was delayed and Miss Saunders questioned her use of the fund for financing passages. 'It is upsetting to have to meet unfounded criticism from a distance since so long an interval must elapse before the reply to them can be received,' she wrote, 'and such a want of understanding from Headquarters only increases the already great difficulties of our work out here.'<sup>145</sup>

**Figure 2.2.**  
**Annual Letter of Kathleen Weatherhead bemoaning shortages of workers, 1949.**<sup>146</sup>  
**[Copyright: CMS]**



<sup>144</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW282. Letters Received (India, Burma). 1926. p.108.

<sup>145</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW277/1-3. Original Letters Received (Chota Nagpur, Lahore.) 1927-29. p.11.

<sup>146</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Kathleen Weatherhead, 1949.

Tensions also existed between a missionary's vocation, professional training, and the practical realities of working for a mission society. As shown in Chapter One, women missionaries were usually highly-qualified women. Yet, the exigencies of the field often meant they were sent to postings unsuited to their professional skills. This was natural for teachers as the demands of the Indian educational system – high levels of illiteracy, teaching in multiple languages, and the embryonic nature of girls' schools – were radically different from those of the English system. Although missionaries had been trained to expect these difficulties, they sometimes proved unendurable.

In February 1928, Tirzah Barnes, headmistress of the Epiphany School in Cawnpore, complained to SPG that she was 'a round key in a square hole here.' Miss Barnes was a trained high school teacher with a degree from Trinity College, Dublin. As the Epiphany was an elementary school, her original appointment had been limited to two years, after which the Society hoped to find her a more suitable post. Now, well into her third year, this had not materialised and she was increasingly frustrated that her educational skills were 'rusting.' Miss Barnes explained that since joining SPG, she had been offered the Secretaryship of the YMCA, jobs at Indian Guide Headquarters and on the staff at one of the big women's colleges, and the position of headmistress at one of the most prominent girls' schools in North India, all of which she had refused.<sup>147</sup> In August, she asked whether SPG could lend her for three years to the United Provinces Educational Department to work as a Guide Trainer. She was willing to remain in Cawnpore, if an elementary-trained co-worker could be provided, but demanded assurances from SPG of her 'permanence as a missionary,' as it would impede her employability elsewhere and she did not want to become 'a burden' on family and friends in the future.<sup>148</sup> Ultimately, Miss Barnes' missionary vocation trumped her desire for professional fulfilment. SPG would

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<sup>147</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW275/1-2. Letters Received (Lucknow, Madras). 1927-29. p.2.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

not permit her to remain on its lists if she accepted a position beyond its control. Although no qualified co-worker was sent, she chose to stay at the Epiphany School, proving her assertion that she was ‘ready really to give up everything to go on being’ a missionary.<sup>149</sup>

Other missionaries were frustrated at being placed in posts for which they were *under-qualified*. In 1928, for example, Olive Carpenter used the same phrase as Tirzah Barnes – ‘square peg in a round hole’ – to describe her own situation. She had been asked to be Acting Principal of the CMS Normal School in Benares during her colleague’s furlough: ‘[T]he policy is that, the shortage of workers being desperate, when no suitable person is available for a post an unsuitable one must take it,’ she wrote. ‘There is no choice in the matter either for the Committee or for the individual concerned.’<sup>150</sup> She began acquainting herself with the work with ‘very bad grace... for I could not live in any sort of peace of mind... At no time could I ever feel assured that it was God’s will and accept it wholeheartedly.’ To her great relief, shortly before she was due to assume duties, the United Provinces Mission secured the services of an amply-qualified missionary of the Western India Mission.<sup>151</sup>

Interestingly, SPG’s distinctive administrative structure may also have led to misplacement of workers. As the five missionaries who complained to the Society about living conditions in 1917 pointed out, neglect of women’s work by bishops and Diocesan Secretaries meant ‘serious mistakes’ were made. New recruits were posted to areas unsuited to their qualifications and experience and prematurely overburdened with responsibility. Katherine Peacey herself had been sent to start a higher elementary school at Nandyal, although she had only high school experience. In her first year, as well as studying Telugu, she had to make timetables and syllabuses, and in her second year, she

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. E. Olive Carpenter, 1928.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. 1929.

assumed entire charge of the school.<sup>152</sup> The SPG letters also show that bishops' organisation of workers could be frustratingly haphazard. In 1920, for example, there appears to have been much confusion in the Madras diocese over the placement of women missionaries. Sylvia Dale informed SPG that everything in the diocese was at 'sixes and sevens' with everyone in the wrong place. Marjorie Hughes, a highly-trained graduate, had been sent, not to St Ebba's High School in Madras as expected, but to the lower-elementary Holy Cross School in Nandyal. Katherine Peacey, now so experienced in this work, had been transferred from Nandyal to be Principal of St Ebba's, a post for which she considered herself utterly unqualified. She consequently confined her teaching to the junior classes, meaning Emily Cutcliffe, a kindergarten mistress, was teaching the seniors!<sup>153</sup> Marjorie Hughes was extremely discontented in her position, emphasising to Miss Saunders: 'Of course the work [in Nandyal] is very different from what I came out for.'<sup>154</sup> At Miss Dale's urging, she was transferred to a post more suited to her talents at Ranchi. The lack of communication between the mission field and the Home Society is also shown. In multiple mails, SPG in London made no comment upon the rearrangement of workers in the diocese. Miss Peacey and her colleagues were 'getting anxious at this prolonged silence and wonder what we have done to deserve it.' 'Are you never going to write again? Are you vexed because I came here?' she demanded desperately. Again, missionaries in the field felt abandoned and ignored.<sup>155</sup>

### *The problem of vocation*

In some cases, the realities of working under a society came into conflict with missionaries' sense of personal calling. Two particularly fascinating cases relate to St

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<sup>152</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW312: Advisory Group Papers re Conditions of Service.

<sup>153</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW142. Original Letters Received. 1920. p.97.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. p.100.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

Stephen's Community in Delhi. In December 1923, Marguerite Bengough left the Community, apparently feeling she could 'do more useful work and get in closer touch with some of the Indians by living in a house of her own, and by planning her own time and work.'<sup>156</sup> Miss Bengough's attempt to break from the Society's ties was a resounding failure. To her shock, the India Sub-Committee of SPG objected to her continuing to serve in Delhi, if she was not a member of St Stephen's.<sup>157</sup> She was urged by the Head of the Cambridge Mission, Canon Western, to use her furlough in England to decide whether she wished to return to the Community or work elsewhere.<sup>158</sup> In December 1925, she reoffered, and by October 1926, she was back in the Community's fold.<sup>159</sup>

Significantly, in her letters to Miss Saunders, one member of St Stephen's had expressed support for Miss Bengough's plans. Nora Karn believed her colleague had been led 'rightly' to sever her connection with the Community since 'she realised the extreme importance of getting into closer and less formal relationship with Indians.' She urged SPG not to stand in the way of these proposals.<sup>160</sup> In 1927, when Miss Bengough was safely reinstated in Delhi, Nora began her own protest. Miss Karn asked the Committee of St Stephen's to allow her to start work on 'special lines' in Delhi.<sup>161</sup> Precisely what this entailed is unclear. Miss Karn appeared to have a 'vision' and 'various ideas' for future missionary work, but she was unsure of the precise nature of her 'call.'<sup>162</sup> She was advised by Canon Western and the Community to resign her membership and embark upon a period of testing her vocation in England. In July 1928, Miss Karn requested that the Cambridge Mission to Delhi assemble a small committee before which she might place

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<sup>156</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW146. Original Letters Received. 1923. p.94. Words of Hilda Gould and Canon Western.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. 1924. p.16.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid. p.24.

<sup>159</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW280. Letters Received. (India, Burma). 1925. p.50.

<sup>160</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW146. Original Letters Received. 1924. p.25.

<sup>161</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW277/1-3. Original Letters Received (Chota Nagpur, Lahore). 1927-29. p.8.

<sup>162</sup> Archives of St Stephen's Community, Delhi. Minutes 1928-38. Meeting 29<sup>th</sup> October 1928.

certain proposals. To her frustration, this was refused. 'I am very tempted sometimes to fling up everything, to be a writer, to make money, or to go back on my own to live in India among my beloved people,' she wrote angrily to Miss Saunders. 'Committees of big societies are the most baffling things there are, I think! I offer my whole life to Delhi, and all I get is a snub!' <sup>163</sup> The following month, she too reoffered to St Stephen's.

Miss Karn's letter of 30<sup>th</sup> August is particularly interesting as it highlighted defects within the administrative structures of SPG and of St Stephen's Community. 'We missionaries have no redress if anything goes wrong,' she argued. 'Why can there not be a Committee, or a few people appointed to whom we would have the right to turn to in any difficulty. I assure you that I am not the only person who thinks this. I have known people leave our Mission before now because of inner happenings which loyalty prevented them from speaking of. What is the result? You lose good people. God loses good workers.' She believed that St Stephen's was also lacking in spiritual promptness. New ideas were never followed up. The Mission was 'always "going to."' <sup>164</sup>

On 29<sup>th</sup> October, in its half-yearly meeting, the Community of St Stephen discussed the following question, submitted by Miss Karn: "If arrangements can be made by which those of its members who feel called to a life of prayer, in the sense of poverty, celibacy and obedience, whilst continuing members of St Stephen's Community and subject to its general rule, could live together." Although members agreed upon the need for the Community to develop its prayer life, they emphasised the 'lay' nature of St Stephen's as well as the undesirability and unfeasibility of differentiating a group within the Community by special privileges or vows. They also discussed, and rejected, her offer to return to Delhi. Canon Western maintained that Miss Karn 'had great difficulty in distinguishing between God's will for her and her own will...' In stating that she would

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<sup>163</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW277/1-3. Original Letters Received. (Chota Nagpur, Lahore). 1927-29. p.8.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

return as a loyal member of St Stephen's, even if nothing happened with regards to her proposals for its development as a religious body, she had fundamentally misunderstood the concept of vocation. It would be 'illogical and unspiritual' for her to subordinate her true calling to a more religious life in order to continue working in Delhi.<sup>165</sup>

In December 1928, on Miss Saunders' advice, Nora Karn re-offered to SPG for work elsewhere in India. She refused to admit to 'confusion of mind' with regards to her calling, arguing '[i]t is surely not the first time in the history of missions that a missionary vocation has held good in the face of the apparent contradiction of a "vocation to prayer," or "religion."' <sup>166</sup> She also expressed discontent at her treatment by the Society, questioning whether it was not 'inconsistent' that at the same time as calling for workers, pleading for prayer, and stressing the opportunities of the mission field, SPG was failing in 'practical understanding' at moments of crisis in the lives of its missionaries. These frustrations came to a head in February 1929, when there was a severe delay in the decision of the Lucknow authorities with regards to Miss Karn's possible posting to Moradabad. In a letter to Miss Saunders, she deplored the possibility of remaining inactive in England for another summer and mentioned that she had spoken to her vicar about her problems. She did not anticipate the incensed reply she would receive from the Society's Secretary, Stacy Waddy. Angered by her 'most outspoken disagreement' with the actions of SPG, he accused her of damaging the Society's reputation by complaining to her vicar and to the Secretary of the Foreign Missionary Associations of the Anglo-Catholic Congress. 'I must now say to you plainly that, if S.P.G. is to expect this attitude from you, you thereby render it impossible for any connection between you and S.P.G. to continue,' he cautioned. He emphasised great efforts were being undertaken by the Society to find Miss Karn a suitable position, warning her that if she expected to find 'constant

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW277/1-3. Original Letters Received (Chota Nagpur, Lahore). 1927-29. p.8.

difficulties, lack of sympathy, lack of promptness, and conduct' of which she did not approve from the Society, she should leave its lists.<sup>167</sup>

Interestingly, although she announced her preparedness to 'still the criticism in [her] heart,' Nora Karn's reply was not entirely penitent. She maintained her right to feel aggrieved, telling Mr Waddy in order to 'get a right perspective,' he should 'look right beyond the Society to the Mission Field.' He would then see how, 'with the utmost loyalty to yourselves as GOD's stewards, the delays caused by machinery will fret and chafe.' She also contended that SPG was 'too old and honourable' an organisation to fear adverse comments, implying the Secretary was overreacting.<sup>168</sup> Finally, the Society took special measures to enable Miss Karn to return to India to work under the Bishop of Nasik.<sup>169</sup> Her acceptance of this post came at a cost. She was warned by Stacy Waddy that he could not guarantee the Society would take on any new work. For the moment at least, her 'vision' would have to be forsaken.<sup>170</sup>

The Karn affair is interesting in a number of ways. For a start, it shows the difference between the stereotype of the pioneering missionary adventurer and the realities of life in the mission field. Missionaries were constrained by the regulations of their societies. Neither Miss Bengough nor Miss Karn succeeded in their 'vision.' Instead, both re-entered into agreements with the Society whose norms they had tried to transcend. This may have been purely for practical reasons – financial support was needed for themselves and their work. The Society also provided companionship, security, and recourse (however

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> The Society agreed to find an additional salary for Miss Karn to work in Nasik for a period of five years to discern her true vocation. If the Bishop decided to keep her, she could become an ordinary SPG woman worker. If he decided against her, or her vocation took her elsewhere, the Society would not be responsible for finding her another post, although it would pay her passage and a proportionate amount of her furlough allowance.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

inefficient) in times of crisis. However frustrating they found its regulations, neither missionary was prepared to sacrifice membership of SPG to pursue her vision. Perhaps both believed they had little chance of success without the Society's help? Unlike Miss Bengough, however, Miss Karn did break away from the Community of St Stephen. She seems to have found greater freedom and fulfilment as an evangelist in rural Nasik. Yet, her criticism of the insensitivity of large missionary societies did not cease. Significantly, it was she who wrote the obituary of Marguerite Bengough in 1962 in the *Delhi* mission quarterly. Although she praised Miss Bengough's 'gentle and wise acceptance of the "Community" way' on her return to Delhi, she commented characteristically: 'do let me add a word for church bodies and societies, which overlord us, or did anyhow, once. Patience is not always a virtue. It has been said to be "one of the greatest murderers of men's souls."'”<sup>171</sup>

The Karn affair also provides a further example of the problems of letter-writing as the principal medium of communication between the Home Society and the mission field, and of the absence of concrete bodies within mission organisations to which female missionaries could air their grievances. The delayed response from Moradabad caused much upset, highlighting the difficult position of Miss Saunders as SPG Foreign Secretary. She apologised to Miss Karn, after the latter's letter had been 'swooped' away from her by Stacy Waddy, precipitating his stern rejoinder. Her sense of guilt draws attention to an important issue. Although Miss Saunders was used as a 'sounding-board' by many women missionaries, she was, after all, an official of SPG. Letters to her were not private. She trod a fine line between being missionaries' friend and confidante, and being an agent of their employer, responsible for the unenviable task of keeping discipline. Miss Karn obviously learnt from her mistake, labelling subsequent letters 'private' when she wanted them on

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<sup>171</sup> *Delhi*. Vol XXV. No.6. (September 1962). pp.3-4.

‘no account to be shown to Mr Stacy Waddy’<sup>172</sup> In fact, in a letter of January 1929, Miss Saunders had reminded Tirzah Barnes of the importance of making this distinction. She stressed it was ‘not considered right’ that members of SPG Staff should receive private letters from missionaries ‘unless they deal with entirely personal matters.’<sup>173</sup> Missionaries writing to Miss Saunders were in a difficult position, therefore. She was, as Miss Karn noted, often the only person whom they could turn to in times of difficulty. If they wanted to have any hope of their grievances being remedied, they had to tell her of them in her official capacity. Yet, if they complained too much, there was always the danger that higher powers, like Stacy Waddy, would hear and take umbrage, questioning their loyalty.

Finally, Miss Karn’s experiences draw further attention to the problem of vocation. Nora Karn clearly felt ‘called’ to be a missionary, but she also felt inclined towards a lifestyle more akin to that of religious houses. She did not feel the missionary vocation and a vocation to prayer were necessarily contradictory. For some missionaries, particularly those of the high-Church SPG, however, the ‘call’ to the Religious Life as part of an Anglican sisterhood would lead them away from the field. A ‘call’ towards ordination as a Deaconess was less problematic, as it did not necessarily entail leaving missionary service. Deaconesses were ordained and commissioned by the bishop of a diocese by the laying on of hands. They served as missionaries in the SPG-affiliated communities of St Faith’s in Madras and St Hilda’s in Lahore, and as individual SPG and CMS missionaries in the Indian dioceses. Several lay missionaries went to England for training and ordination, before returning to the field.<sup>174</sup>

Anglican sisters were different. A summary of women candidates trained by SPG between 1923 and 1928 noted that twenty had withdrawn during training: seven to test

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<sup>172</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW277/1-3. Original Letters Received. (Chota Nagpur, Lahore). 1927-29. p.8.

<sup>173</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW275/1-2. Original Letters Received. (Madras, Lucknow.) 1927-29. p.2.

<sup>174</sup> For example: Deaconess Margaret Durell of St Hilda’s, Deaconess Maud Favell of St Stephen’s Community, Deaconess Ethel Walker of Lucknow Diocese.

their vocation to the Religious Life.<sup>175</sup> Annual reports and letters also include numerous examples of women leaving missionary service for this reason. This problem was confronted by the SPG Committee on Conditions of Service. ‘Often the only idea that occurs to any who hears a call to GOD’s service is to offer for missionary work,’ Mother Clementina, the Superior of the Home of the Epiphany in Truro told the Committee in May 1919. The Head of another training home, Sister Emily Isabel of the Wantage sisters, concurred. Many candidates simply did not realise their vocation was actually to the Religious Life.<sup>176</sup>

The vocation to the Religious Life and the vocation to missionary service were not the same. Indeed, as noted in Chapter One, one of the reasons for SPG’s decision to build its own training home was that the quiet, regimented lives of convents and deaconess homes did not prepare candidates for the hustle, bustle, loneliness, and spiritual privations of the mission field. Although, like missionaries, sisters cared for the sick and worked amongst the poor and orphaned, theirs was also a contemplative life, focused upon prayer and the sacraments. Unlike the majority of missionaries, they lived in communities, following a Rule of Life. In religious houses, there were several communal services a day and hours of silence. In contrast to missionaries, they also committed to lifelong service, making vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Sisters would be subject to the firm discipline and authority of the Mother and Sisters Superior.<sup>177</sup>

The draft report of the Committee on Conditions of Service discussed the ‘great problem’ of whether those ‘having a vocation to Religious Life and only having realised it when they are training as missionaries ought to be urged to fulfil their obligations.’ Such women often carried out their work in a ‘half-hearted and unsatisfactory way’ until they

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<sup>175</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW310: Women Candidates Department: Papers re Recruitment and Marriage. 1913-1936.

<sup>176</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW312: Advisory Group Papers re Conditions of Service.

<sup>177</sup> See Susan Mumm, *Stolen Daughters, Virgin Mothers. Anglican Sisterhoods in Victorian Britain*. (London, 1999).

had fulfilled their true calling.<sup>178</sup> Margaret Seeley is an example of this. She was appointed by SPG to the Lucknow diocese in 1921. Two years later, while working at the Epiphany School in Cawnpore, she suffered a nervous breakdown. She was transferred to Moradabad, where she worked for fifteen months, before returning to England as ‘her nerves could no longer stand the strain of the Indian climate.’<sup>179</sup> Interestingly, in her letters to Miss Saunders announcing her intention to test her vocation to the Religious Life, Miss Seeley directly linked her health with the fulfilment of her true calling. ‘If I did...[return to India]’ she contended, ‘I should probably break down because I should feel that I was trying to work where I was not meant to and had rejected a Call to work elsewhere...’<sup>180</sup> Her justification for breaking her contract with the Society tallied with SPG’s own belief that a worker who had misunderstood her vocation was bound to be ineffective.

Yet, in some instances, a calling to the Religious Life was subordinated to a sense of duty to the Society and to the practical needs of the work. In 1920, for example, Katherine Peacey was transferred from Nandyal to become Principal of St Ebba’s, Madras. Writing to Miss Saunders, she remarked: ‘Truro seems to have been put back a year or two again...’<sup>181</sup> Her desire to explore her calling to the Religious Life at the Community of the Epiphany had evidently been long felt but she had postponed it due to absorption in missionary work. Later in the year, she asked Miss Saunders to inform the Mother Superior that she was still needed in India. She wanted the explanation to come from SPG, so the Mother did not think she was needlessly postponing her admission.<sup>182</sup> Katherine Peacey’s experience demonstrates the complicated nature of vocation. It was difficult for a missionary to distinguish between God’s call and the will of the Society, between inner and outer pressures. Were the immediate needs of the work and the wishes of SPG always

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<sup>178</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW312: Advisory Group Papers re Conditions of Service.

<sup>179</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW280. Letters Received (India, Burma). 1925. p.78.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid. p.66.

<sup>181</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW142. Original Letters Received. 1920. p.102.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

concomitant with those of the Divine? Did inner desires stem from restlessness, selfishness, or from God's command?

The 'call' to the Religious Life was not the only 'call' which led missionaries away from the field. As we have seen, a missionary calling involved sacrifices, not only for the missionary herself but also for her family at home. As noted in Chapter One, some missionaries faced considerable opposition from their families when offering to the mission field. It is important to place their experiences within the historical context. As Katherine Holden's work on singleness demonstrates, the notion of 'family responsibility' was potent in Victorian, Edwardian, and interwar Britain. Obligations imposed upon families by the Poor Law to provide financial support to dependent members proved enduring. An inconsistency existed (and was deliberately left unresolved) between the legal definition of the family and the practice of poor relief bodies. Unmarried sons and daughters in employment could be compelled to support not only their parents, but brothers, sisters, grandparents, nieces, and nephews. Outside the legal, economic sphere, the ideal of the 'dutiful daughter' was ingrained in respectable, middle class society. It was assumed that in the event of illness, disability, or even widowhood, unmarried daughters would care for parents and other elderly relatives. They were, in Holden's words, 'family standbys.' This manifested itself in contemporary literature.<sup>183</sup> Mary Jocelyn, the spinster heroine of F.M. Mayor's much-admired novel, *The Rector's Daughter*, (published in 1924), was portrayed as living a dull, but perfectly ordinary and acceptable life, caring for her mentally-retarded sister and supporting her ageing father in his parish duties.<sup>184</sup>

The importance of 'family responsibility' was strongly felt by women missionaries and missionary societies. 'Before mentioning to her parents the desire of offering for

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<sup>183</sup> See Katherine Holden, 'Family, caring and unpaid work' in Ina Zwiniger-Bargielowska (ed.), *Women in Twentieth-Century Britain*. (London, 2001). p.137; Holden, *The Shadow of Marriage*. pp.53-75.

<sup>184</sup> F.M. Mayor, *The Rector's Daughter*. (London, 1980).

foreign work, she made it the special subject of prayer for a week,' noted one of Irene Birkinshaw's interview reports. 'Without their willing consent she would not have thought it right to go further.'<sup>185</sup> Indeed, throughout this period, the white CMS application form asked explicitly: 'Is any relative dependent upon you for support, wholly or in part, or likely to become so?' Candidates were also questioned as to whether their parents were still living. The SPG application form asked whether they were free from 'home obligations.' The importance of this latter was reiterated in recruitment documents. The absence of 'family responsibilities' was also used by missionaries to justify their decision to become a missionary.<sup>186</sup>

For some missionaries, however, the 'call' to home service sounded when they were already in the field. In July 1921, for example, Edith Hayne wrote to SPG to resign from her work with St Hilda's Society in Lahore. Her sister had become engaged 'and that means that I must now stay at home and help my Father and Mother in her place.'<sup>187</sup> Miss Hayne's eldest sister, Winifred, also an SPG missionary, had died of enteric the previous November. She also had a brother and another sister in Canada. As the only unmarried sibling, however, Edith was the natural 'family standby,' called upon to sacrifice her career for her parents' needs. Aged parents were not the only reasons for resignation, however. In her Annual Letter of 1943, for example, Dorothy Orton of the CMS Hospital in Anantnag explained that as two of her sisters and a brother-in-law had died since her arrival in Kashmir in 1938, she felt she must return home after the war to be with her remaining (widowed) sister, Mrs Vaughan.<sup>188</sup>

Often, missionaries on furlough decided not to re-offer to service due to familial duties. Although, in this case, they were not breaking any contract with the Society, the

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<sup>185</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/ATw2: Candidates papers: white and blue packets. M. Irene Birkinshaw.

<sup>186</sup> See Ibid. Agnes Lees.

<sup>187</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW142. Original Letters Received. 1921. p.5.

<sup>188</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Dorothy Orton, 1943. In fact, Miss Orton herself died in 1944 before she could return from the field.

decision was still a difficult one. It is likely that the pressures and emotions of immediate family contact strongly influenced their decisions. Feelings of guilt and duty were mixed. In June 1920, for example, Lilian Henderson, an evangelist with St Stephen's Community, was called home as her mother was seriously ill.<sup>189</sup> Although she was able to return to India the following year, she accepted that following her next term of service, she might have to return to England permanently to care for her mother.<sup>190</sup> In the event, however, her mother and uncle decided to employ a paid companion to help them in the house, freeing her for further missionary service.<sup>191</sup> The language of Miss Henderson's letters to Miss Saunders is particularly interesting. When announcing her intentions to return to India in 1921 and 1928, she emphasised the 'difficulty and uncertainty and darkness' she had experienced in determining whether it was 'the will of God' that she should leave her family again. This language is directly linked to SPG's declaration of purpose, in which candidates promised to devote themselves entirely to work in the mission field 'if it be God's Will.' It is significant that on both occasions, it was not Miss Henderson, but her family, who made the final decision that she return to missionary service. She wrote in 1921: 'now that my dear ones have come to this decision to offer me afresh in faith, it is not for me to hold back.' Again, in 1928, she told Miss Saunders that her mother and uncle would like to offer her. The easy way in which Miss Henderson, a woman in her forties, speaks of being 'offered' by her relations is extremely revealing with regards to the obligations upon single women in Britain in the interwar period. Despite being an educated, middle-aged woman, who enjoyed considerable authority and independence as an evangelist in India, she does not appear to have found it strange or undesirable that her loved ones should exercise so much control over her future. She accepted it as natural that as an unmarried daughter, her primary duty was to her family. Miss Henderson admitted in

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<sup>189</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW142. Original Letters Received. 1920. p.77.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid. 1921. p.23.

<sup>191</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW277/1-3. Original Letters Received. (Chota Nagpur, Lahore) 1927-1929. p.6.

1928 that it was hard to make her mother and uncle ‘make this sacrifice’ but it ‘does not feel right not to go if they are willing to make it.’ Perhaps the unusual phrasing of this statement hints at her inner conflict – it would be difficult to leave home, but it would also be difficult to stay.<sup>192</sup>

Women’s vocation to missionary life and commitment to their societies could also be challenged by a ‘call’ to marriage [Figure 2.3.]. A particular row blew up surrounding the engagement of Maud Tidmarsh and the Reverend Philip Young. Miss Tidmarsh had been appointed to St Stephen’s Community in 1924 for work in the English-speaking parish of St James’, Delhi, of which Mr Young, a member of the Cambridge Brotherhood, was vicar. In February 1927, the two became engaged.<sup>193</sup> It was usual practice for SPG to transfer one member of an engaged couple elsewhere in India until marriage, but, as the Bishop did not wish to disrupt the work in Delhi, it was decided that the engagement would be short and the couple would marry on 27<sup>th</sup> April.<sup>194</sup> It is clear from Maud Tidmarsh’s letter to Miss Saunders, announcing her engagement, that she considered marriage would only deepen her connection to India and her effectiveness as a missionary – it was an extension of her original vocation. She did not feel she was breaking her contract with SPG as she intended to continue work at St James’ after her wedding. She told Miss Saunders, ‘I have always felt it that in many ways a married woman is the person for a parochial job like this.’<sup>195</sup> Hilda Gould, the Head of St Stephen’s, also believed that through marriage Miss Tidmarsh would realise her true vocation. ‘Miss Tidmarsh is one of

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid. p.14.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid. p.4.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid. p.14.

the people who must marry to be happy,' she told Miss Saunders, 'I realised that long ago...' <sup>196</sup>

Yet, no such enthusiasm was expressed at SPG headquarters. Miss Saunders was irritated by Miss Tidmarsh's 'airy remark' that she was not acting contrary to her agreement with the Society. <sup>197</sup> In contrast to CMS, when a female missionary of the SPG married, she was usually removed from its lists. Although she might continue in her work as the wife of a male SPG missionary, she no longer personally received a salary from the Society and could only be an 'associate' worker. Miss Tidmarsh had broken her original contract to serve for five years in the field. Indeed, as she had served for less than three, she was obliged to refund the Society a proportion of the sum expended on her outfit, passage, and training. <sup>198</sup> Miss Saunders expressed dismay that male missionaries did not seem to appreciate that their female colleagues had accepted 'special obligations' to the Society before sailing to the field. <sup>199</sup>

The newly-weds did not react well to Miss Saunders' 'rather unpleasant' letter reminding Miss Tidmarsh of these obligations. <sup>200</sup> A heated exchange of letters occurred with Mr Young and the Society 'getting somewhat at cross purposes.' <sup>201</sup> While the former acknowledged SPG's 'technical justification' for a refund of £68.2.6., he resented paying this fee as his wife was continuing to do the work in St James' parish for which she had been sent out. She would therefore (albeit after marriage) be completing the minimum of

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid. p.4.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

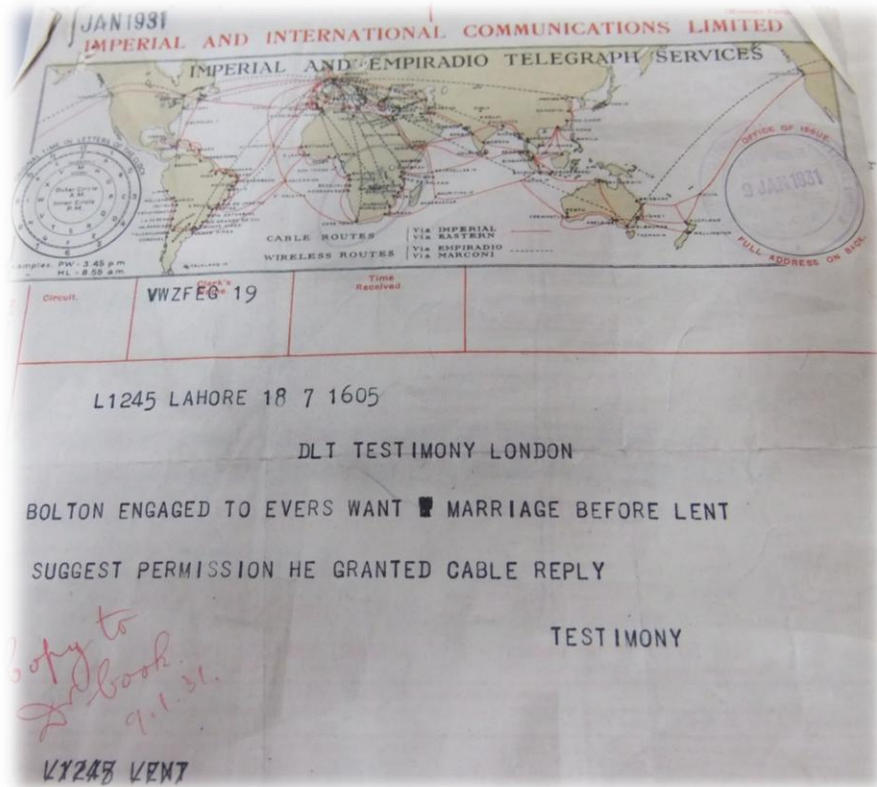
<sup>198</sup> Ibid. p.14.

<sup>199</sup> This certainly seems to have been the case. In his autobiography, the Rev. G.W. Lovejoy, who married Marjorie Kellaway, a member of St Stephen's Community in 1944, humorously records how deciding himself in need of a wife, he turned up on the doorstep of St Stephen's Home: 'where was I likely to find a better partner in my ministry than among the members of the St Stephen's Community?' Although recognising the men of the Cambridge Mission could not marry, he certainly does not seem to have considered the possibility that its women had a vocation and enduring commitment to remain single. G.W. Lovejoy, *The Call in the Cellar. The Memoirs of Reverend G W Lovejoy. 'A Nobody Used by God.'* (Sussex, 1996).

<sup>200</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW277/1-3. Original Letters Received. (Chota Nagpur, Lahore) 1927-1929. p.4.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid. p.12.

**Figure 2.3.**  
**Cable sent to Salisbury Square reporting the engagement of Dr Effie Bolton of the CMS Hospital in Bannu to Reverend Mervyn Evers, the Chaplain of Peshawar, 1931.<sup>202</sup> [Copyright: CMS]**



service required by her contract. The Secretary of SPG, Stacy Waddy, however, insisted on ‘the general principle that marriage entirely alters the status of the worker.’ While the content of Miss Tidmarsh’s work might be the same, SPG was still losing a worker since she had broken her obligations to work for the Society as a *single woman* missionary. Yet, he assured Mr Young that SPG’s desire was to ‘emphasise the principle [of its regulations] far more than to recover the money.’ If this was accepted, the amount for repayment could be substantially reduced.<sup>203</sup>

In refusing to accept even this, Mr Young displayed impatience with the concept of the Society itself. ‘My wife, like I suppose every other missionary, never accepted training by the S.P.G. with the limited idea of being a salaried worker of the Society, but as a

<sup>202</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Overseas. G2 I4/O Punjab and Sindh. 1931.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid. p.13.

preparation for the specialised work in the Church of Christ abroad,' he told the Secretary. In insisting that his wife was carrying out the same work at St James', he had failed to distinguish between work done for the *Society* and work for the *Diocese*. As he was becoming a diocesan worker after marriage, his wife would no longer be connected, even through him, to SPG. Mr Young believed, however, (and rightly so in the opinion of the Head of the Cambridge Brotherhood, Canon Western) that as long as she was still working for the Church, SPG should not be concerned since the Society was supposed to be the 'handmaid' of the diocese.<sup>204</sup> The fact that negotiations about Miss Tidmarsh's contract were conducted between the Society and her husband is also interesting. Miss Tidmarsh had made her agreement with the Society as an independent woman and it was she who had broken it. Yet, she had surrendered this independence by marrying. Mr Young had assumed her burden of responsibility and clearly saw it as an act of chivalry, informing the Secretary: 'when the Society accuses my wife of wrong doing (which I do not admit) and then suggests that I ask the accuser the favour of a reduction of the penalty, it is asking something which is very difficult for a gentleman to do.' Perhaps he believed his wife's case was likely to get more consideration by the Society if he took up her cause?

Like Miss Tidmarsh, the majority of women missionaries of SPG and CMS who married wed fellow missionaries in the field. This is unsurprising given their common ideas and the limited social circles in which missionaries moved. Most women also continued to work in the field after marriage, implying that they saw their marriages as a chance to deepen their vocation of service rather than a departure from it. They may have been less likely to accept an offer of marriage had it led them away from their sphere of work.

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<sup>204</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW277/1-3. Original Letters Received. (Chota Nagpur, Lahore) 1927-1929. p.12.

Miss Tidmarsh's case also draws attention to the different status of wives in SPG and CMS. CMS had historically encouraged the marriage of its male missionaries. This was not universally so in SPG – the Cambridge Brotherhood, for example, committed to celibacy. Despite this, *resignation* of single women missionaries upon marriage was certainly not expected or encouraged by CMS. In her Annual Letter of 1926, for example, Irene Birkinshaw of the CMS Normal School in Benares revealed herself to be extremely unimpressed by the resultant staff shortages: 'since Major Dullimore robbed us of Miss Law...'<sup>205</sup> CMS lists of missionaries and mission statistics also included wives. They were treated as full missionaries and wrote their own Annual Letters. In some cases, lists also made reference to a wife's previous career as a single woman missionary.<sup>206</sup> Although this contrast with SPG has been remarked upon by historians, it should not be overdrawn. Some women missionaries who remained in the field as wives and continued to work were included on SPG's lists. Sibylla Baker-Wilbraham, for example, Principal of Holy Cross School in Nandyal, married the Reverend Percy Emmet, an SPG missionary at Kurnool, in December 1920. In the SPG yearly report, Mrs Emmet appears as an honorary missionary in the list of women workers in the Madras diocese.<sup>207</sup> The same is true for Louisa Todd, a missionary at Hubli, who married the Superintendent of the Criminal Tribes Settlement, Reverend A.L. Bradbury, in 1922. Mrs Bradbury continued to work as the Manager of the Settlement Schools and was listed as an honorary missionary on SPG's lists.<sup>208</sup>

In conclusion, the realities of life in the mission field strongly tested women missionaries' sense of vocation. It required great physical endurance, deep faith, and grim determination to remain convinced of, and committed to, their original 'calling' to preach

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<sup>205</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. M.I. Birkinshaw, 1926.

<sup>206</sup> See CMS, Birmingham. Overseas G2 I4/O Punjab and Sindh. 1920. 136. Report of the CMS & CEZMS in the Punjab and Sindh. 1919-20. List of missionaries.

<sup>207</sup> *Annual Report for the Year of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 1920.* p.133.

<sup>208</sup> *Annual Report for the Year, 1925.* p.258.

the Gospel overseas in the face of ill-health, loneliness, and setbacks in their work. There was also a significant difference between the popular image of a pioneering missionary, energetically converting the heathen, and the realities of life under a missionary society with its financial and staffing limitations, rules and regulations. Some women simply could not stand the strain. Others felt they were actually called elsewhere. Life overseas also did not exempt women from obligations at home. As Chapter One demonstrates, missionaries were constantly warned in their training about the difficulties of the field, although it is unlikely that these could be fully imagined until personally experienced. I would argue that it was probably impossible for CMS and SPG to have trained missionaries adequately for the realities of the mission field. This is because experiencing difficulties as a missionary was fundamentally different from experiencing difficulties in an ordinary job. Personal happiness and self-advancement were not a missionary's goal. Instead, she had to live up to strict spiritual ideals and was ultimately answerable to God. Every decision had to be scrutinised to determine God's Will. This led to dilemmas as individual desires, the needs of the work, the demands of the missionary society, and God's Will often seemed to lead in opposite directions. A sense of failing in God's service also led to great unhappiness, spiritual desolation, and psychological trauma. Most missionary careers were a story of struggle, of darkness and light. Dorothea Teale's experience is typical. The 'horrible dream' of her first two years in the field,<sup>209</sup> her quarrels with Miss Swain, and the subsequent traumas of missionary life were all forgotten (or at least pushed to the back of her memory) when reflecting on her long career. Starting her retirement in England at the age of fifty-five, she told the SPG Secretary: 'I had a happy time in my work abroad...'<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW282. Letters Received (India, Burma). 1925. p.78.

<sup>210</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/2 F2. South India Church Union. Correspondence with missionaries, 1947-48. Letter from Dorothea Teale to Secretary. October 15<sup>th</sup> 1947.

## Chapter Three: Women missionaries at work

As well as struggling with challenging living conditions in the field, women missionaries in India had to respond to the shifting aims and character of their educational, evangelistic, and medical work. The primary aim of the Christian missionary enterprise had always been to convert. This was obvious from a mere glance at the facades of CMS and SPG headquarters in London. While the former's was emblazoned with Christ's exhortation, 'Go ye into the whole world...' (Matthew 16:15), the ornamental seal above SPG's entrance depicted a ship carrying missionaries towards a foreign land whose 'natives' were reaching out for the Gospel. Its motto, 'Transiens adjuva nos,' came from the Acts of the Apostles, in which a vision of a man from Macedonia urged Paul to 'come across...and help us.'<sup>1</sup> Yet, women's missionary work was not solely about preaching the Gospel to the 'heathen' masses. Missionaries were also concerned to teach and develop the faith of those who were already Christian. The strategies they employed to achieve such aims were subject to constant reassessment.

Between 1917 and 1950, the work of SPG and CMS was transformed by the intensification of a global mission strategy of 'Indianisation.' 'Indianisation' was not a novel concept. As C. Peter Williams demonstrates in his study of Victorian missionary strategy, from an early stage in its history CMS had been particularly concerned with nurturing an independent 'native' Church in India with an indigenous episcopate, separate from missionary control.<sup>2</sup> Henry Venn, Secretary of the Society from 1841 to 1872, articulated the 'three selfs' principle, arguing that 'native' churches should be 'self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating.' As early as 1844, he famously described

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 16:9.

<sup>2</sup> C. Peter Williams, *The ideal of the self-governing Church: a study in Victorian missionary strategy*. (London, 1990).

missionaries' ultimate aim as 'euthanasia.'<sup>3</sup> Yet, as Williams acknowledges, these early ideals of self-government were often flawed and compromised by the realities of mission policy in the field. Missionaries were, as Jeffrey Cox puts it, 'compulsive, inveterate institution builders.'<sup>4</sup> Their conviction that conversion could best be brought about through the education of India's elites in Western scientific knowledge and Christian religious truth led to the foundation of schools and colleges. Medical institutions also rose in prominence between 1850 and 1900, reflecting a growing belief that the Gospel was not only a gift for the transformation of the spirit, but also for the body.<sup>5</sup> The Western character of these institutions inevitably created a hierarchy with the Western-educated missionary at the top; so too did missionary caution regarding the appointment of an indigenous episcopate.<sup>6</sup>

A reassertion of the importance of the self-governing Church, and the implementation of a concerted missionary policy towards this end, was stimulated by nascent Indian nationalism. The need for 'Indianisation' was stridently expressed at the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910.<sup>7</sup> The Conference, especially Commission II on 'The Church in the Mission Field' recognised the difficulties that rising nationalist movements posed to missionary work, but emphasised such movements should not be condemned. Instead, their presence should lead missionaries to a greater realisation that their far reaching aim was to 'decrease,' so the 'native' Church could 'increase.' In his renowned speech of 20<sup>th</sup> June, Vedanayagam Samuel Azariah (who was appointed the first indigenous Indian bishop in 1912) claimed '[t]he problem of race relations is one of the most serious problems confronting the Church today.'<sup>8</sup> 'The missionary is the paymaster, the worker his servant,' he stressed. 'As long as this relationship exists, we must admit that

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. pp.3-5. See also Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Henry Venn. (1796-1873).

<sup>4</sup> Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*. p.27.

<sup>5</sup> See Oddie, *Social Protest in India*.

<sup>6</sup> Williams, *The ideal of the self-governing Church*. pp.11-51.

<sup>7</sup> W.H.T. Gairdner, "Edinburgh 1910." *An Account and Interpretation of the World Missionary Conference*. (Edinburgh, 1910); Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference. Edinburgh 1910*. (Cambridge, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference*. p.124.

no sense of self-respect and individualism can grow in the Indian Church.’<sup>9</sup> Azariah not only urged that definite plans be made for the devolution of responsibility, authority, and financial control from foreign missions to the Indian Church, he also pleaded for greater understanding and spiritual fellowship between races: ‘We also ask for *love*. Give us friends!’<sup>10</sup>

The missionary strategy of ‘Indianisation’ was different, therefore, from the contemporary policy of ‘Indianisation’ adopted by the Indian Civil Service and military. The intention behind the ‘Indianisation’ of missionary work was not political: to prepare Indians for the responsibility of running their own nation state. Instead, it was religious: missionaries sought to prepare them for the responsibility of running their own national Church – a Church which would further the Kingdom of Heaven through its care of the sick and neglected, and its education of the ignorant. Emergent political nationalism merely spurred missionaries to greater efforts towards this spiritual aim.

By the 1920s, CMS and SPG were making concrete efforts to promote Indians to positions of authority and responsibility in their hospitals, schools, and evangelistic work, to transfer mission work and property to Indian dioceses (such so-called ‘Diocesanisation’ will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Four), and to encourage Indian congregations towards greater self-support. The importance of such policies was constantly stressed in the Report of the CMS Delegation to India in 1922: ‘The missionary is the servant, not the master of the Church; not lords over GOD’s heritage, but examples; not masters over the faith of the disciples but helpers.’<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p.125.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. See also Susan Billington Harper, *In The Shadow of the Mahatma. Bishop V.S. Azariah and the Travails of Christianity in British India*. (Michigan, 2000). p.148. Ironically, Azariah’s hostess in Britain, Isabel Whitehead, wife of the Bishop of Madras, travelled in a higher class than him on the train and stayed at a superior hotel. His comment, ‘Too often you promise us thrones in heaven, but will not offer us chairs in your drawing room,’ significantly omitted from official conference records, expressed his bottled frustration.

<sup>11</sup> *Report of the CMS Delegation to India*. (London, 1922). p.19.

The work of women missionaries was also altered during the early twentieth century by the need to respond to so-called ‘mass movements’ of lower-caste and casteless Indians into the Church. Between the censuses of 1881 and 1931, the Christian population of India had increased from 1,862,634 to 6,296,763. While Christians remained swamped by India’s ‘heathen’ masses (they represented a mere 1.8% of the population in 1931), such growth was phenomenal in comparison with the growth of the Hindu community over the same period: 340% as opposed to 78%.<sup>12</sup> From the late 1870s, tens of thousands of people from the lower ranks of the social hierarchy had begun converting in groups. Although these ‘mass movements’ were slowing by the 1920s, between 1921 and 1931 there were still approximately 12,855 converts every month. By 1933, 80% of Indian Protestants were ‘mass movement’ converts from depressed class backgrounds.<sup>13</sup> Members of groups stigmatised by higher-caste Hindus as ‘polluted,’ they suffered from many disabilities. They were prevented from drinking at the same wells and walking the same streets as their high-caste neighbours, and carried out demeaning tasks for the latter, including leather-working, sweeping, and performing sacrificial duties at religious ceremonies. ‘Mass movements’ were an affront to nineteenth-century missionary expectations that the Christianisation of India would (and should) be an individually-based, ‘top-down’ process. Missionaries were particularly concerned to uncover the real reasons behind lower-class conversion, suspecting many were ‘rice Christians,’ motivated by hopes of material advancement rather than genuine spiritual longing.<sup>14</sup> They were

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<sup>12</sup> *Report on the Census of British India, 1881*. Vol.II. (London, 1883). pp.9-18. *Census of India, 1931*. Vol.II. (Delhi, 1933). pp.513-20.

<sup>13</sup> Harper, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*. p.184.

<sup>14</sup> Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*. p.91. For a contemporary examination of the new Christians’ motivations, see J. Waskom Pickett, *Christian Mass Movements in India. A Study with Recommendations*. (New York, 1933).

forced to constantly re-examine their methods in order to adequately shepherd their new impoverished and uneducated flock.<sup>15</sup>

It is important to analyse the realities of women missionaries' daily work in order to understand how mission strategies and priorities translated into practice. In their reports and letters, women of SPG and CMS recorded their plans, successes and failures, and the development of their relations with Indians. Women missionaries encountered Indians in several contexts. Some were their Christian co-workers in mission, whether well-educated padres or illiterate Biblewomen. Although missionaries may have superintended the work of the latter, they were, to some extent at least, their partners in imparting the Gospel. Indians were also missionaries' colleagues in hospitals and schools – as doctors, nurses, teachers, matrons, and housekeepers. The scale of Indian agency in mission work is noteworthy. Missionaries were heavily outnumbered by their Indian co-workers. Jeffrey Cox estimates that non-western staff constituted approximately 84% of the missionary overseas workforce.<sup>16</sup> In 1935, there were 46,663 Indians engaged in missionary work, including 5,030 women Church-workers and 7,154 women teachers. This did not include the 310 Indian doctors and 2,997 nurses who served in mission hospitals.<sup>17</sup> In contrast, the foreign missionary population was tiny. There were only 8,533 British Protestant missionaries in the whole world in 1938!<sup>18</sup> Women missionaries further engaged with Indians as pupils and patients, as new Christians to be visited and taught, and as non-Christians to be converted. Here Indians were clearly subordinates, recipients of the

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<sup>15</sup> There is much historiography on the 'mass movement' phenomenon. See for example: D.B. Forrester, 'The Depressed Castes and Conversion to Christianity, 1860-1960,' in G.A. Oddie (ed.), *Religions in South Asia*. (Delhi, 1991); Robert Frykenberg, *Christians and missionaries in India: cross cultural communication since 1500, with special reference to caste, conversion, and colonialism*. (Cambridge, 2003); Christopher Harding, *Religious transformation in South Asia: the meanings of conversion in colonial Punjab*. (Oxford, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise since 1700*. p.200.

<sup>17</sup> Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*. p.251.

<sup>18</sup> Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise*. p.268.

mission's care and instruction. They were of all castes, rich and poor, Hindu and Muslim, educated and uneducated, speaking a variety of languages, and adhering to a variety of customs. Again, the scale of missionary contacts was considerable. CMS statistics for 1925, for example, claimed that the Society's missionaries were responsible for a total of 333,736 'adherents' in India and Ceylon, (including communicants, baptised, and those under instruction). It had also 114,182 students and pupils in its 2,302 educational establishments, 82,613 pupils in its Sunday schools, and cared for 12,246 inpatients in its hospitals (not to mention thousands of outpatients).<sup>19</sup> Fifteen years later, the number of 'adherents' had risen to 480,043. CMS also shepherded 138,782 students and 103,058 Sunday school pupils, and cared for 17,269 inpatients.<sup>20</sup> In order to understand how women missionaries sought to cure, teach, convert and mould these Indians into a vibrant and autonomous Church, it is important to examine each part of their work in turn.

### *The mission school*

Most women missionaries of CMS and SPG worked in mission schools. The majority of the Societies' schools employed between two and four missionaries – one acting as Principal and the others as headmistresses, teachers, and boarding-house superintendents. The rest of the teachers were Indian. The fundamental aim of the mission school was to teach the Gospel to 'young India.' As Jeffrey Cox has emphasised, schools had been at the heart of missionaries' institution-building programme in the nineteenth century, particularly following Charles Wood's educational dispatch of 1854, banning Bible teaching in government schools.<sup>21</sup> At the Ootacamund Conference of 1858, South India's missionaries stressed their schools were active tools of conversion, aiming for 'the salvation of the souls of the pupils, and not merely their intellectual and moral

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<sup>19</sup> *The C.M.S. Short Report, 1924-1925*. pp.90-91.

<sup>20</sup> *The C.M.S. Short Report, 1940*. pp.68-69.

<sup>21</sup> Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*. p.32.

improvement.<sup>22</sup> Missionaries disagreed over educational methods, however, especially over the extent to which schools should promote English language and culture. By the mid-nineteenth century, most schools had adopted the ‘top-down’ strategy proposed by the Church of Scotland missionary, Alexander Duff. From 1830s, Duff had argued for ‘stratified diffusion’ of Christianity; by educating India’s elites in Western science and the Christian religion via the medium of the English language, their Hinduism would be shattered, they would convert, and their influence would penetrate down the social spectrum, encouraging the conversion of India’s lower classes.<sup>23</sup> The advent of the ‘mass movements’ and the coming of women missionaries to India in the late nineteenth century impacted upon missionary educational policy, however. Educational provision had to be broadened. Schools were no longer elite, male institutions.

By the 1920s, CMS and SPG ran a variety of types of school, catering for children of various classes, castes, races, and religions. Women missionaries usually taught Indian girls, although their nurseries and infant departments sometimes included boys. In establishing institutions for female education in the nineteenth century, missionaries had challenged orthodox Hindu and Muslim opinion which regarded this as unnecessary and undesirable. Girls were second-class citizens, whose central purpose was to marry as soon as possible and raise offspring. The observation of purdah in high-caste families had further prevented girls from leaving home for the ‘polluting’ environment of the schoolroom. In 1882, therefore, the Hunter Commission on education found that 98% of girls of school age were not in school.<sup>24</sup> Missionaries were not alone in their recognition of the importance of female education. Girls’ schools were also founded by the government and reformist groups including the Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, and Theosophical

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<sup>22</sup> Oddie, *Social Protest in India*. p.18.

<sup>23</sup> Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*. p.162.

<sup>24</sup> Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India*. (Cambridge, 1996). p.45.

Society.<sup>25</sup> Despite their dramatic growth between 1882 and 1920, the numbers of girls in education remained extremely small. In 1917, for example, only 6.7% of girls of school-age in British India were receiving primary education, compared to 30.3% of boys. More girls were attending school in the South than in the North: 10.1% in Madras as opposed to merely 1.9% in the United Provinces and 2.4% in the Punjab.<sup>26</sup> Progress continued in the 1920s and 1930s. By 1937, there were 2,607,086 girls enrolled in India's 32,273 primary schools, compared to 1,195,892 in 22,579 schools in 1921. Yet, the number of girls continuing to high school level remained much smaller. There were still only 297 high schools (an increase of 177 in twenty years) with 114,481 pupils (an increase of 89,351).<sup>27</sup>

The scale of the educational provision of CMS and SPG was small, therefore, in terms of India's enormous population. SPG statistics for the diocese of Lahore in 1920, for example, show that the Society ran three boarding schools for girls and two day schools (as well as one boarding school for boys, eleven day schools, and three mixed schools). The total number of pupils in its girls' boarding and day schools was only 403.<sup>28</sup> In the diocese of Madras, numbers were larger. SPG ran two girls' boarding schools (as opposed to five for boys) and 245 mixed day schools with a total of 1,687 female pupils.<sup>29</sup> While mission schools may have catered for a relatively small number of Indian girls, therefore, for their pupils, they were valuable 'resource providers.'

The qualities women missionaries sought to cultivate in their pupils depended on the type of school. From the late nineteenth century, women missionaries had established a number of elite high schools with boarding houses. Even these varied in form. While most served the Indian community, the schools of St Hilda's Society, including Auckland House

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. pp.39-43.

<sup>26</sup> Judith Brown, *Modern India. The Origins of An Asian Democracy.* (Oxford, 1994). p.124.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p.260.

<sup>28</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E70b 1920. Lahore. Statistical table.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. Madras. Statistical table.

School in Simla (founded in 1866) and St Denys' School, Murree (1882), catered primarily for the daughters of wealthy Indians, Europeans, and Anglo-Indians. The religious composition of these schools also varied. While the pupils of Queen Mary's School in Delhi were predominately Muslim and Hindu, those of CMS' Queen Victoria High School in Agra were Christian. Parents paid fees for their children's education. In 1917, for example, it cost R4 per men for a girl to attend Queen Mary's.<sup>30</sup>

Queen Mary's provides an interesting case study of this type of mission school. Founded by Helen Jerwood, a member of St Stephen's Community, in 1912 to educate the daughters of Bengali clerks relocated to the new capital of Delhi, it was (until 1947) a purdah school in the English medium for high-caste Muslim and Hindu girls. In her report of 1922, for example, Miss Jerwood recorded there were 100 pupils in the school: 46 Mohammedans, 23 Hindus, 10 Sikhs, and 21 Christians. Ten to fifteen girls were boarders. On the staff, there were four English missionaries, four Indian Christian teachers, one Indian Mohammedan teacher, and one Indian teacher in training, whose religion was not given.<sup>31</sup> By 1950, the school had grown to 455 pupils and 22 teachers, including its Indian Principal, Miss Shanti Devi Ditta, and one missionary, Clare Froggatt.<sup>32</sup> Queen Mary's ranged from kindergarten to Matriculation level. The school's logbook reveals students followed a curriculum similar to that of girls' schools in England, which aimed to give girls 'a sound general education,' building up 'above all' 'a sound character capable of meeting with courage all the vicissitudes of life and helping others to do so.'<sup>33</sup> Although its pupils were predominately non-Christian, Queen Mary's was Christian in ethos. All girls were given scripture teaching 'to enable [them] at least to have some understanding of it

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<sup>30</sup> Queen Mary's School, Delhi. Logbook December 1912-22.2.54.

<sup>31</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E77b 1922. Lahore. Miss Jerwood.

<sup>32</sup> Queen Mary's School, Delhi. Logbook December 1912-22.2.54.

<sup>33</sup> Queen Mary's School, Delhi. *The Queen. Golden Jubilee Issue.* (March 1962). p.10.

and have a sympathetic appreciation of it.’<sup>34</sup> They studied academic subjects including mathematics, history, drama, art, domestic science, Urdu and English, as well as participating in games and drill. In the primary department, experiments were made using new Western educational techniques: the Beacon Method for developing literacy, and the Project Method, encouraging children to ‘play shop’ in order to learn weights and measurements.<sup>35</sup> It is clear that the curriculum of the school was heavily Westernised. Interestingly, although (as we shall see) the school was ‘Indianising’ its staff in 1920s and 1930s, it resisted any ‘Indianisation’ of its curriculum. The school logbook includes numerous pleas from School Inspectresses that Indian culture be more explored. This was first suggested in 1914. ‘Miss Jerwood has a class in singing but the girls have not yet mastered our tones and are apt for this reason to get out of tune,’ the Inspectress recorded. ‘Would it not be possible to teach Indian music instead of our English method?’ Yet, despite much repetition of this request, it was not until 1945, under the school’s first Indian Principal, that training in Indian dancing and sitar playing was introduced.<sup>36</sup>

As Clare Froggatt, head of the Primary Department, stated in the school’s jubilee magazine, the purpose of Queen Mary’s was to allow wealthy, high-caste Hindu and Muslim girls to progress ‘from the prison of strict ‘purdah’ to the freedom of the modern girl; from the custom of early marriage to the tyranny of the examination hall; from the dependence of the young bride to the self-sufficiency of the career girl...’<sup>37</sup> This latter is particularly noteworthy. In her study of women in modern India, Geraldine Forbes argues that female education, whether provided by the government, Indian reformers, or missionaries, was ‘overwhelmingly conservative’ – its main intention being to provide

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Queen Mary’s School, Delhi. Logbook December 1912-22.2.54.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Queen Mary’s School, Delhi. *The Queen. Golden Jubilee Issue.* p.16.

educated, 'professionalised housewives' for Indian men.<sup>38</sup> Certainly missionaries expected the majority of their pupils to marry and sought to prepare them to be good wives. Yet, they also encouraged Indian schoolgirls towards higher academic qualifications and independent careers as doctors, nurses, and teachers. In her report of 1917 from the Queen Victoria High School in Agra, for example, the CMS missionary, Margaret Kitching proudly described the composition of the school's 'Old Girls' Association.' She listed girls who had become wives of important men, for example the wife of a professor at Calcutta University, the wife of a railway official, and the wife of a clerk in the UP Government Secretariat. Some were also wives of schoolmasters at CMS schools and shared in their mission work. Yet, Miss Kitching also gave details of eighteen old members who were teachers, three who were studying for degrees at Allahabad University, two who were in teacher training at Lucknow College, and nine who were medical students. Five were already engaged in medical work (one as a doctor, one as a dispenser, one as a nurse, and two as hospital assistants).<sup>39</sup> The school had provided them with an education enabling them to pursue their own careers.

Missionaries also made attempts to ensure the provision of higher education was not limited to elites. In 1924, for example, CMS took a particularly ambitious step to extend high school education to children from poorer families by amalgamating its middle, normal, and high schools in Amritsar. The resultant, reorganised Alexandra High School brought together children of vastly-different social backgrounds. It had two boarding houses; boarding fees in the English-speaking Clark House were double those in the Urdu-speaking McKenzie House, in which girls did their own sweeping and cooking.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Forbes, *Women in Modern India*. p.61.

<sup>39</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Margaret Kitching, 1917.

<sup>40</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. E. Theodora Barton, 1928.

Alongside high schools, and middle schools for girls preparing for the Government Vernacular Middle Examination, CMS and SPG also ran industrial schools which taught handicrafts and domestic skills to the less academically-inclined. The intention of these latter was to equip girls (and boys in some areas) to support themselves and their families in future life. In some cases, attempts were made to combine academic and practical curricula. In 1924, for example, SPG's St Monica's School in Ahmednagar was amalgamated with a neighbouring Lace School. St Monica's was a vernacular boarding school for Christian girls from infants to the sixth class. The report of one of its missionary teachers, Marjorie Petty, implies that amalgamation was enacted in order that a wider number of girls could benefit from a broader curriculum, including 'a good deal of active work such as gardening, cooking, grinding, weaving, sewing, lace-making and embroidery' as well as more academic subjects.<sup>41</sup> The girls would be educated together until they had spent a year in the Third Standard. Then, those who were not academically-gifted would focus upon manual work, while those thought suitable to train as nurses, teachers, and suchlike, would continue with the government syllabus.<sup>42</sup> This arrangement did have some drawbacks, however. Despite missionaries' efforts, many industrial pupils felt their work inferior to the so-called 'train' work of their academically-talented contemporaries.<sup>43</sup>

CMS and SPG also ran village schools, primarily for Christian children from 'mass movement' areas. St Michael's School in the village of Jangpura, for example, was opened by St Stephen's Community in 1924. Designed by two women missionaries, this boarding school attempted to train village girls in domestic science and simple crafts in a wholesome Christian environment, away from familial superstitions and 'the bondage of

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<sup>41</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E79b. 1924. Bombay. Miss Petty.

<sup>42</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E80b. 1925. Bombay. Miss Haskins.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 3.1.**  
**Educational work: A needlework class at St Elizabeth's Industrial School, Karnal.<sup>44</sup>**  
**[Copyright: USPG]**



**The Indian headmistress, Gulab Dei, is in the centre.**

tradition.' It aimed to save girls from the dangers of remaining at home, (where their 'feeble' Christian parents were prone to committing 'the awful sin' of handing them over to 'heathen' husbands), and to return them to their home villages as healthy and useful wives and mothers.<sup>45</sup> This was not an undisputed success. Interestingly, by 1942 the founding 'raison d'être' of St Michael's was being questioned by its superintendent, Joan Ellison. She noted in her report that the school was not fulfilling its 'original purpose.' Somewhat ironically, the realisation of one of the missionaries' aims – village parents' eventual recognition of the importance of educating their daughters – had had a detrimental impact on their other intentions. The majority of schoolgirls had not become 'useful and educated members of the village community.' As their parents regarded village

<sup>44</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. Photographs. CMD 130 Album.

<sup>45</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E79c 1924. Lahore. Miss Norris.

men unworthy of their literate daughters, they had married men employed in Delhi. These girls, trained in village industries, would not be able to support themselves in the city should the need arise. Miss Ellison suggested that a day-school, providing a basic education and serving several villages, would be far more successful than a boarding school in training girls to become self-supporting and responsible village residents.<sup>46</sup>

The different, more academic character of the CMS village boarding school at Jeyi meant some of these problems were overcome. The Redcoat School taught Christian girls from 'mass movement' villages from nursery age until they sat their Government Vernacular Middle Examination. From 1921, however, it was also a Vernacular Training College, qualifying girls to teach at Upper Primary Level. Its pupils therefore had an alternative to marriage. They also remained useful to the village community. Most of the teachers trained at Jeyi went on to teach in the boarding school itself. Its superintendent, Alice Steward, was convinced of the benefits of 'village girls for village girls,' emphasising '[t]hey understand the minds and ways and feelings of their fellow village girls' far better than High School trained teachers.<sup>47</sup> The school was succeeding in its purpose to help Indian village girls help themselves and their community.

The fact that the Redcoat School trained teachers was not unusual. CMS and SPG operated a number of so-called 'normal' schools, including the CMS Normal School, Benares, St Monica's School, Ahmednagar, and All Saints' School, Trichinopoly. Teacher training classes were usually attached to middle schools, in which trainees could practise their skills. Teaching examinations were regulated and approved by the government. Teacher training was an incredibly important aspect of women missionaries' work; not only did it allow young women to support themselves, it was also a step towards building

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<sup>46</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E95/9 Lahore. 1942. Joan Ellison.

<sup>47</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Alice Margaret Steward. 1924, 1923.

an independent Indian Church. Jane Latham, Head of SPG Women's Work in Ahmednagar, was a particular advocate of this. A graduate of Girton with a Masters from Trinity College, Dublin, Miss Latham had been a pioneering educationalist in England before pursuing her missionary vocation at the age of forty-three. She had been mathematics mistress at Cheltenham Ladies College, lady warden of the Woodard School, St Anne's, and Principal of the teacher training department of St Mary's College, Paddington.<sup>48</sup> Miss Latham argued that teaching in the Christian Church was a vocation, 'nothing less than to prepare girls to live as God's children in this world and beyond it,' and insisted that training school involved much more than passing examinations. Students needed to live a corporate, ordered, and peaceful life with ample time for prayer, reflection, and community service.<sup>49</sup>

The extra-curricular activities introduced by women missionaries into their schools also reveal the characteristics they sought to cultivate among pupils. SPG and CMS reports from 1917 to 1950 show a gradual blossoming in almost all schools of Girl Guiding activities. In 1921, for example, recruitment began for a company of Girl Guides and a flock of Blue Birds (the Indian name for Brownies) at St Ebba's High School in Madras. About twenty-five of each were signed-up and the school was visited by the Chief Guide, Lady Baden-Powell.<sup>50</sup> By 1930, Guiding had so progressed that the school submitted two reports to SPG Headquarters – one from the Principal, Zoe Walford, on its general progress, and the other from Fanny Schubert, who was in charge of Guide and Bluebird work.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Jane Leeke Latham.

<sup>49</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E77b 1922. Bombay. Miss Latham.

<sup>50</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E76c 1921. Madras. Miss Beatty.

<sup>51</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E85c 1930. Madras. Miss Walford. Miss Schubert.

Missionaries wrote often in their reports of the benefits of guiding for their pupils. Guiding was seen to broaden horizons and encourage integration. Dorothy Holcroft of St Monica's School in Ahmednagar, for example, wrote in 1924 of a camp at Talegaon which she and an Indian teacher had attended. 'It is quite astonishing how Girl Guides seems to solve the problems of caste,' she remarked. 'We were a very mixed company (43 all told) both in religions and Nationalities – yet lived together – at very close quarters! – on equal terms of the utmost friendliness.'<sup>52</sup> Numerous other reports echoed this sentiment.<sup>53</sup>

Guiding also taught honesty, punctuality, and discipline. Competitions for Divisional and Collector's Shields helped girls to develop courage and 'team spirit – to play fairly and lose with good grace' – a quality missionaries considered uncommon in most Indians.<sup>54</sup> Charity and voluntary service were also encouraged. In her report of 1935, for example, Fanny Schubert reported that the Rangers at All Saints' School, Trichinopoly took a 'considerable share' in local health work organised by the Municipality Red Cross.<sup>55</sup> The Guides of the CMS Normal School in Benares also visited nearby villages and distributed medicines.<sup>56</sup> During the Second World War, Red Cross work continued, and Blue Birds, Guides, and Rangers held entertainments to raise money for the war effort and took courses in Air Raid Precautions, first aid, and stretcher drill.<sup>57</sup> Guiding was also regarded as beneficial for Indian teachers, allowing them to develop skills of leadership and responsibility. In 1924, for example, Mary Birkinshaw of the CMS Normal School in Benares reported two members of staff had been given full charge of the school's Guide patrol. 'They were somewhat taken aback when they understood that I was even leaving

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<sup>52</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E79c 1924. Bombay. Miss Holcroft.

<sup>53</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E85c 1930. Nasik. Miss Field. 95/2. Bombay. Miss Warwick. CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Elizabeth Law. 1923.

<sup>54</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E85c 1930. Nasik. Ahmednagar News Sheet. December 1930. See also CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Elizabeth Law. 1923. E.M. Barkworth, 1928.

<sup>55</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E90d 1935. Madras. Miss Schubert.

<sup>56</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. M. Irene Birkinshaw. 1934.

<sup>57</sup> See USPG, Rhodes House. E95/9 Lahore. Miss Lee. CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. A.F. Atkins, 1940. E.O. Carpenter, 1940.

the finance to them,' she wrote. 'They had not before realised that receipts and expenditure had somehow to be made to fit.' The teachers were, however, 'responding nobly' to the challenge.<sup>58</sup> Ten years later, one of them so impressed the Guide Trainer of the United Provinces that she was appointed as a travelling advisor to Guide companies by the Provincial Association.<sup>59</sup>

The virtues of team spirit, fair play, and public service were also cultivated by women missionaries in other areas of their school work. School sport was considered particularly important in teaching Indian girls grit, determination and solidarity, as well as improving their physical health. Participation in inter-school competitions and details of drill and games clubs were often recorded in reports.<sup>60</sup> Pupils' participation in school plays was also noted. These were sometimes performed to mark special occasions like the school's saint's day, or in order to raise money for school funds. 'Bethlehem Tableaux' – similar to a Nativity Play where scenes from the birth of Christ were represented by the children – were particular favourites in SPG schools. The tableaux were obvious means of Bible teaching, not only to children but to older audience members. The play itself was also 'an act of worship,' and rehearsals encouraged discipline and cooperation between children and staff.<sup>61</sup> Other plays included depictions of the life of the school's saint, 'Sleeping Beauty,' and a Tamil version of 'The Pied Piper.'<sup>62</sup> Acting developed students' confidence, as well as their vernacular and English language skills. School children were also encouraged by missionaries to think of people less fortunate than themselves. Near the

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<sup>58</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. M. Irene Birkinshaw. 1924. See also USPG, Rhodes House. E85c 1930. Nasik. Ahmednagar News Sheet. December 1930.

<sup>59</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. M. Irene Birkinshaw, 1934.

<sup>60</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E76c 1921. Madras. Miss Beatty. 78c 1923. Madras. Miss Walford? 78c 1923. Lahore. Miss Bealey. CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Dorothy Lyon, 1923. E. Theodora Barton, 1926.

<sup>61</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E96/9 1942. Lahore. Miss Budden. 90d 1935. Lahore. Miss Haig.

<sup>62</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Miss A.F. Atkins, 1929. SPG, Rhodes House. E series. 96/9 1942. Madras. Miss Teale.

end of each report of All Saints' Girls' School in Trichinopoly, for example, Alice Swain described her pupils' efforts to raise money for such causes as the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society, Armenian and Russian Refugees, and Panchana work in the Tanjore district.<sup>63</sup> Other initiatives encouraged children to recognise their responsibilities towards one another. At the CMS Normal School in Benares, for example, a 'family system' was in operation. Each student in the training class acted as 'mother' or 'big sister' of a family of eight to ten girls and was responsible for the latter's sewing, mending, and cooking. They were given an allowance to buy food for their family, in order to teach them about nutrition and the value of money.<sup>64</sup> A similar system was in operation at the Central Boarding School for Girls in Gojra.<sup>65</sup>

Women missionaries sought to develop bright, highly-skilled, independent-thinking, well rounded and healthy schoolgirls with deep reverence for the Christian faith. Although they did not often write of their feelings in reports and Annual Letters (focusing instead upon school events and statistics), they clearly expended much care and energy on their pupils, and lamented that shortages of workers and burdensome administrative work prevented them from doing more.<sup>66</sup> Pupils' lack of a sense of honour and esprit de corps, laziness, untidiness, bickering, lying and petty thieving were commonly recorded, and Indian girls were compared unfavourably with their English contemporaries. Yet, for the most part, the tone of educational reports was positive, stressing progress and achievement. Of course, missionaries may have skirted over failures in the hope of pleasing their society and securing additional funding, yet most reports did not ignore difficulties.<sup>67</sup> Although

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<sup>63</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E series. See reports for All Saints' School, Trichinopoly. 1920-1925.

<sup>64</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. M Irene Birkinshaw, 1920. Marjorie Farquhar, 1930.

<sup>65</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Rebe King, 1931.

<sup>66</sup> See for example CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Elizabeth Law, 1923.

<sup>67</sup> See for example Grace Robson's account of stealing at the Alexandra High School (marked not for publication). CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Grace Robson, 1918.

tired and overworked, educational missionaries seem to have genuinely relished the opportunity to influence ‘young India.’

Women missionaries’ attitudes to their Indian colleagues are also interesting. ‘Indianisation’ of missionary educational work was already beginning in the early 1920s. St Stephen’s Community’s two Bengali schools in Simla, St Monica’s School, Ahmednagar, Holy Cross School in Nandyal, All Saints’ School in Trichinopoly, the Sharkey School in Masulipatam, and the CMS girls’ schools in Srinagar and Jandiala were all put in the charge of Indian headmistresses.<sup>68</sup> In most cases, however, these headmistresses remained under European superintendence as they were not yet considered capable of working independently. Betty Tosh, the Manager of St Elizabeth’s Industrial School in Karnal, commented in 1924: ‘Indians always need a good deal of general supervision to keep them up to the mark.’ Yet, in her report for the following year, she gave complete credit for an increase in demand for pupils’ embroidery and needlework to the school’s ‘most capable’ headteacher and matron, Gulab Dei [see Figure 3.1.], who maintained ‘splendid discipline’ and was ‘always so ready to enter into any new scheme and always so even-tempered.’<sup>69</sup> The promotion of Indian headmistresses allowed missionaries to pursue other initiatives. By 1930, for example, the appointment of an Indian headmistress at Holy Cross School in Nandyal enabled Miss Cutcliffe to open a new Women’s Industrial School, Miss Tickell to carry out Mothers’ Union work and ‘rural reconstruction’ in the diocese, and Miss Benham to run Sunday Schools and a Women’s

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<sup>68</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E78c. 1923. Lahore. Miss Griffith. CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. M.P. Mallinson, 1923.

<sup>69</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E79c. 1924. Lahore. Miss Tosh. For a CMS example see: CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. A.R.B. Ryder, 1923.

Hostel.<sup>70</sup> This arrangement of workers was a clear development from a decade previously, where the three missionaries at Nandyal had all been involved in school management.<sup>71</sup>

In the 1930s and 1940s, efforts towards the promotion of Indian teachers continued. Missionaries recognised the advantage of Indian teachers over Europeans. Miss Jackson of All Saints' Girls' School in Trichinopoly admitted she had 'come to realise that more and more it is the [role] of the foreign missionary to be a silent observer of other people doing the real work that you people in England have sent us to do.' She recognised Indian teachers could teach Indian pupils more effectively than herself. For example, if Miss G.R. Samuel, the Indian headmistress was taking a children's service for Christian children, Miss Jackson might tell her what she wanted the children to learn, but it would be Miss Samuel herself who knew 'just exactly how to give what I want them to have.'<sup>72</sup> Indian teachers were also beneficial for the teaching of Christianity, as they could, in the words of Marjorie Petty of St Monica's School in Ahmednagar, 'train up the girls on truly Indian lines and make their Christian faith the very centre of their lives, free from any foreign element which we, of necessity, bring into it.'<sup>73</sup>

Some missionaries took active measures to recruit Indian women capable of assuming their posts. In her Annual Letter of 1939, for example, Olive Carpenter of St Thomas' School in Meerut strongly pressed the case for aggressive 'Indianisation,' agreeing with a friend's opinion that 'we have been dilatory in giving Indian women responsibility.' She and her colleague, Miss Watts, felt it was better for the whole of the school's leadership to be Indian, and offered to resign their posts if suitably qualified and spiritually-minded candidates were found. '[C]autiously and tentatively (in the absence of

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<sup>70</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E85c 1930. Dornakal. Miss Benham. Miss Cutcliffe. Miss Tickell.

<sup>71</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW142. Original Letters Incoming. 1920. p.107.

<sup>72</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E90d 1935. Madras. Miss Jackson.

<sup>73</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E90d 1935. Nasik. Miss Petty.

instructions from Headquarters...)' they had begun enquiries for such.<sup>74</sup> Failing to receive any advice from CMS, Misses Carpenter and Watts eventually appointed a twenty-five year old Bengali, Shanti Laha in 1940. Miss Laha was to come to the school on a year's probation to learn the Principal's work from Miss Watts. Less than a month after her arrival, however, Miss Watts fell ill, and Miss Laha assumed full duties.<sup>75</sup>

**Figure 3.2.**  
**Evidence of 'Indianisation' at the celebration to mark fifty years' service of Helen Jerwood and Eva Fiennes, Delhi, November 1954.<sup>76</sup>**

The image originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright. The image can be found at the Archives of St Stephen's Community, Delhi, or in the Bodleian hard copy of this thesis.

**Left to right: Miss Shanti Devi Ditta (Principal of Queen Mary's School), Miss Fiennes, Miss Jerwood (Founder of Queen Mary's), the Bishop, Miss Evelyn Ashdown (former Principal of Queen Mary's), Miss Ayesha Jacob (Principal of St Thomas' School)**

By Independence, there had been considerable progress towards the transfer of full authority elsewhere. Queen Mary's School in Delhi, for example, had four missionaries on

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<sup>74</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1935-1939. Miss Carpenter, 1939.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 1940, 1941.

<sup>76</sup> Archives of St Stephen's Community, Delhi. Miscellaneous photographs of the Community.

its staff in 1942. When its Principal, Miss Ashdown, departed for furlough at the end of the year, however, it was an Indian teacher, Miss Shanti Devi Ditta, who was appointed Acting Principal in her absence.<sup>77</sup> Her position was made permanent in 1945. The Indian headmistress at CMS' Queen Victoria High School in Agra was also appointed Acting Principal during Miss Bickersteth's furlough in 1946. She was so successful that the latter suggested she retain the post. 'It is good to find that if we, English people, have to leave [following Independence], the school is settled with an Indian Principal,' Miss Bickersteth told CMS. She herself assumed charge of the training class, working under her Indian colleague.<sup>78</sup>

The vocabulary of school reports indicates that even in schools where missionary superintendence persisted, missionaries shared authority with their Indian colleagues. Describing the evacuation of St Ebba's School from Madras to Namakkal in 1942 owing to fear of Japanese invasion, its Principal, Miss Jackson wrote: 'Miss Teale, Miss Gnanadickam and I came here on June 9<sup>th</sup> to get everything ready.'<sup>79</sup> Similarly, in her report for All Saints' School, Trichinopoly, Miss Vaughan Johnson wrote: 'Miss Schubert, Miss Samuel and I have also been asked to provide food for Indian troops at a social...'<sup>80</sup> The inclusion of an Indian teacher's name in these groupings implies that she was in a position of responsibility alongside the missionaries – in Miss Samuel's case, she was headmistress of the training school and in charge of Guides. It would have been very unusual in the 1920s and even the 1930s for such a grouping to be made in a report, and for an Indian teacher to join missionaries in service outside the school. By 1950, the majority of mission schools were in the hands of Indian Principals. [See Figure 3.2.] These included the Victoria Girls' School in Delhi, St Michael's School in Jangpura, the

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<sup>77</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E95/9 1942. Lahore. Miss Froggatt.

<sup>78</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. E.M. Bickersteth, 1946, 1947.

<sup>79</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E95/9 1942. Madras. Miss Jackson.

<sup>80</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E95/9 1942. Madras. Miss Vaughan Johnson.

Alexandra High School in Amritsar, and the CMS Normal School in Benares.

Interestingly, however, the mainly Anglo-Indian and European schools of St Hilda's Society remained under missionaries' control. In 1947, there were still two missionaries (one Principal, one part-time teacher) at Auckland House School in Simla, and one as Principal at St Denys', Murree.<sup>81</sup>

### *The mission hospital*

The other major missionary institution which employed women missionaries was, of course, the mission hospital. Although the link between medical work and conversion was more tenuous than that of educational work, the legitimacy of missionary medical service was rarely questioned. As Jeffrey Cox points out, 'Jesus healed people; he neglected to set up schools and colleges...' The fact that Jesus' healing powers had not been based upon Western scientific knowledge was ignored.<sup>82</sup> Missionaries worked as doctors, nurses, and compounders. They also taught Indian nurses in hospital training schools.

As noted in Chapter One, the foundation of women's medical work in India coincided with women's entrance into the medical profession in Britain in the 1870s. The Countess of Dufferin's fund was established in 1885 to facilitate the supply of medical women to India. In the same year, the Countess opened the flagship hospital of the Delhi Mission, St Stephen's hospital for women and children. From the start, therefore, missionary and government efforts to provide women's medical care coexisted and often overlapped. Women medical missionaries frequently worked in government hospitals. The career of Dr Charlotte Houlton of St Stephen's Community is a perfect example of this. Dr Houlton first went to India in 1913 under the auspices of the Dufferin fund to work at the

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<sup>81</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E95/9. 1947. Lahore. St Hilda's Society.

<sup>82</sup> Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*. p.171.

Lady Lyall Hospital in Agra. Before being invalided home in 1919, she also worked as professor of gynaecology and obstetrics at the newly-opened Lady Hardinge Medical College in Delhi. Following her return to India in 1924, she assisted in the establishment of the Lady Reading Hospital at Simla, serving as its Medical Superintendent. In 1927, the same year in which she was awarded the Kaisar-i-Hind medal first class, she joined St Stephen's Community and took charge of St Stephen's Hospital. Dr Houlton left missionary service in 1933 to become Principal of the Lady Hardinge Medical College. Two years later, she was appointed Chief Medical Officer of the Women's Medical Service of India and Secretary of the Countess of Dufferin's Fund. After retiring from India, she served as SPG medical secretary, subsequently joining the Anglican Order of the Holy Paraclete at Whitby.<sup>83</sup> Other missionaries also assisted the government in the supervision of nursing examinations.<sup>84</sup>

The growth of women's medical work in India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was considerable. There were no hospitals staffed by women in 1870, but by 1927, there were 183.<sup>85</sup> Of these, a significant number were missionary run. According to Rosemary Fitzgerald, there were 134 women's mission hospitals by the early 1930s, compared to 112 for men.<sup>86</sup> The scale of the medical work of CMS and SPG was certainly considerable. In 1925, for example, CMS statistics claimed the Society's forty-two hospitals (and dispensaries) in India and Ceylon had received 421,509 visits of outpatients and cared for 12,246 inpatients.<sup>87</sup> The corresponding figures for SPG's twenty-three Indian hospitals and dispensaries were 77,102 outpatients and 5,953 inpatients.<sup>88</sup> As

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<sup>83</sup> Author's biographical database. Dr Charlotte Leighton Houlton.

<sup>84</sup> For example, Sister Alice Wilkinson of SPG.

<sup>85</sup> Margaret I. Balfour and Ruth Young, *The work of medical women in India*. (London, 1929). p.182.

<sup>86</sup> Fitzgerald, 'A "peculiar and exceptional measure,"' in Bickers and Seton, (eds.), *Missionary Encounters*. p.196.

<sup>87</sup> *The C.M.S. Short Report, 1924-1925*. pp.90-91.

<sup>88</sup> 'Staff of Hospitals and Dispensaries assisted by S.P.G. with Statistics for 1925,' in *Annual Report for the Year of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 1925*. pp.264-265.

noted in Chapter Two, CMS and SPG hospitals varied in character and size. St Stephen's hospital in Delhi, for example, had six doctors on its staff in 1920, four missionary sisters, a missionary dispenser, a housekeeper, thirty Indian nurses and probationers, four compounders, six midwives, three government-approved dais, and two Biblewomen. In the past year, 35,042 visits had been paid to outpatients – a daily average of 134.73 patients, 1,399 inpatients had been treated – a daily average of 67.36 residents, and 590 operations had taken place.<sup>89</sup> This compared with the much smaller Marie Hayes Hospital at Rewari, also run by St Stephen's Community, which had a medical officer (who served also a doctor at St Stephen's Delhi), one missionary sister, an Indian compounder, five Indian nurses, and two Biblewomen. In 1920, there had been 93 inpatients and 2,536 outpatients – an average daily attendance of 44.45. 94 operations had been performed.<sup>90</sup>

In mission hospitals and dispensaries, missionaries encountered Indians as colleagues and as patients. The men, women, and children they treated suffered from all manner of ailments from cataracts, cholera, malaria, and tuberculosis, to gunshot wounds obtained in Frontier conflict, to numerous complications in maternity. Missionaries wrote often of their horror at the condition of their patients. They recognised many were prevented from coming to hospital due to fear, custom, and superstition. 'It is interesting to notice when taking histories how many of them have been treated by village hakim or barber before coming to us,' reported Violet Salmon of the CMS Hospital in Srinagar in 1928, 'often suffering much unnecessary pain and discomfort thereby, and also making a cure much more difficult.'<sup>91</sup> One of the favourite treatments for septic wounds was to rub them with mud taken from a grave. When this failed, the village 'fir' or priest wrote out a

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<sup>89</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. MM 470. St Stephen's Hospital, Delhi. Reports, circular letters etc. 1919-1925. Dr H.M. Franklin, 1920.

<sup>90</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E75c 1920. Lahore. Martha Francis.

<sup>91</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Violet Salmon, 1928.

verse of the Qur'an, soaked the paper in a cup of water, and gave the infusion to the sick person to drink.<sup>92</sup> Many patients were perceived as apathetic and fatalistic: 'If the patient does not survive it is attributed to the will of Allah.'<sup>93</sup> Conditions for women were particularly horrifying. Untrained 'native' dais were considered a 'serious menace' with their harmful and unhygienic practices.<sup>94</sup> Sick women were also at the mercy of their husbands. Margery Treanor of CMS Khatauli recorded one such case in 1948. A very ill Christian woman had begged her to take her to hospital, but her husband refused to let her go. '[I]n fact he was really quite pleased for her to die,' she wrote, 'particularly because she had no children and on her death he would buy another wife for about Rs200.'<sup>95</sup>

Missionaries not only aimed to cure their patients, they also wanted to teach them. This teaching was not only religious. Missionaries sought to dispel fears of Western medicine, to encourage attendance at hospitals and clinics, and to emphasise the importance of fresh air, sanitation, and healthy nutrition. A recurring theme in the reports and Annual Letters is cleanliness. Women missionaries consistently remarked upon the dirtiness of patients and attempted to promote cleaner habits. In 1930, for example, Sister Hughes of St Stephen's Hospital in Delhi submitted an account to SPG written from the perspective of a small 'untouchable' boy suffering from a hernia. The boy described the efforts of the sisters to keep him clean: 'You see when I want to do things I do not go to a special place but just sit where I am and so I had done then and of course the bandage got wet and horrid which was a grief to these people but I am very jungly and Sister said I knew no better and they must "train" me whatever that means.'<sup>96</sup> The language missionaries used is especially interesting. Although the subject of Sister Hughes' account

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 1930.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Noel Fletcher, 1931.

<sup>95</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Margery Treanor, 1948.

<sup>96</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E85d 1930. Lahore. Miss Hughes.

was a child, missionaries' accounts of their adult patients often treated them as children, commenting upon and marvelling at their childlike 'ignorance.'

Of course, missionaries were concerned not only for the physical welfare of their patients, but also for their spiritual welfare. The extent of evangelistic work varied from hospital to hospital. In the late 1920s, for example, there was a considerable evangelistic programme at the CMS hospital in Multan. Every morning before medical work began, the Indian nurses met in the hospital prayer room for prayer and Bible study, while the Indian matron and European staff took 'bandagis' (prayers) in various parts of the hospital. The two matrons had also started taking a small service in the evenings with singing, a talk, or magic lantern slides.<sup>97</sup> Christian teaching was still taking a prominent part in the hospital's routine in the 1940s. There was a trained evangelist working amongst the women, *and*, although Multan was a zenana hospital, it employed a permanent trained male evangelist to teach patients' male relatives in a prayer room just outside the gates. Once a week, all who took part in evangelistic work in the hospital met together for prayer and discussion of any points of interest or difficulty. 'Of all the Missionary Institutions I have been or worked in up to this,' wrote Kathleen Weatherhead in 1942, 'Multan seems to me to be the one above all which I could say justifies... itself as a Mission Hospital.'<sup>98</sup> In other hospitals, evangelistic work was carried out on a smaller scale. In most places, including SPG's St Catharine's Hospital in Cawnpore, a Biblewomen sang bhajans (Indian hymns) and taught patients while they waited to see the doctor in the outpatients department.<sup>99</sup> Teaching in wards also took place in a number of forms from prayer services led by nurses (Indian and missionary) to the telling of stories or the showing of pictures to individual patients by Biblewomen.

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<sup>97</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Miss Simmonds, 1928.

<sup>98</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Kathleen Weatherhead, 1942.

<sup>99</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E75b 1920. Lucknow. Miss Western.

Margaret Western's comments to SPG's Committee on Conditions of Service highlight a significant difference in the organisation of evangelistic work in CMS and SPG hospitals. Miss Western claimed CMS missionaries were considered 'more ardent' amongst the European community in India, as in their hospitals all doctors and nurses were obliged to take prayers in the vernacular, give lantern lectures, and preach to patients 'as a definite part of their work.' In SPG hospitals, this work was deputed to a regular evangelistic worker (Indian or missionary), hence 'most of the doctors took a standpoint that it was not therefore necessary for them to do anything but medical work.'<sup>100</sup> As Kathleen Weatherhead's letter implies, however, this contrast was not so evident in practice. CMS women missionaries often complained about the unsatisfactory realities of their evangelistic work, arguing that their hospital's punishing routine prevented it from justifying its missionary status. In 1934, for example, Sister Elsie Pearce lamented 'the evangelistic work in most of our hospitals suffers very badly owing to shortage of staff. The medical side of the work cannot be neglected when there are hundreds of suffering men, women and children, seeking relief, so consequently the spiritual side of the work is not given its proper place.'<sup>101</sup>

The difficulty of assessing the impact of hospital evangelistic work upon patients was noted by women missionaries. They admitted '[w]e do not have most of the patients long enough to see results in the way of conversions...' Instead, missionaries had to 'be content with the work of giving them an idea of our friendship and of what we stand for, in the hope that either they will get further contact later, or at any rate will be more sympathetic towards us in general and later on if their children want to become Christians.'<sup>102</sup> They hoped seeds would be sown by hospital evangelistic work, which

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<sup>100</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW312: Advisory Group Papers re Conditions of Service.

<sup>101</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Elsie Pearce, 1934.

<sup>102</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. MM. 470. St Stephen's Hospital, Delhi. Reports, circular letters etc. 1919-1925. Dr H.M. Haythornthwaite. 6.12.25.

would reap a future harvest.<sup>103</sup> The value of evangelistic outreach work to maintain contact with hospital patients, and reinforce the Christian teaching they had received, was emphasised, although the establishment of such work was hindered by shortages of finance and staff.<sup>104</sup> Women missionaries also wrote optimistically about ‘secret Christians’ – patients whom they believed knew and desired Christ’s love, but were prevented from converting openly due to the bondage of old customs and fear of their relations. Some were declared to have died in the knowledge of the resurrection.<sup>105</sup> ‘Poor things!’ commented Mary Simpson of SPG’s St Catherine’s Hospital in Cawnpore in 1923, ‘so many are really (I do know it, I’ve heard it from many) Christians at heart, they unconsciously are like the people in S. Matt. 25, 34-40, doing all Christ’s commands, but they miss the joy of the consciousness of doing it for Him. I guess when Christ said those words He was picturing these women of India.’<sup>106</sup>

Of course, women missionaries also encountered Indians in the mission hospital as colleagues: as nurses, doctors, and dispensers, as well as porters, sweepers, and Biblewomen. From the 1920s, as in schools, they began to make concerted efforts to promote their Indian co-workers in the medical profession to positions of authority and responsibility. They took considerable interest, therefore, in the training of Indian women (and men) as nurses, and in some cases, compounders. This, in the words of Sister Alice Wilkinson, Nursing Superintendent of St Stephen’s Hospital in Delhi, and founder of its Training School, was regarded as ‘one of the most important branches’ of the hospital’s

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<sup>103</sup> See for example, CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Annie Manwaring, 1926. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Violet Stapleton, 1946.

<sup>104</sup> See for example, CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1935-1939. Amy Aston, 1937.

<sup>105</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Kathleen Weatherhead, 1942.

<sup>106</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. MM 778. India: Cawnpore, St Catherine’s Hospital, Lucknow, Annual Reports, Correspondence. 1909-65. Sister Mary Simpson, 21.10.23.

work.<sup>107</sup> Missionaries sought to instil more than medical knowledge in the minds of their Indian trainees. The standards they desired in nurses did not relate simply to professional efficiency – they were explicitly Christian. Indian nurses were not merely to be skilled and conscientious, but they were to serve, as Christ had served, putting themselves last and others first: they were ‘to be good nurses, and earnest Christians...’<sup>108</sup>

In the early 1920s, missionaries constantly reiterated the difficulties they faced in achieving this aim. Sister Wilkinson repeatedly emphasised the lamentable standards of the nurses in training at St Stephen’s. They ‘are mostly very young and inexperienced girls who have come straight from the school room, and who need much help and supervision and encouragement,’ she stressed, ‘...they do not play the game and instead of rising to the occasion will often let a sister down.’ ‘At times I wonder is it worth going on?’ she continued. ‘Will we ever accomplish anything when the spirit of self sacrifice, esprit de corps, the desire to give service seems so lacking?’ Sister Wilkinson did acknowledge, however, that some of the senior nurses at St Stephen’s were showing ‘signs of a growing sense of responsibility, of helpfulness and loyalty,’ and one or two ‘though not very good at taking the full responsibility of a staff nurse’ were ‘really excellent nurses.’<sup>109</sup> Sister Elsie Pearce of the CMS Hospital in Multan also recognised that the training of Indian nurses was a work requiring ‘a great deal of prayer and patience.’ The majority of young girls in training had only ‘a very elementary education,’ some were subject to ‘bad home influences,’ and none, though Christian, had much spiritual training.<sup>110</sup>

By 1930, more definite progress towards the transfer of authority had been made. At St Stephen’s Hospital in Delhi, for example, the departure on furlough of two missionaries had accelerated ‘Indianisation.’ In their absence, an Indian Staff Nurse was

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<sup>107</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E75c 1920. Martha Francis.

<sup>108</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Sister Simmonds, 1923.

<sup>109</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E79d 1924. Lahore. Sister Wilkinson.

<sup>110</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Elsie Pearce, 1927.

made responsible for the operating theatre, and the Indian head compounder was put in charge of the dispensary.<sup>111</sup> One of St Stephen's eight fully-certified Indian nurses had also been promoted to a sister in full charge of a large medical ward. Despite her weakness in giving lectures, Sister Wilkinson judged her to be 'well able to take her full position' in the hospital.<sup>112</sup> At Multan, Sister Simmonds was pushing for further measures. In her Annual Letter of 1932, she emphasised Indian Sisters should be given responsibility and allowed to learn from their mistakes: consequently, missionaries would have 'a hand in training "Young India."' <sup>113</sup>

While Indian nurses were taking greater positions of responsibility and authority at mission hospitals in the 1930s and 1940s, however, British women missionaries remained in overall charge for far longer than in educational work. The first Indian Nursing Superintendent of St Stephen's, Delhi was not appointed until 1964.<sup>114</sup> Equally, in the majority of cases, 'Indianisation' seems to have been precipitated more due to staff and financial shortages than any decision by women missionaries to step down from their positions and work as subordinates. At the CMS Hospital in Quetta, for example, it was only in 1948, 'owing to the desperate shortage of [European] Sisters,' that the mission 'surveyed our resources and realized that at Quetta we had at least two of our trained Male Nurses, who were well fitted to take the place of Sisters in a Male Hospital.' These men were given such 'added responsibility and seniority' when Sister Manwaring retired and Sister Wheeler was invalided home.<sup>115</sup>

Perhaps the reason behind the slow progress of 'Indianisation' lies in missionaries' constant criticism of nurses' training: it may have been felt that Indian nurses, unlike Indian teachers, simply had not reached the standards required. In 1947, for example,

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<sup>111</sup> SPG, Rhodes House. E series. 85d. 1930. Lahore. Dr Houlton.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. Sister Wilkinson.

<sup>113</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Sister Simmonds, 1931, 1932.

<sup>114</sup> Biswas, *Not Mere Memories*. p.156.

<sup>115</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Sister Wheeler, 1949.

Sister Kathleen Weatherhead of the CMS Hospital in Quetta regretted that '[t]he General rule in India one finds, is for the worker to revert to slack and "any-old-how" methods and ways as soon as he or she is left to his or herself, without supervision or the Sister's eagle eye upon them, no matter how long a training in right ways they may have had.' She recognised progress towards greater responsibility had been made, but stressed that Indian nurses 'still shirk it, or cannot cope with it...'<sup>116</sup> Perhaps missionaries' standards were too high? The language they used to assess their Indian colleagues is noteworthy. Indian nurses were (perhaps inevitably) almost always judged by British standards of professional efficiency. Although it was recognised that most recruits were hindered by a lack of education and spiritual training, few missionaries fully acknowledged the gulf between their Western ideas and practices and the perspectives of recruits from lower-caste backgrounds with no tradition of education or Christian service. Equally, it was never accepted that Indians might have their own styles of work, also valid and effective, though different from Western norms.<sup>117</sup> It was perhaps natural that highly-skilled and well-trained missionaries would have been reluctant to sacrifice what they considered to be correct and well-tested practices in order to allow Indians to learn from their mistakes or experiment with their own methods. It has also to be recognised, however, that the slow rate of 'Indianisation' in mission hospitals was not entirely due to missionary conservatism. The pool of nursing recruits was very small, as nursing was much slower than teaching to gain acceptance as a suitable occupation for a young woman. In 1939, for example, Sister Joan Simpson of the CMS Hospital in Srinagar wrote of her difficulties recruiting Kashmiri girls to train as nurses. Even when the girls themselves were keen,

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<sup>116</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Kathleen Weatherhead, 1947.

<sup>117</sup> David Hardiman also finds the progress of 'Indianisation' was slow in the CMS Bhil medical mission. White missionaries' superior skill was used to justify their persistence in positions of authority, even until 1960s. See Hardiman, *Missionaries and their medicine*. pp.236-237. Jeffrey Cox also argues that missionaries were preaching Western organisational and professional superiority in their hospitals and schools. See Cox, 'Independent English women in Delhi and Lahore, 1860-1947,' in Davis and Helmstadter (eds.), *Religion and Irreligion in Victorian Society*. p.180.

**Figure 3.3.**  
**Medical work: scenes of St Stephen's Hospital, Delhi, late 1940s (original labels).<sup>118</sup>**  
**[Copyright: USPG]**



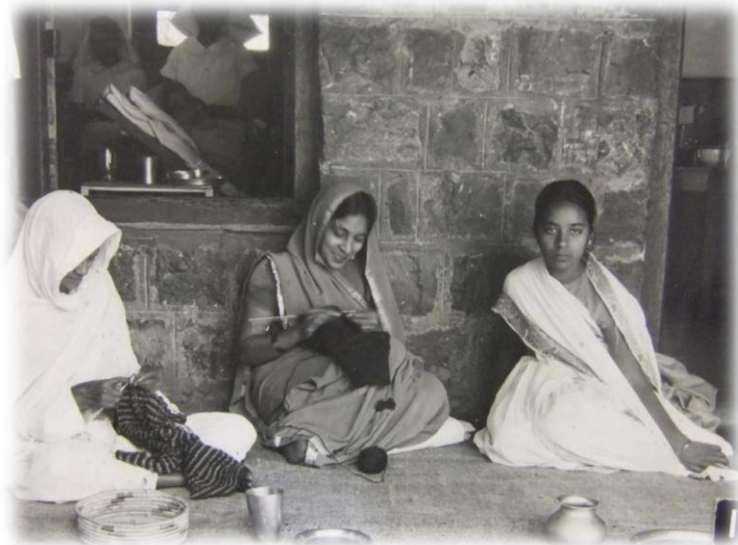
**The Dispensary**



**Operating**



**Preparing an injection**



**A Cottage Ward**

<sup>118</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. Photographs. CMD 129B.

their parents were vehemently opposed fearing the ‘family honour was being dragged in the mire’ and their daughter’s marriage prospects receding.<sup>119</sup> Nurses were also paid much less than doctors or teachers, hence much less prestige was attached to the profession. It was considered to be a career for girls who could do nothing else, and this had an impact upon the educational standard of applicants.<sup>120</sup> Missionaries repeatedly noted that government hospitals poached the best recruits as they offered far higher salaries than the Mission could afford.

Indian doctors (male and female) did work at CMS and SPG mission hospitals, though they were trained elsewhere: at government institutions like Lady Hardinge Medical College in Delhi, or at the Christian medical colleges in Ludhiana and Vellore.<sup>121</sup> One of the most pioneering and well known lady doctors was Martha Francis, who became house surgeon at St Stephen’s Hospital in Delhi in 1899 and medical officer in charge of the Marie Hayes Hospital in Rewari in 1910. She was listed as a missionary of the SPG, although she never joined St Stephen’s Community.<sup>122</sup> Dr Francis was an exception, however. She had not been brought up in an Indian environment, but was a true ‘mission baby.’ As the orphaned daughter of a Christian, she had grown up at St Stephen’s Hospital and attended the Victoria Girls’ School (another mission institution) before going to Agra Medical College. This upbringing, as well as providing Dr Francis with the opportunity to train as a doctor, may also have meant she was more readily accepted by missionaries as capable of responsibility. Indeed, authority largely remained in British hands. The first

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<sup>119</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1934-1939. Joan Simpson, 1939.

<sup>120</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Kathleen Weatherhead, 1941.

<sup>121</sup> Balfour and Young, *The work of medical women in India*. pp.102-122.

<sup>122</sup> *Delhi*. Vol XXI No.8. October 1953. ‘Obituary – Martha Francis.’ pp.87-88.

Indian Medical Superintendent of St Stephen's Hospital, Dr Lucy Oommen, was not appointed until 1961.<sup>123</sup>

### *Other missionary institutions*

Schools and hospitals were not, however, the only institutions operated by women missionaries. They also ran a number of homes for widows and orphans, including St Mary's Home in Delhi, the SPG's Widows' Home at Kolhar, the CMS Orphanage (and Industrial School) in Benares, and the CMS Widows' Home in Lahore. The aim of these establishments was similar to that of industrial schools. They taught handicrafts to their residents, attempting to give them the skills to support themselves. In line with growing 'Indianisation' (and 'Diocesanisation') in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, efforts were also made to encourage women from these homes to engage in Church work. Women from St Mary's Home, for example, began to work as Biblewomen and to help at nearby Churches. One, Lachmi Elizabeth, the first Indian woman to be appointed by the diocese of Lahore (rather than the Mission) in 1923, was able to pay her own keep at the home with her salary, earned from work in St Stephen's parish.<sup>124</sup> Missionaries were also trying to devolve increasing responsibility upon their Indian colleagues in these institutions. At the CMS Orphanage and Industrial School in Benares, as elsewhere, 'Indianisation' was accelerated due to staffing shortages. When Dora Snelson was transferred in 1928, only one missionary was left on the staff. 'It has been quite good for the [school],' Miss Willis admitted, 'for I couldn't possibly do it all, but first because I couldn't do it, the Seniors discovered they could. True not well at first but [they] have now got so well into the work, that a 2<sup>nd</sup> experienced missionary is not necessary...'<sup>125</sup> Abigail Gopal, matron of St Mary's Home in Delhi, was promoted to its head in 1942. Her missionary predecessor,

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<sup>123</sup> *St Stephen's Hospital, Centenary Celebrations, 1885-1985.* (Delhi, 1985). p.52.

<sup>124</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E78c 1923. Lahore. Miss Bruford.

<sup>125</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Sarah Willis, 1929.

Emily Bruford, considered this ‘an excellent move.’ Despite being heartbroken to leave the ‘family’ she had loved and cared for at the Home, it was with ‘rejoicing and a sense of fulfilment’ that she handed over to her Indian colleague. ‘All work possible should be given over to Indian hands these days, and they be allowed to take the initiative...’ she emphasised to SPG. It was important that the Mission’s maxim: “The Church must increase and the Mission decrease” did not become a platitude.<sup>126</sup>

In their schools, hospitals, and widows’ homes, as well as in evangelistic work, women missionaries worked mostly with and amongst Indian women. Their letters, reports, and publications frequently expressed horror at the conditions in which these women lived and highlighted similar issues to those emphasised by ‘maternal imperialist’ campaigners like Eleanor Rathbone,<sup>127</sup> and described by Katherine Mayo in her infamous work of 1927, *Mother India*<sup>128</sup>: purdah, child marriage and widowhood, infant mortality, the dangers of ‘native’ dais etc. Yet, women missionaries were not political ‘feminists’ or social reformers. They did not consider universal suffrage or legislative reform the remedy to such evils. Equally, while providing a small number of Indian women with the resources to train as teachers, nurses, and Church workers, they did not advocate careers for all. School curricula accepted a substantial number of girls would become wives and mothers, and sought to prepare them to carry out traditional domestic work in a Christian manner. Missionaries’ ‘feminism’ was of a distinctively Christian hue. In her pamphlet, *Indian Womanhood Today*, (published two years after *Mother India*) Lilian Underhill of the CMS emphasised: ‘[t]rue equality is given only by Christianity... a Person, Jesus Christ, is the

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<sup>126</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E95/9 1942. Lahore. Miss Bruford.

<sup>127</sup> See Barbara N. Ramusack, ‘Cultural Missionaries, Maternal Imperialists, Feminist Allies. British women activities in India, 1865-1945’ in Chaudhuri and Strobel (eds), *Western Women and Imperialism*.; Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of history: British feminists, Indian women, and imperial culture, 1865-1915*. (North Carolina, 1994), & Kumari Jayawardena, *The White Woman’s Other Burden. Western women and South Asia during British colonial rule*. (London, 1995).

<sup>128</sup> Katherine Mayo, *Mother India*. (London, 1927).

need and the hope for the regeneration of India.’<sup>129</sup> Not in Islam, nor in Hinduism, was equality of sexes to be found. It was only put into action in the New Testament. Indeed, Mrs Underhill urged, it ‘was to a woman that the great honour was given to be the first to see Him after His rising from the grave – and to a woman was given the command, “Go tell.”’<sup>130</sup> For the missionary ‘feminist,’ therefore, emancipation came only through evangelisation and conversion.

### *Missionary evangelism*

Evangelistic workers were not based in institutions and conformed more to the missionary stereotype of itinerant preachers. While women evangelists had traditionally worked in elite Hindu and Muslim zenanas in towns, by the 1920s their work was largely amongst newly-Christian, lower-caste and ‘untouchable’ villagers.<sup>131</sup> They were allocated specific areas of a diocese where they were responsible for teaching the Anglican faith. Although most of their work focused upon women, they did interact with husbands and children as well.

Missionaries’ reports provide an insight into their strategies of teaching, as well as highlighting the difficulties they encountered when dealing with embryonic Christian communities. The majority of village Christians were the products of ‘mass movement’ conversions. The evangelistic missionaries of St Stephen’s Community, for example, worked amongst the Chamar community in and around Delhi. The Chamars, an outcaste class of shoemakers, had first come into contact with missionary evangelists forty years previously. Small communities of Christians had been established, but the majority had fallen away from the faith, ‘being disappointed that Christianity did not mean as much as

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<sup>129</sup> Lilian A. Underhill, *Indian Womanhood Today*. (London, 1929). p.19. Mrs Underhill was better known as Lilian Starr – see Chapter Five.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid*, p.20.

<sup>131</sup> Zenana work continued at CMS Agra, Aligarh and Meerut, and SPG Delhi, Simla and Moradabad etc.

they thought it meant in the way of material gain.’ Work amongst the Chamars was dismissed by the Mission as ‘well-nigh useless, as they seemed to be incapable of taking in any kind of spiritual truth whatsoever.’ Yet, when the missionaries least expected it, the community began seeking Christian teaching one again.<sup>132</sup> CMS women missionaries of the United Provinces Mission also worked amongst Chamars to the East of Delhi in the Meerut, Muzaffarnagar, Ghaziabad, and Aligarh districts.<sup>133</sup>

The manner in which evangelistic work was carried out varied depending on the seasons and the geography of the mission district. Women missionaries, alongside Biblewomen and catechists, were often responsible for teaching in over one hundred villages. In the Bombay diocese, for example, two SPG evangelistic workers (and their Indian colleagues) were responsible for teaching in the Ahmednagar district, which was the size of Wales and had a population of 800,000!<sup>134</sup> In order to reach more outlying communities of Christians and catechumens at least once a year, some evangelistic missionaries spent part of the year in camp. Describing her first year of CMS work in the Meerut district in 1917, for example, Charlotte Ramsden explained that she had camped in the district during the cold weather. Borrowed dak-bungalows were used until the ground was dry enough for tents. Over six months, Miss Ramsden, her Eurasian colleague (a missionary in local connection), two Biblewomen, and one or two male catechists camped in sixteen places and visited another sixty villages. Their principal aim in each village was to prepare enquirers for baptism and to build up converts in the faith, although as catechumens and Christians were at work during the day, they also evangelised other classes in the neighbourhood. In the evening, by the light of lanterns, they would sit in the verandah of mud huts and teach bhajans and Bible stories, show pictures, and ask questions from a simple ‘Mass Movement Catechism.’ In the hot weather, Miss Ramsden

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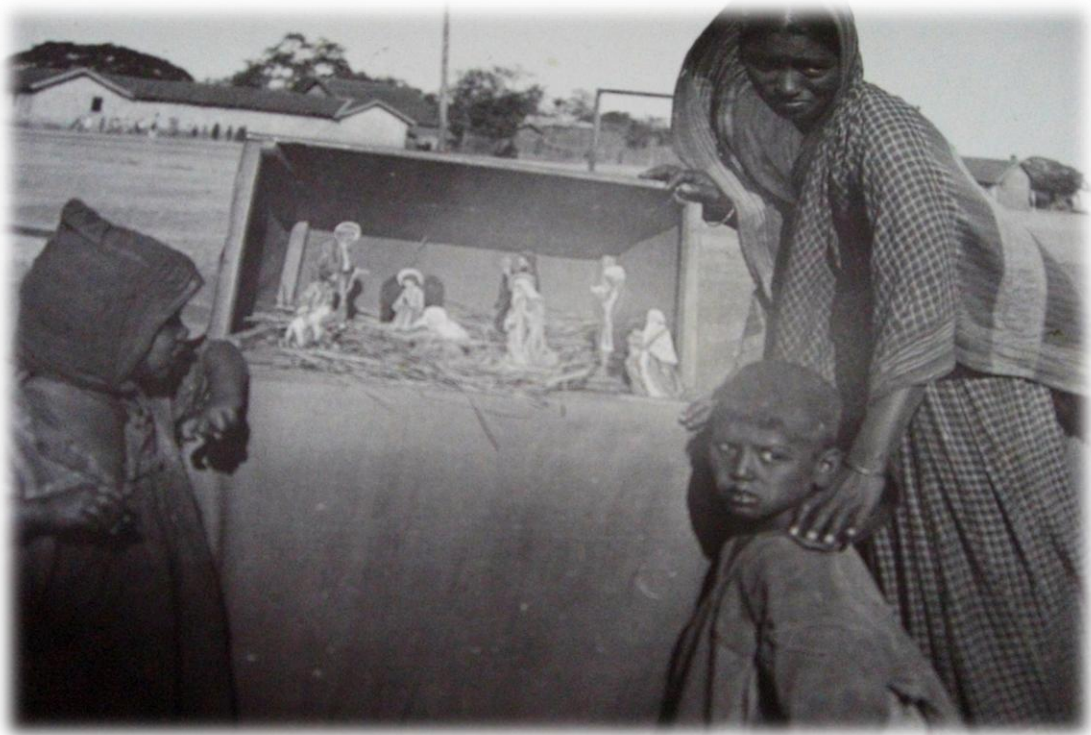
<sup>132</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E75b 1920. Lahore. Letter from Miss Henderson.

<sup>133</sup> See CMS, Birmingham. Annual Letters.

<sup>134</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E78c 1923. Ahmednagar News Sheet, December 1923. No.1.

and her colleagues returned to Meerut and each day visited one of the ten or twelve surrounding villages which could be reached within an hour's drive.<sup>135</sup>

**Figure 3.4.**  
**Evangelistic work: a Sunday school demonstration at Christmas, Criminal Tribes Settlement, Hubli, 1936.**<sup>136</sup> [Copyright: USPG]



The language used by missionaries to describe 'mass movement' Christians and enquirers stressed their ignorance, backwardness, and simplicity. Teaching had to be basic and repetitive due to their lack of education. Like children, they were easily distracted and frightened by superstitions. In their reports and letters, missionaries frequently highlighted the degraded and pitiful lives outcasts had lived before conversion, emphasising the impact that Baptism had made upon 'these poor darkened minds': 'there is yet the light of new intelligence and a new hope in their eyes, which you will not find in their unbaptised brothers and sisters.'<sup>137</sup> Interestingly, this notion that converts' spiritual change had also

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<sup>135</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Charlotte Ramsden, 1917.

<sup>136</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. Photographs. 702 Hubli (India) 32 Photos of the Church of the Holy Name and Hubli settlement etc.

<sup>137</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E75b 1920. Lahore. Letter from Miss Henderson.

brought about a change in the physical appearance of their faces was regularly expressed in SPG and CMS reports: ‘shining faces...tell us of the new life within.’<sup>138</sup> Women missionaries’ emphasis on the backwardness of Indian villagers may have been a natural reaction to the difference between village life and Western standards. On the other hand, it was also a useful device: any advances were therefore more of an achievement and any setbacks in villagers’ progress towards Christianity could be more easily explained and justified. When highlighting problems with village converts, for example, Lilian Henderson argued that it was ‘ridiculous to expect plain-sailing at all times’ as the converts were still mere ‘babes in Christ,’ just ‘dragged an inch or two out of the mire of heathenism... with all the old life still strong within them.’<sup>139</sup>

In all areas, missionary methods of teaching in the villages were similar. An article submitted to SPG in 1920 by Lilian Henderson entitled ‘A glimpse of village work in the Delhi District’ is particularly useful in giving details of the efforts they took to ensure villagers understood their new faith despite their ‘undeveloped minds.’ A typical meeting of women Christians and catechumens would start with lengthy singing of bhajans. Then, a Bible story would be told ‘in language fitted to the intellect of an average child of 5 or 6 with certain elaborations to make it more vivid.’ Relevant questions would be asked: “‘Who is the strong man, who has kept so many under his thrall?’” questions the missionary. “‘Satan,’” comes the ready answer. “‘And the stronger than He?’” “‘Our Lord Jesus Christ, God’s Son.’” At the end of the lesson, the missionary would do some catechesis, reminding the villagers of the fundamental lessons they had learnt prior to Baptism. The Creed or the Commandments would be recited. Miss Henderson described

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<sup>138</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Mary Laurence, 1923. See also: CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Kathleen Bernard, 1921. AL ASW. 1935-1939. Dorothy Sykes, 1935. G.E. Tucker, 1938. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Barbara Rutherford, 1948. Ada Simmonds, 1943. USPG, Rhodes House. E79c 1924. Dorothy Holcroft. 95/12. 1942. Nasik. Miss Field.

<sup>139</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E75b 1920. Letter from Miss Henderson.

how a missionary would ask questions, trying to ascertain the depth of village Christians' understanding of what she had taught. She might ask, for example, who could belong to God's family – “Is it for English folk, or for Mussalmans, or Brahmins alone?”

Interestingly, symbolic gestures were also used by missionaries to convey serious messages. At the end of the lesson and catechesis, simple prayers would be said, then the Creed would be recited once more. This was no longer as a lesson, however, but ‘as the sign and seal of their Christian profession.’ Only baptised Christians were allowed to stand for this ‘solemn act.’ This physical symbol clearly differentiated Christians from non-Christians, demonstrating to non-Christian Chamars the gravity of the decision that their brethren had made in embracing their new religion. They were now privileged members of a community of faith; they had elevated themselves (quite literally) from their former debased condition.<sup>140</sup>

Miss Henderson's colleague, Emily Bengough, also gives interesting details of the use of symbolism by missionaries in her report for 1921. She explained how a Chamar custom had been incorporated into the service in which enquirers became catechumens. When swearing oaths, the Chamars had a ceremony where they would put a pinch of salt into a vessel of water. This now took place during the service, accompanying the swearing by new catechumens that they would remain steadfast in the Christian faith for the remainder of their lives.<sup>141</sup> By using a sign easily recognisable to, and accepted by, the Chamar community, missionaries could better convey the importance of the enquirers' actions.

Women missionaries encountered numerous disappointments, difficulties, and frustrations in their evangelistic work. Consecutive missionary reports demonstrate that

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<sup>140</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E75b 1920. Lahore. Letter from Miss Henderson.

<sup>141</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E76c 1921. Lahore. Miss Bengough.

joyful advances were often followed by devastating setbacks. These were sometimes precipitated by outside influences. In 1922, for example, about twenty families from the SPG village of Bijwásan in the Gurgaon district were confirmed, alongside Christians from the nearby villages of Dhulsiras and Dundohera, in a huge service and Christian Mela (festival) at Mehrauli. Miss Henderson recalled the occasion as ‘one of the most touching, thrilling and inspiring events in which I have ever been permitted to share.’<sup>142</sup> Yet, following the Confirmation came a ‘crushing blow.’ The landowners of Bijwásan turned to open violence against the Christian community, refusing them their usual payment in kind, forbidding them to use the jungle to gather sticks or to graze their cattle, and setting fire to their houses. Although some Christians remained constant in their faith, others fell away. The attacks had repercussions for Christians in surrounding villages as well. Three villages of catechumens lapsed altogether and Christians in the whole neighbourhood were suffering from ‘paralysing fear’ and depression. All their ‘former keenness’ disappeared and many, especially amongst the women, returned to their ‘heathen’ customs and practices.<sup>143</sup>

Persecution of Christian communities by their higher caste neighbours was a recurrent problem. Converts in SPG and particularly in CMS villages around Delhi were especially intimidated by the growing Arya Samaj movement in the 1920s and 1930s. Founded in Bombay in April 1875 as a Hindu reformist and revivalist response to the growth of Christianity and missionary institutions, this movement self-consciously imitated missionary strategies. It had its own press, orphanages, street-preaching missionaries (upadeshaks), Vedic Missionary Fund, and Arya Tract Society. It also founded the Dayananad Anglo-Vedic High School in Lahore in June 1888.<sup>144</sup> The Samaj

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<sup>142</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E77b 1922. Lahore. Miss Henderson.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> See Kenneth Jones, *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Punjab*. (New Delhi, 1976). pp.46-88, & *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India*. (Cambridge, 1989).

intentionally established itself as an alternative ‘resource’ bank for Indians, a competitor in the battle for souls.<sup>145</sup> Samaj members held anti-Christian meetings in bazaars, encouraged the boycott of mission schools, and released propaganda discouraging the purchase of Gospels. Landowners influenced by the Samaj also prevented missionaries from purchasing land.<sup>146</sup> At Jeyi, for example, Mabel Lewin reported that the Samaj ‘are copying our methods but are able to do so in a better way owing to having voluntary workers and much more money at their command.’ During the missionaries’ camp at the village of Sona, a party of six or eight members of the Arya Samaj had arrived for four days and held well-publicised meetings with trained musicians, Indian historical songs celebrating past efforts of the Rajputs for their religion, and speeches encouraging the audience to shun Christianity and remain loyal to Hinduism.<sup>147</sup>

Other setbacks came from within the embryonic Christian community itself. Although Christianity was supposed to be casteless, new converts found it difficult to shake off their caste differences. In the early 1920s, following the baptism of Chamar Christians in the village of Sohna, the village’s sweeper community had approached SPG missionaries asking for teaching and Baptism. This request had been accepted, much to the resentment of the Chamars, whose ‘deeply rooted caste prejudices’ prevented them from admitting sweepers ‘to any sort of equality with themselves.’<sup>148</sup> Although progress towards unity was made – the sweepers being invited to attend the village panchayat and share in some services – this was beset by setbacks. In March 1924, when the Bishop of Lahore

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<sup>145</sup> This mimicry was common to other reformist and revivalist groups in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries including the Islamic revivalist Aligarh Movement. See Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*. (New Jersey, 1982).

<sup>146</sup> See variously: CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Kathleen Bernard, 1925. Mary Laurence, 1927, 1933. Annie Lowick, 1919, 1927. Mary Woodhouse, 1933. Etc. USPG, Rhodes House. E76c1921. Lahore. Miss Bengough. 85c 1930. Lahore. Miss Griffith. Miss Norris.

<sup>147</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Mabel Lewin, 1927.

<sup>148</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E77b 1922. Lahore. Miss Henderson.

visited the village, the Chamars refused to take part in any celebration of which the sweepers were part. They hoped after finishing the sweepers' Confirmation, the Bishop would hold a special service for them in their basti. He refused to come, however, seeking to teach them a 'valuable, tho' bitter lesson' that 'Our Lord's Church is One.'<sup>149</sup>

The endurance of 'heathen' customs among new Christian communities was also a continual problem. Persecution or the pressure of non-Christian families and friends led converts to revert to 'heathen' burial or marriage customs, or superstitious practices like the wearing of Hindu charms. It was also difficult to replace a pervading fear of evil spirits and angry gods bringing sickness and death with knowledge of a God of love and forgiveness. An especial difficulty was 'the marriage question.' Familial pressures and the lack of sufficient numbers of Christian boys and girls to provide matches led many Christian parents to betroth their young children to non-Christians. For this reason, 'some otherwise keen Christians' were barred from Holy Communion and Confirmation: a 'great source of weakness to the Church.'<sup>150</sup> In 1934, Mary Laurence of the CMS expressed her disappointment that two leading communicants at Rardhna (a village where the mission had been working for twenty years) whom she had considered 'enlightened' and 'intelligent beyond many' decided to marry their ten year old son to a 'heathen' girl by Hindu rites. They did this with the full approval and fellowship of almost all the Christians and catechumens.<sup>151</sup>

Sometimes missionaries took extreme measures to prevent such occurrences. Deaconess Katherine Hall Hall, an SPG evangelist in Kolhapur for example, once made 'a memorable journey [in the late 1920s] on foot of some 32 miles between dawn and midnight in order to try to save one of [the Mission's] young school-girls from a Hindu marriage which was being arranged for her.' Despite her great efforts, she was

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<sup>149</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E79c 1924. Lahore. Miss Henderson.

<sup>150</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E79c 1924. Lahore. Deaconess Maud Favell.

<sup>151</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Mary Laurence, 1934.

unsuccessful.<sup>152</sup> Another SPG missionary, Cecilia Norris, took similarly dramatic action to prevent a school girl from Jangpura from being married to a heathen boy. According to Miss Norris, nothing would dissuade the girl's mother from making such an arrangement, 'so I decided to take strong measures, and literally kidnapped the child. Relay after relay of relatives and friends came to the school to, to put it mildly, discuss the matter, but we hung on to the child, and now everything has settled down...'<sup>153</sup> It is fascinating to observe that Miss Norris felt no scruples, (at least no declared scruples), about snatching a child from her parents' control. She was utterly convinced of her own moral authority.

'Heathen' marriage practices remained a problem in the 1940s. In her report of 1945 from Kolhapur in the Bombay diocese, the SPG missionary Sarah Tollett acknowledged the material pressures upon parents which led them to arrange such matches. Village congregations were so poor that it required 'a tremendous act of faith to resist an offer of marriage from a family owning land...' It was considered imperative for girls to be married by the time they were twelve or thirteen for their own protection. In some areas, attempts had been made to overcome this problem – a betrothal ceremony would take place and then the parties would return to Church for the marriage ceremony once they had reached the required age. This had not been an unqualified success, however, as some young men had claimed the betrothal was in fact marriage and had refused to return for the marriage ceremony in Church.

The language used by women missionaries to describe their encounters with 'heathenism' in their evangelistic work, hospitals and schools is revealing. As shown in Chapter One, women attended lectures on Hinduism and Islam as part of their training. Though they sometimes described Hindu and Muslim festivals in their reports and letters,

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<sup>152</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E95/2 1940. Bombay, Miss Tollett.

<sup>153</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E79c 1924. Lahore. Miss Norris.

they did not engage with the fundamental theological tenets of these religions. The beliefs they criticised seemed little to do with doctrine or opposing understandings of the Divine. The Gita and Qur'an were scarcely mentioned. Instead, missionaries attacked supposedly superstitious practices and harmful traditions. Like British and Indian reformers, they drew attention to the social evils of Hinduism and Islam, in particular repression of women.

Women missionaries' portrayal of 'heathen' religions was somewhat essentialised:

Hinduism was presented in simplistic terms as a religion of caste and child marriage, Islam of purdah. 'Difference' was emphasised. Any similarities with Christian beliefs were overlooked. Of course, this does not mean that women missionaries were necessarily ignorant of the intricacies of Hindu and Muslim spirituality. In writing for a home audience, they may have deliberately focused upon describing social evils as this was far more likely to attract financial support than dry theological debate. Women's lack of engagement with Hindu and Muslim beliefs also reflects the nature of their work. Unlike their male colleagues, they did not regularly debate with learned Brahmins and mullahs, nor were they responsible for the complex theological training of Christian priests. The Hindus, Muslims, and unformed converts they encountered on a daily basis were largely uneducated. Their faith was based more upon inherited traditions than detailed spiritual study.

In their evangelising in towns and villages, women missionaries were certainly not alone. They were aided by Indian Biblewomen and by the wives of Indian padres, readers, and catechists. The scale of 'native' agency is difficult to quantify. Biblewomen were often unnamed in missionaries' reports and letters. According to Jeffrey Cox, there were approximately 5,030 Indian women conducting Church work across India in 1935.<sup>154</sup> As in

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<sup>154</sup> Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*. p.251.

hospitals and schools, throughout the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s missionaries attempted to place more responsibility in these women's hands. The importance of providing Indian evangelists with sufficient training was reiterated. From the early 1920s, summer schools and training classes were started for Biblewomen and the wives of catechists. At one such CMS summer school for catechists' wives, held at Khatauli in 1934, each day was started with a short Church service, followed by Bible reading. Women then attended classes in needlework, the teaching of village Christians for Baptism and Confirmation, hygiene and simple medicine, Bible storytelling and bhajan-singing. In the evening, there was singing and prayers. Women missionaries examined each woman individually.<sup>155</sup>

Women missionaries' attitudes towards their Indian colleagues, at least those recorded in letters and reports, were usually positive, praising their hard work and devotion. In her report of 1925 from the Karegaon district of Ahmednagar, for example, Nellie Kenyon admitted she was often saddened by the 'ignorance, slackness, superstition and Hindu ideas about marriage' of the Christians amongst whom she worked. Her 'most constant source of joy,' however, was 'the help in prayer and work given by one's Indian fellow workers.'<sup>156</sup> Yet, true fellowship between missionaries and Indian workers, and between missionaries and the Indians whom they served, was not easy. In her report for 1918, for example, Mary Laurence confessed that her first experience of camping in the Meerut district without a fellow European missionary had been difficult: 'I found that with a good staff of Indian helpers, we were able to get almost as much work done, but the burden of responsibility for all the many arrangements... becomes rather heavy unshared.' Although her head Biblewoman had a 'very practical and helpful spirit' and she and her co-workers had 'lived together as a family, happy together and in the work,' she had felt

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<sup>155</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1935-1939. Miss Compton, 1935.

<sup>156</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E80b 1925. Bombay. Miss Kenyon.

lonely.<sup>157</sup> Deaconess Carol Graham, who arrived in Dornakal diocese in 1927, also found ‘[o]ur relations with our Indian colleagues were good upon a point, but there was a definite line beyond which we did not go.’<sup>158</sup>

### *Towards real fellowship*

Genuine ‘Indianisation’ was far more complicated, therefore, than the mere promotion of Indians to positions of responsibility and authority in missionary educational, medical, and evangelistic work. In order for a vibrant ‘native’ Church to grow, Christianity had to be rendered meaningful to the vast majority of Indians. This could not occur if a concept of ‘difference’ persisted between missionaries and Indian Christians, and if Christianity continued to be viewed as a ‘foreign’ Western religion. Missionaries must no longer be overlords, but as Azariah had desired, partners and ‘friends.’ Consequently, women missionaries made a number of attempts between 1917 and 1950 to increase fellowship with the Indians with and amongst whom they worked.

One particular institution, distinctive to missionaries of the high-Church SPG, seemed especially suited to cultivating spiritual companionship: the women’s community. From the 1920s, increasing efforts were made to encourage Indian women’s association with such communities. In contrast to the annual reports, the Minute Books of St Stephen’s Community in Delhi provide particularly useful information on this process.<sup>159</sup> The Community’s labours in this area are also of interest to historians as they give clues as to how missionaries were perceived by their Indian co-workers. It is extremely difficult to uncover the opinions of these workers as they did not leave their own records: we see them only through missionaries’ eyes. The Minute Books give far greater indication than usual

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<sup>157</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Mary Laurence, 1918.

<sup>158</sup> Graham, *Between Two Worlds*. p.3.

<sup>159</sup> Archive of St Stephen’s Community, Delhi. Minute Books.

of their views. They also highlight the difficulties the Community faced in adapting itself to Indian needs.

By the 1920s, only one Indian woman had been a member of St Stephen's. Miss Mary Tarachand, daughter of the Reverend Lala Tarachand, had worked in the zenanas and bastis in Delhi and in St Elizabeth's school from 1895 until her death in 1899.<sup>160</sup> In 1922, a Sub-Committee of the Community drafted a Rule for a Guild of Indian women in connection with St Stephen's.<sup>161</sup> Interestingly, these proposals were not met with great enthusiasm by those for whom they were intended. Sister Wilkinson, Miss Fenn (of Queen Mary's School), and Miss Mowll (of the Victoria School) reported that 'the idea had not been specially welcomed' by their staffs. It was felt the concept had 'not been fully understood' and a meeting to hear the opinions of Indian workers was advisable.<sup>162</sup> It does not seem, however, that such a meeting materialised.

In the 1930s, renewed efforts were made towards fellowship. Significantly, in contrast to the previous decade, these were partly prompted by a direct request from an Indian woman herself. Abigail Gopal, Matron at St Mary's Home, 'definitely wanted a Rule of Life in common with other people, together with the privileges of Quiet Days and a share in [the Community's] fellowship.'<sup>163</sup> A special meeting was called, consisting of: Miss Gopal, nine of the mission's Indian teachers, and two nurses from the hospital. While one or two of the women expressed a desire for more discipline and fellowship in devotional life, nobody shared Miss Gopal's need for a Rule. It is significant that no members of the Community attended this meeting. The Minute Book reported: 'It was not easy to gather exactly what had happened...' and concluded 'probably none of them had

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<sup>160</sup> Biswas, *Not Mere Memories*. pp.114-115.

<sup>161</sup> Minutes of St Stephen's Community. March 1917-October 1927. March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1922.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.* November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1922.

<sup>163</sup> Minutes of St Stephen's Community. 1928-1938. 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1934.

grasped what Miss Gopal was driving at.’<sup>164</sup> Despite this, it seems the Community had realised the importance of allowing their Indian colleagues to form their own ideas and opinions, away from missionary input or interference. Perhaps they had learnt from their abortive attempts to form a Guild in the 1920s that Indian initiative was key?

Two months later, in May 1934, a long discussion took place over the possible formation of an Indian Association in connection with the Community. Again, members were cautious about forcing ideas upon their co-workers. The Reverend Arabindo Nath Mukerji, who had been specially invited to the meeting, emphasised ‘the beginning [of any Association] must be from the Indian side.’<sup>165</sup> It is important to note that the missionaries of St Stephen’s were not opposed to Indians joining the Community itself. Miss Gould, its Head, had originally suggested Miss Gopal be admitted as a probationer member. It was subsequently decided, however, ‘that all the other workers would be alienated from her’ if this were to occur. Interestingly, it was the Indian participant at the meeting, the Reverend Mukerji, who stressed: ‘there would be the danger of [Miss Gopal] developing an inferiority complex, not through any fault or feeling but because of her limitations of background.’<sup>166</sup>

Ultimately, a special Rule of Life was drawn up to meet Miss Gopal’s needs. She was also at the heart of a new (but short-lived) Indian Fellowship, which was formed in October 1934, with two other members.<sup>167</sup> In November 1941, Miss Gopal was unanimously admitted ‘to full fellowship in the Community as far as the spiritual and social side is concerned,’ and in 1942 she became a full member. It was noted in passing that the Indian Fellowship which had developed around her ‘being somewhat artificial, did

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid. 15<sup>th</sup> May 1934.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid. 13<sup>th</sup> April 1935.

not last long.<sup>168</sup> Miss Gopal's admission did not herald the beginnings of an 'Indianisation' of the Community's membership, however. The next Indian member, Irene Mitra, a former Inspectress of Schools, joined over twenty years later, shortly before her death in 1964.<sup>169</sup> No other Indians were admitted before 1977, when under a new constitution and Rule the Community's scattered Companions became full members.<sup>170</sup>

There are several reasons for this. It is likely, as the Reverend Mukerji implied, that the Community's established Englishness was a deterrent. Although the missionaries were not hostile to admitting Indian colleagues, Indian women themselves may have felt, if not 'inferior' then at least 'different' and 'out of place' amongst educated British women in the highly-Westernised environment of St Stephen's Home. As the Head of Mission, Reverend Frederick Western pertinently remarked in 1927: 'When a number of English people live together, life cannot be so Indian as in other circumstances.'<sup>171</sup> Miss Gopal is an anomaly here. Despite what Reverend Mukerji termed her 'limitations of background,' she clearly did not feel the barrier between herself and the missionaries to be insurmountable.

Unfortunately, there is little information available about her upbringing. The Minute Book does note, however, that she possessed 'a very strong spiritual side' since childhood,<sup>172</sup> suggesting Miss Gopal had been known to the Mission from an early age. She had worked for twenty years within St Stephen's Compound, at St Mary's Home, and would have been well accustomed to the missionaries' ways of life. Perhaps Miss Gopal felt that the spiritual fellowship she would enjoy with the Community would overcome any differences of culture and race?

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<sup>168</sup> Minutes of St Stephen's Community. 1938-1970. 11<sup>th</sup> November 1941.

<sup>169</sup> Ruth Roseveare, *DELHI: Community of St Stephen. 1886-1986*. (privately published, revised June 1987). p.103.

<sup>170</sup> Biswas, *Not Mere Memories*. pp.35-36.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.* 27<sup>th</sup> October 1927.

<sup>172</sup> Minutes of St Stephen's Community. 1938-1970. 11<sup>th</sup> November 1941.

On the subject of race, it is interesting to note that there were several *Anglo-Indian* members of St Stephen's in the 1920s and 1930s [see Figure 3.5.]. These included Agnes Reid Parsons, one of its original members, and Dr Minna Bazely, medical officer at St Stephen's Hospital. These women appear to have been treated exactly the same as British members. Indeed, no reference was ever made to their race, and they sent reports back to SPG in London, which are strikingly similar in tone to those of their British colleagues.<sup>173</sup> A notable example of this occurs in Dr Bazely's account from the mid-1920s of a probationer nurse's skirt catching fire on a ward. 'I'm not surprised at the second nurse not being able to do much,' she wrote, 'the probationer is fat and hefty, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> nurse thin and small, and certainly Indians haven't the presence of mind one would wish them to have in emergencies.'<sup>174</sup> The use of the word 'Indians' is significant, suggesting Dr Bazely saw those amongst whom she worked as the 'other' – people separate and different from herself. Unlike Indian mission workers, Anglo-Indians were probably far more accustomed to Western attitudes and living conditions, and, more importantly, wished to associate themselves with them.

Another reason for the dearth of Indian members may be, as the Reverend Mukerji put it, that 'monasticism was foreign to the country.'<sup>175</sup> Only Abigail Gopal expressed any desire for a 'Rule of Life.' Perhaps her compatriots did not understand what this entailed or perhaps it did not seem relevant or practical for them. The structure of St Stephen's Community simply does not seem to have appealed to a large number of Indian women. (A desire for a more useful, Indian model appears to have motivated its radical overhaul in 1977.) It is true that a successful, indigenous alternative to St Stephen's did not emerge, but perhaps in the 1920s and 1930s, this was not yet viable or desired. Indian women may

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<sup>173</sup> See for example, Dr Bazely's reports. SPG, Rhodes House. Medical Missions Department. 470. St Stephen's Hospital, Delhi. Reports, circular letters etc. 1919-1925.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid. Dr Bazely. Undated – probably 1924.

<sup>175</sup> Minutes of St Stephen's Community. 1928-1938. 15<sup>th</sup> May 1934.

**Figure 3.5.**  
**A change in uniform but still no Indian members: St Stephen's Community, Delhi in the 1920s and (below) 1930s.<sup>176</sup>**

The images originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright. The images can be found at the Archives of St Stephen's Community, Delhi, or in the Bodleian hard copy of this thesis.

**Hilda Gould (Head of the Community) is in the centre. The Anglo-Indian members, Agnes Reid Parsons and Dr Minna Bazely, are second from right in the second row and second from right in the first row respectively.**

**Miss Gould (Head) and Miss Parsons are front row centre.**

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<sup>176</sup> Archive of St Stephen's Community, Delhi. Miscellaneous photographs of the Community.

have found it easier and more acceptable to serve the Church as wives and mothers rather than as single women living in Community. The Indian Church strongly emphasised the importance of motherhood and family, a central aspect of Indian culture, and, ironically, much promoted by the missionaries themselves.

Indeed, the issue of Indian membership of St Stephen's is particularly fascinating as it highlights a crisis of purpose on the part of the Community – a crisis not fully realised by the missionaries themselves. Although the Community seemed keen to 'Indianise' and to respond to Indian ideas for development, they failed to comprehend that their own existence as a Community might be incompatible with the aims of 'Indianisation.' They never considered that the upcoming national Church might find the institutional framework of Community life to be both alien and irrelevant to its needs. Missionaries did realise that 'Indianisation' would ultimately lead to the end of their own usefulness in India – ideally, one day, there would be no missionaries in the subcontinent, but a healthy, 'native' Church. It is striking, therefore, that the members of St Stephen's did not seem to realise that their own institution might also become defunct. Much was spoken about 'the euthanasia of the Mission,' but the far-reaching consequences of this aim were not fully understood. Indians would not simply inherit old structures: they wished to build something new.

Not all missionaries were as blind to the complexities of 'Indianisation' as the missionaries of St Stephen's, however. Some recognised the importance of breaking away from the shackles of Western-style institutions if they were to render the Gospel applicable to Indians. 'We had to present Christ in the veritable down-to-earthness of the Incarnation, Jesus in the simplicity of the Galilean village and his teaching closely related to their daily life,' Deaconess Carol Graham wrote. 'But how could this be done if we ourselves were

condemned to live in the apparent luxury of the old fashioned bungalow, served by a galaxy of servants, eating strange food and wearing still stranger clothes?"<sup>177</sup> New communities needed to be constructed on Indian lines, in which missionaries were helpers and friends, not superiors.

Ashram fellowships were founded on this principle. Women missionaries of CMS worked at Bethel Ashram at Tiruvella in Travancore [see Figure 3.6.] and at Vidvelli Ashram in Tinnevely, while those of SPG worked at Sevananda Ashram at Nandikothur in the Dornakal diocese. Bethel Ashram was one of the oldest in South India. It was established in 1922 in a house in Alleppey by Edith Neve, a CMS missionary at Pallam, and an Indian teacher, Rachel Joseph. Miss Neve believed 'the way to help people is to be one with them,' and that ashram life was a step towards this.<sup>178</sup> In 1926, the ashram moved to a permanent home in Tiruvella. It was supported largely by local contributions and included a school for 'untouchables', an orphanage, a dispensary, and industrial work. Ashrams also acted as training centres for Indian Church workers. At Sevananda (founded in 1941), conferences and refresher courses were held for women evangelists, elders, and village teachers' wives. Young women were also trained to work as evangelists and matrons of girls' hostels in the various pastorates of the diocese.<sup>179</sup> The physical symbolism of ashrams was extremely important. Gone was the implicit superiority of the grand, Western-furnished mission bungalow. Missionaries were now placing themselves on a level with Indians and embracing Indian living conditions. Looking back over her forty year career in 1948, Edith Neve noted dramatic changes in missionary lifestyle. 'In 1907 we lived in big bungalows and were waited on by men servants. We had horses on which we used to go for rides in the evenings, and though I was working in a school I never had a meal with either teachers or girls...' she recalled. 'Now none of the bungalows

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<sup>177</sup> Graham, *Between Two Worlds*. p.21.

<sup>178</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Edith Neve, 1948.

<sup>179</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E95/6 Dornakal. 1942. Mary Kirby.

are occupied by missionaries, all are accustomed to Indian clothes, Indian food and Indian customs...<sup>180</sup> Change was also reflected in vocabulary. All ashram workers – Indian or British – were referred to as ‘sisters,’ implying equal status and shared duties.

**Figure 3.6.**  
**Members of Bethel Ashram Fellowship in the Ashram Chapel, c.1930s.<sup>181</sup>**  
**[Copyright: CMS]**



Further experiments in communal living were made elsewhere. Unlike those of SPG, several women missionaries of CMS were employed in so-called ‘canal colonies’ in the Punjab. Canal irrigation in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries had led to the opening-up of eleven million acres of new land by 1947.<sup>182</sup> Missionaries had leased such land from the government in order to create ‘model villages.’ It had been hoped that

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<sup>180</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Edith Neve, 1948.

<sup>181</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Unofficial. Miss Lilian Annie Davies. Z1. Photographs.

<sup>182</sup> Christopher Harding, *The Dynamics of Low-Caste Conversion Movements: Rural Punjab, c.1880-1935*. (D.Phil Thesis, University of Oxford, Trinity Term 2004).

by physically removing converts from their village environments and immersing them in a Christian community, they would be emancipated from former ties and more fully embrace the Gospel. These villages consisted of a mission station with Church, schools and dispensaries, village industries, and agricultural land. Women missionaries of CMS worked as evangelists, school superintendents, and dispensers at three such colonies: Clarkabad (founded in 1869), Montgomerywala (1898), and Batemanabad (1909). CMS' 'canal colonies' were beset with numerous difficulties. Montgomerywala had a particularly bad reputation. In 1901, its tenants had rebelled against their missionary landowners. Acrimonious litigation, stealing, fights, wife-beating, and other lapses in Christian conduct were regularly reported.<sup>183</sup> In 1941, Deaconess Beatrice Weston acknowledged: 'we 'in the family' must admit that we are not a shining Christian witness in the non-Christian world – we are not bringing much joy to the heart of Jesus.'<sup>184</sup>

Two years previously, the Deaconess had begun a new experiment at Montgomerywala which aimed to make Christian witness in the colony less missionary-centric and more applicable to its Indian population. This had been partly stimulated by CMS' difficulties in supplying a medical worker for the village's dispensary. Mrs Chandu Lal, the young widow of an Indian CMS missionary, had been asked to take charge of the work. 'This she did and we had a very queer time during the heat and newness of it all; trying to accommodate ourselves to each other's temperament and racial differences,' reported the Deaconess. 'But love of Christ did prove our highest common factor and quickly developed our love for each other... our learning to live together, an Indian and an Australian alone in the jungle 12 miles from our nearest neighbours, has taught us both something of what we as a Mission and part of the Indian Church must yet face if we hope

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<sup>183</sup> See for example, CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Ruth Salmon, 1922. E. Theodora Barton, 1926.

<sup>184</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Deaconess Beatrice Weston, 1941.

to present a really united front against the forces of evil in India.’<sup>185</sup> Rosamund Chalk and Winifred Creed Meredith, who served at Montgomerywala during the Deaconess’ furlough, also shared her belief in the importance of this step and advocated its replication elsewhere.<sup>186</sup> ‘In living together, bonds of sympathy and understanding are forged which cannot, I believe, be forged in any other way...’ Miss Chalk told CMS. ‘One finds oneself almost unconsciously coming to view many things through their [the Indians’] eyes – or at least coming to understand how they would view them...’<sup>187</sup> Again, the symbolism of the new living arrangements was important. As Mrs Lal’s mother and young son also lived in the house, the situation was that of a missionary choosing to live with an Indian family in Indian conditions rather than an Indian worker being accommodated by a missionary in Westernised ones.<sup>188</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Leslie A. Flemming in her work on American Presbyterian missionaries between 1870 and 1930 has argued that these women regarded themselves as ‘agents of change,’ bringing Christianity to alter Indian women’s lives for the better. Their rhetoric drew attention to Indian women’s low status in society and implicitly assumed the superiority of their own Western cultural values.<sup>189</sup> It is clear, however, that such assumptions were made increasingly rarely by CMS and SPG women missionaries in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. As well as reasserting the long-held missionary goal of ‘euthanasia,’ the policy of ‘Indianisation’ was an implicit recognition of missionary failure. Missionaries had not been effective ‘agents of change,’ at least not in the ways they had intended. The majority

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid. 1940.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid. Winifred Creed Meredith, 1942.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid. Rosamund Chalk. 1942.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Leslie A. Flemming, ‘A New Humanity. American missionaries’ ideas for women in North India, 1870-1930,’ in Chaudhuri and Strobel (eds.), *Western Women and Imperialism*. See also Flemming, (ed.), *Women’s Work for Women*.

of Indians, in particular the high-caste, educated elites targeted by early mission strategy, had shown themselves willing to utilise the educational and medical ‘resources’ of mission schools and hospitals, but had remained unresponsive to the Gospel. The Indians who had converted in the unexpected ‘mass movements’ were lower-caste or ‘untouchable’, impoverished and illiterate villagers. It was these dubious Christians from whom the Indian Church had to be built. New mission strategies were required to educate such unformed minds in their new faith. Yet, progress had to be quick. Growing demands for an Indian nation state raised the possibility that British missionaries might no longer be permitted to remain in the subcontinent. It was even more imperative, therefore, that Indian Christians should be capable of running their own Church and evangelising their own people. *They* had to become the ‘agents of change.’

Increasingly, therefore, women missionaries’ work and self-perceptions were transformed by ‘Indianisation.’ Admittedly some still considered (however unconsciously) their own Western-learnt methods superior in the running of hospitals and schools. Like British-based social reformers, they saw themselves (and were seen) as mother figures with Indian women as their backward, ignorant daughters, requiring much teaching and supervision. Nurses in training, patients, and villagers were described condescendingly as ‘children.’ Missionaries were also reluctant to surrender power. On many occasions, it was only when shortages of recruits made the promotion of Indian colleagues imperative that they realised their co-workers’ capabilities. They also failed to understand that some mission institutions were too Westernised, and not necessarily desired by, or relevant to, the emerging Indian Church. Yet, attitudes were changing. Trusted Indian colleagues were promoted to positions of equality with, if not authority over, missionaries, and their distinctively-Indian methods were increasingly valued. Missionaries were starting to step back to allow Indians to shape the character of their Church, understanding that the

missionary Church and spirituality was inadequate for Indian needs. As will be explored further in Chapter Four, missionaries themselves were transformed – by the 1940s, rather than seeking to change them, they were adapting themselves to Indian ideas and ways of life. To some Indians at least, they began to be regarded less as mother figures and more as sisters. In 1941, for example, on an Indian colleague's suggestion, Winifred Creed Meredith of the CMS began to be referred to as 'Apa Ji' (big sister) rather than her former title of 'Miss Sahib.' 'They say "What's in a name,"' she wrote, 'but all I can say is "A great deal." I seemed at once to get into quite a different relationship to any I had ever had with my Indian fellow workers before. We have always been happy together, but now we were one family...' More and more, women missionaries of CMS and SPG no longer presented themselves as 'agents of change.' Instead, they emphasised that such change had to come from Indian women (and men). As the SPG missionary, Jane Latham, argued in her pamphlet of 1930, *Native Workers in the Younger Churches*, missionaries realised that Indian women would 'do for the glory of God and for the service of their people what foreigners can never do.'<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Jane L. Latham, *Native Workers in the Younger Churches (Women)*. (Westminster, 1930).

## Chapter Four: Missionaries and their Church.

Question 8 of CMS' blue application form asked candidates to give reasons for their membership of the Church of England. 'Because the Church of England is a true branch of the Catholic Church, founded by our Lord Jesus Christ,' wrote Elsie Hunt in 1913. 'Because the Church of England (unlike the Roman branch of the Catholic Church) seeks by the power of God to keep itself from error, and to teach those and only those doctrines which are found in the Bible. Therefore the Church of England has not only retained its Apostolic succession, but it is the purest form of the Catholic Church.'<sup>1</sup> Such rationale was echoed by most of Elsie's fellow applicants. Others expressed a more personal rapport with the established Church, variously describing it as the Church which 'best satisfies my needs,' which '[conforms] most nearly to my idea of what the Church should be,' and a place where one could 'feel at home.'<sup>2</sup>

While women missionaries may have been more eloquent in their appreciation and more active members of the Anglican communion than most of their English contemporaries in the 1920s and 1930s, a significant part of the population would have shared, however loosely, their identification with the established Church. As Matthew Grimley<sup>3</sup> and John Maiden<sup>4</sup> demonstrate, historians have unduly emphasised Church of England decline and 'secularisation' in the early twentieth century. The Church continued to exercise considerable influence in national life. While only 2,171,619 people, out of a total population (in England and Wales) of just under 38 million, attended communion in a Church of England parish on Easter Sunday 1920,<sup>5</sup> three quarters of the population

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<sup>1</sup> CMS, Birmingham C/ATw2. Candidates papers: white and blue packets. Elsie Hunt.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Rose Hill, Olive Cocks, Marguerite Gaze.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Grimley, *Citizenship, community, and the Church of England: liberal Anglican theories of state between the wars*. (Oxford, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> John G. Maiden, *National Religion and the Prayer Book Controversy, 1927-1928*. (Woodbridge, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Robert Currie, Alan Gilbert, and Lee Horsley (eds.), *Church and Churchgoers. Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700*. (Oxford, 1977). pp.128-129.

continued to be baptised in the Church and four-fifths of marriages took place there.<sup>6</sup>

These sacred ceremonies were, for most, not milestones in a life of spirituality, but secular rituals: manifestations of conventional behaviour. Indeed, many, who never attended a service, accepted the Church of England as a 'national' institution, a symbol of 'Englishness.' It was as fundamental to 'national' culture as the Roman Catholic Church was alien. Its buildings peppered the landscape, its affairs were affairs of state, and its leaders were public figures whose pronouncements from the pulpit were reported in the press. Regardless of numbers in pews, the Church of England presented itself as 'the Nation at Prayer.'

For women missionaries, however, the Church of England was far more than an accepted part of civic society. It was, after all, the Church which had nurtured their Christian faith: the faith which inspired them to work in the mission field and to share the Anglican doctrines and formularies they had learnt at home with Indians. In 1917, the Anglican Church in India, in which the missionaries served, was an extension of the Church at home. It was the established Church of the British Raj, founded by Act of Parliament as 'the Church of England in India.' This Church was entirely under British authority. No new diocese could be formed without an Act of the British Parliament, no synod or council could be called without consent of the Crown and the Archbishop of Canterbury, and no decision of any such synod was binding without the same consent. Yet, no Indian representative could sit in Convocation.<sup>7</sup> 'The Church of England in India' encompassed British Chaplains, appointed and financed by the government to minister to the European population, as well as missionaries and indigenous clergymen who ministered to Indians themselves. At the start of our period, therefore, women missionaries

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<sup>6</sup> Hewitt, *The Problems of Success. A History of the Church Missionary Society. Vol.I.* p.409.

<sup>7</sup> 'The Indian Church Measure and the Constitution of the Indian Church' in *The Church Overseas. A Quarterly Review of the Missionary Work of the Church of England.* Vol.I. No.1. (January, 1928). p.15.

in India were working for a Church which was shaped and regulated by, and intimately linked to, their Church at home.

Missionaries' connection to the home Church was much stronger than an Act of Parliament, however. The two mission societies, CMS and SPG, were vital organs of the Anglican communion. SPG was, in fact, the 'official' Society of the Church of England, founded at the request of its Convocation to spread its work overseas. The Archbishop of Canterbury was its President and the Vice-Patron of CMS. Details of the work of both societies appeared in the Official Yearbooks of the Church of England. The administrative hierarchies of CMS and SPG were also dominated by clergymen.<sup>8</sup> The particulars of missionary clergymen were given in *Crockfords* clerical dictionary and most retired from the field to parishes at home. Women missionaries' connection with the home Church was less obvious as they were not members of its patriarchy. They relied principally upon correspondence from the mission society to keep them informed of developments in the home Church. They also received news from Church periodicals sent to the field, and letters from family members (many of whom were clergymen), friends, and parishes in which they were 'own missionaries.' Every five years, women's furloughs gave them an opportunity to renew contacts and assess the current state of the home Church. They rejoined a parish, spoke at meetings in various churches, and attended gatherings like the Keswick Convention and the High Leigh Conference.<sup>9</sup> Between 1917 and 1950, women missionaries' sense of belonging to the Anglican Church, both at home and overseas, was affected by changes in the Church in England and abroad.

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<sup>8</sup> See for example: *Pressing Forward. The C.M.S. Story of the Year for 1929-30.* (London, 1930). p.29.

<sup>9</sup> See for example: CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Kathleen Bernard, Dorothy Sykes. AL ASW. 1935-1939. Violet Stapleton. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Noel Fletcher, Mildred Gibbs. USPG, Rhodes House. CWW275/1-2. Original Letters Received. (Lucknow, Madras). 1927-1929. Dorothea Teale,

### *The Church at Home*

SPG and CMS represented the different forms of Anglican Churchmanship which had developed in the Church of England during the nineteenth century: high-Church Anglo-Catholicism, and low-Church evangelicalism.<sup>10</sup> By the early twentieth century, as Adrian Hastings points out, the Church of England represented an uneasy, ill-balanced combination of these. Most of its laity and clergy were broadly Protestant, yet Anglo-Catholic ideas (for example the regular receipt of Holy Communion) had influenced Church worship and the Anglo-Catholic minority (the majority of whom were clerics) were far more energetic, vociferous, and charismatic than their evangelical counterparts. ‘There are really so few leaders in what are known as the Evangelical ranks,’ lamented Bishop Ernest Ingham, Home Secretary of CMS, to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, in 1911.<sup>11</sup> In the 1920s, conservative evangelicals became increasingly determined to safeguard the Church of England against unwelcome Tractarian accretions. They were also threatened by a rising ‘modernist’ movement. So-called ‘Modern Churchmen,’ who held a notorious conference at Cambridge in 1921, advocated a liberal interpretation of the Bible, which sought to reconcile an understanding of Christ with recent scientific discoveries. They were condemned by traditionalists due to their questioning of the historic truth of the Bible and fundamental doctrines like Jesus’ bodily resurrection.<sup>12</sup>

### *The CMS Split*

In October 1922, a dispute within the evangelical ranks of the Church of England actually precipitated a split within the Church Missionary Society. The Society refused to bow to mounting pressure from conservatives in favour of the adoption of a written

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<sup>10</sup> Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*. Part.I. (London, 1966). Part.II. (London, 1970).

<sup>11</sup> Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity, 1920-1990*. (London, 1991). p.76.

<sup>12</sup> See Richard Lloyd, *The Church of England. 1900-1965*. (London, 1966). pp.258-271.

doctrinal statement to which candidates must assent. These members feared that in the aftermath of the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910, CMS was sacrificing its founding principles and ignoring genuine doctrinal differences with Tractarians in favour of woolly theological liberalism and increasing cooperation. In October 1912, for example, the high-Church Archbishop of London, Arthur Winnington-Ingram had spoken at the Society's Albert Hall meeting.<sup>13</sup> The majority of CMS' General Committee was reluctant to tie the Society to any explicit doctrinal definitions, however. CMS had traditionally taken pride in its broad, 'comprehensive' nature, which required adherence to no doctrinal principals other than those enshrined in the Book of Common Prayer and the Thirty Nine Articles. (Even then, as the CMS application forms illustrate, the Society had been prepared to accept candidates who expressed hesitation or disagreement with specific articles.)<sup>14</sup> As a result, on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1922, conservative evangelicals split from CMS and formed the Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society.

Surprisingly, the disputes and eventual split within their Society seem to have made barely an impact upon CMS women missionaries in India. Indeed, Jocelyn Murray notes that its impact was far greater at home than abroad. While CMS faced the resignation of three Vice Presidents and four honorary governors, much adverse publicity, and the loss of a number of supporters and subscribers, only two missionaries in the field resigned over the issue.<sup>15</sup> In fact, women missionaries did not mention the split at all in their Annual Letters! In view of the controversy, however, the Punjab and Sind Secretary, Reverend C.M. Gough did send missionaries on probation a copy of the General Committee's resolution of July 12<sup>th</sup> 1922, as well as inquiring whether they could 'subscribe to the

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<sup>13</sup> Hewitt, *The Problems of Success. Vol.I.* p.462.

<sup>14</sup> CMS, Birmingham. C/ATw2. Candidates papers: white and blue packets. See for example: Kathleen Bernard, Dora Gough, Helen Graham, Dorothy Honeybourne, Elsie Hunt, Daphne LaBrooy, Dorothy Lyon, Beryl Wilkinson

<sup>15</sup> Jocelyn Murray, *Proclaim the Good News. A short history of the Church Missionary Society.* (London, 1985). pp.181-182.

Nicene Creed and the teaching of the XXXIX Articles of the Church of England especially in their reference to Holy Scripture’ and whether they held ‘with conviction the Evangelical interpretation of their formularies.’<sup>16</sup> Most missionaries signed copies of the resolution without comment, but Ruth Salmon, a missionary at Gojra, questioned the necessity of this ‘as when I offered to the Society in 1918 I was given a very full questionnaire...’ ‘I have no desire to migrate to the B CMS,’ she commented, ‘but wish to remain in the ranks of the CMS to which I offered in 1918. I am not a Modernist, but neither am I an extremist in the other direction. I believe that St Paul’s dictum “Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand,” is a very good one to follow in all matters.’<sup>17</sup>

### *The Prayer Book Dispute*

Differences between Anglo-Catholics and evangelicals also reared their head in the most serious incident affecting the Church of England during this period: the 1927-1928 Prayer Book Dispute. This was, in the words of Matthew Grimley, ‘the last great parliamentary battle between Church and State.’<sup>18</sup> By the early twentieth century, largely due to the rise of Anglo-Catholicism, the realities of Anglican worship in many parishes were not in line with the rubrics of the existing Prayer Book of 1662. A Royal Commission of Enquiry, reporting in 1906, had declared: ‘the law of public worship in the Church of England is too narrow for the religious life of the present generation.’<sup>19</sup> Letters of Business had been sent to Convocation suggesting the preparation of a new rubric regulating the vesture of Church ministers and changing current laws relating to the

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<sup>16</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Overseas. G2 I4/O. Punjab and Sind. Original Papers (Incoming). 1923. 13 – Letter from C.M. Gough to Mr Wigram. 27<sup>th</sup> December 1922.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 14 – Papers from the missionaries concerned. Miss Ruth Salmon.

<sup>18</sup> Grimley, *Citizenship, community, and the Church of England*. p.143.

<sup>19</sup> Rev. A.G. Robinson, ‘Prayer Book Revision,’ in *Official Year-Book of the Church of England*. 1927. (London, 1927). pp.153-154.

conduct of Divine Service. By 1927, proposals for Prayer Book revision had been made by Convocation and were submitted to the National Assembly of the Church of England. The revised Prayer Book made concessions to Anglo-Catholics, including an alternative order of communion service with a longer Eucharistic prayer and newly-entitled section, 'The Consecration,' and provision for reservation of the sacrament for ministry to the sick.<sup>20</sup> The National Assembly consisted of three houses: the Bishops (of which there were forty), the Clergy (319), and the Laity (352 members chosen by an electoral roll of the baptised).<sup>21</sup> It had been formed by the Enabling Act of 1919, which had granted it legislative authority to determine matters of Church administration which previously had to be considered individually by Parliament (and were consequently neglected).<sup>22</sup> In July 1927, the Assembly gave final approval to the revised Prayer Book by 517 votes to 133. The Book then required the consent of Parliament. It was passed by the House of Lords, but then was twice defeated by the Commons after 'vituperative' debate in December 1927 and June 1928.<sup>23</sup>

The revised Prayer Book was rejected, not by the majority of Church of England MPs in the Commons, but by an Anglican evangelical minority, supported by Welshmen, Scots, Ulstermen, and an Indian Parsee. It was, however, a response to a strident anti-revisionist campaign in the country as whole, which awakened popular anti-Catholicism, presenting the new Prayer Book as 'a sell-out to Rome.' Over 300,000 communicants signed an opposition memorial. There was a proliferation of polemical literature, protest meetings, and much clerical mudslinging and hysteria.<sup>24</sup> The rejection of the Book also

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<sup>20</sup> The Book of Common Prayer with the additions and deviations proposed in 1928. (Cambridge, 1928). See especially pp.367, 465.

<sup>21</sup> Canon A.G. Robinson, 'The New Prayer Book,' in *Official Year-Book of the Church of England*. 1928. (London, 1928). p.164.

<sup>22</sup> Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*. p.62.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p.206.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* See also Maiden, *National Religion*, pp.184-185. Grimley, *Citizenship, community, and the Church of England*. pp.140-141.

caused a frenzy. It was seen as a 'humiliating blow' dealt by Parliament to the Church.<sup>25</sup> Ultimately, the new Prayer Book was neither legalised nor withdrawn. Instead, the bishops fudged the issue, declaring it could be used in dioceses if authorised by the ordinary. It was not clear, however, whether ordinaries really possessed such liturgical authority!<sup>26</sup>

In spite of the furore in the Church of England, there is almost no mention of the Prayer Book Dispute in women missionaries' reports and letters. It was only remarked upon by Agnes Lees, a CMS missionary from the Bhil Mission in Western India, who was on furlough in England between the summers of 1927 and 1928. In her Annual Letter of 1928, Miss Lees recounted her experiences as a missionary speaker in parishes. In some, attendance was poor and the atmosphere 'cold.' One minister, with whom she spoke, 'definitely ascribed the lack of missionary interest to the disturbing effect of the discussion about Prayer Book Revision.' Miss Lees gave her own opinion that until 'a more Scriptural Gospel' was being preached in Churches, 'no real interest in missionary work can be expected from the mass of church people.' She implicitly criticised Prayer Book revision, arguing '[a]s long as the clergy are content to preach a few dull platitudes as their chief message of the week.... or doctrines long discarded by our church, or praise of some heathen religion, missionary societies must expect to have large deficits and inadequate incomes.' Miss Lees indicated that some clergymen were focusing too much upon the revival of Catholic doctrines alien to the Anglican Church, and not enough on their evangelical duty of effectively preaching 'the Word of the Lord.'<sup>27</sup>

Matthew Grimley's work would suggest that the lack of female missionary comment on the Prayer Book issue is hardly surprising. The controversy was, he points out, 'an internal dispute, largely restricted to clergy and a few ecclesiastically minded politicians, and conducted in complex liturgical and theological terms,' which were

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<sup>25</sup> Grimley, *Citizenship, Community, and the Church of England*. p.140.

<sup>26</sup> Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*. p.207.

<sup>27</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Agnes Lees, 1928.

‘largely incomprehensible’ to the public. He quotes Arnold Bennett’s contention that ‘the great majority of the citizens were merely pained lookers-on at the noisy rumpus.’<sup>28</sup> It could be inferred that women’s exclusion from the patriarchy of Church and State prevented them from engaging with the Prayer Book dispute. Yet, the internal workings of the Church of England were not entirely impregnable to interested Anglican women. By the late 1920s, women could sit on diocesan conferences and parochial councils. There were also (at least forty) female members of the National Assembly of the Church, including Louise Creighton, mother of Beatrice Creighton, the Head Deaconess of St Faith’s Community in Madras.<sup>29</sup> Well-educated, well-connected, and interested Churchwomen would surely not have found the Prayer Book dispute ‘incomprehensible.’ Of course, women missionaries were not directly involved in the decision-making bodies of the home Church, yet it is unlikely, given the involvement of many of their families and of their societies in Church affairs that they would have been unaware of the controversy. Instead, their lack of comment suggests (as we will see again in Chapter Five) they were simply preoccupied with immediate, local mission affairs. As Miss Lees was on furlough and re-entering into the life of the home Church, it was natural she should confront the Prayer Book issue. For women missionaries in the field, however, Prayer Book revision was not a pressing concern. Pupils’ exam results, difficult operations, lapsing converts, and shortages of finances and recruits were more urgent matters and dominated missionary reports. When missionaries did comment upon broader Church issues, these were ones which directly affected the Indian mission field, particularly possible Church Union. The lack of connection between mission concerns and the internal affairs of the Church in England is demonstrated by the absence of references to the Prayer Book controversy in missionary periodicals, *The East and the West*, *The Church Missionary Outlook*, and *The*

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<sup>28</sup> Grimley, *Citizenship, Community, and the Church of England*. p.141.

<sup>29</sup> Heeney, *The Women’s Movement in the Church of England*. p.111.

*Church Overseas* in 1927 and 1928.<sup>30</sup> To women missionaries, therefore, the Prayer Book dispute was not ‘incomprehensible,’ only inconsequential and irrelevant to the immediate demands of the mission field.

### *The Church in the mission field – the Indian Church Measure*

The Anglican Church in the Indian mission field changed enormously between 1917 and 1950. The first significant step came in December 1927, when the Indian Church Act was passed by Parliament, dissolving the legal connection between the Church of England and the Indian Church. India would become an independent province of the Anglican Communion. The Archbishop of Canterbury would no longer be responsible for the Church’s superintendence and its creation of dioceses would no longer need the sanction of the British Parliament. Following the formulation of a constitution for this ‘spiritual child of the Church of England,’ the new Church of India, Burma, and Ceylon came into being on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1930.<sup>31</sup> For missionaries, therefore, the Church in which they served (though Anglican) was no longer directly governed by the Church from which they came. The Indian Church Measure was an important development in accordance with the mission strategies of ‘euthanasia’ and the building-up of a self-governing, self-financing ‘native’ Church in India. The 1922 Report of the CMS Delegation to India, for example, had strongly argued that the ‘chief problem’ of the Anglican Church in India was ‘our section of the Church labours under the terrific disadvantage of appearing quite definitely to be foreign and bureaucratic rather than “Indian.” In the first place, it is not free in India, through being definitely and intimately related to the Government of India.’<sup>32</sup> The new

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<sup>30</sup> *The East and the West. A quarterly review for the study of missionary problems.* Vol.25. Nos.97-100. (SPG, 1927). *The Church Missionary Outlook.* Vol.LIV. (1927). *The Church Overseas. A Quarterly Review of the Mission Work of the Church of England.* Vol.I. Nos.1-4. (1928).

<sup>31</sup> ‘The Indian Church Measure and the Constitution of the Indian Church,’ in *The Church Overseas.* Vol.I. No.1. (January 1928). p.18.

<sup>32</sup> *Report of the CMS Delegation to India.* p.24.

constitution of the CIBC with its creation of councils and synods, and its provision for the election of bishops via a communicant franchise, gave Indians a far greater say in the management and future policy of their Church.<sup>33</sup> It was now less the Church of India's Western rulers, more the Church of Indians themselves. Given the importance of this change, the failure of missionary reports and letters to mention the Indian Church Measure and the creation of the CIBC is surprising. Neither SPG nor CMS women missionaries referred to this. Perhaps as they were not personally involved in the formation of the new constitution, as the home societies would have been intimately acquainted with the process, and as this development was so obviously in missionary interests, they saw no reason to comment further on the inauguration of the CIBC.

#### *'Diocesanisation'*

A wider mission strategy to increase the autonomy of the Indian Church did have an impact upon the work of women missionaries, however. As explored in Chapter Three, in order that the mission might 'decrease' and the 'native' Church 'increase,' both SPG and CMS had implemented a policy of 'Indianisation' in the aftermath of the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910, transferring authority and responsibility to Indians in schools, hospitals, and evangelistic work. The sister strategy to 'Indianisation' was 'Diocesanisation' – the transfer of mission societies' control of the finances and administration of Church work to 'native' Church structures. Although this had also been advocated by the Edinburgh Conference, the first use of the term, 'Diocesanisation' came in the Report of the CMS Delegation to India in 1922. The Delegation recommended that control of the Society's missions in most areas of India 'be transferred as rapidly as possible to the several dioceses, such transfer involving the replacement of the Society's

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<sup>33</sup> 'The Indian Church Measure and the Constitution of the Indian Church,' in *The Church Overseas*. Vol.I. No.1. (January 1928). p.21.

administration in these missions by diocesan administration which in many cases has yet to be provided.<sup>34</sup> The prospect of ‘Diocesanisation’ was far more radical a departure for CMS than for SPG. As noted in Chapter Two, SPG finances and work had traditionally been controlled by bishops in the mission field, whereas those of CMS had been administered by its London headquarters and regional mission secretaries in India. ‘Diocesanisation’ challenged missionaries’ loyalties to their society and its particular Anglican churchmanship. On diocesan boards of work, cooperation would be demanded from missionaries of evangelical and Anglo-Catholic opinions. The progress of ‘Diocesanisation’ varied considerably between dioceses. As early as 1924, for example, all CMS and SPG councils and committees in Tinnevely were dissolved in favour of diocesan organisation. Three Church Councils were created for the diocese, including both CMS and SPG parishes.<sup>35</sup> The transfer of administration to the diocese had also occurred in the Lucknow diocese by 1933. In the Lahore and Bombay dioceses, on the other hand, it did not take place until the 1940s.<sup>36</sup>

Naturally, the administration of women’s work was changed considerably by ‘Diocesanisation.’ It affected the management of SPG’s women’s communities. In the Lahore diocese, for example, as early as November 1922, the members of St Stephen’s Community had discussed its possible consequences in the light of the report of the CMS Delegation. The Community debated how it could continue to function at the same time as making a full contribution to the Church in the diocese. Although members declared themselves in favour of most work in the diocese passing into the hands of a Church organisation, it was felt desirable for the maintenance of ‘ordered corporate life’ (and hence, its ‘special contribution’ to the diocese) that the Community should remain a self-

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<sup>34</sup> *Report of the CMS Delegation to India.* p.32.

<sup>35</sup> Hewitt, *The Problems of Success. Vol.II.* pp.74-75.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* p.73. Thompson, *Into All Lands.* pp.593-635. CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Beatrice Noel Fletcher, 1947. Ruth Salmon, 1947, 1949. Evelyn Stocken, 1949. USPG, Rhodes House. E95/2 1942. Helen Martindale, Margaret Ward. E95/9. Head Deaconess Report to chapter. E95/2 1950. Sarah Tollett.

governing body.<sup>37</sup> The power of the Head of Community to determine the work of individual members (subject to the consent of the Head of Mission) was altered in the 1940s, however. During the headship of Gladys Mowll (1942-1946), the Head of Mission was given overall authority. This effectively 'diocesanised' St Stephen's, as following the formation of the Archdeaconry of Delhi in 1944 the 'Mission' was no longer a separate entity. Its duties had been assumed by the new Archdeaconry Council and the role of 'Head of Mission' was now that of the Archdeacon, Canon Arabindo Nath Mukerji. Upon the formation of the Delhi diocese in April 1947, Mukerji became bishop with the same authority over the placement of members of St Stephen's as over that of other diocesan workers.<sup>38</sup>

The 1940s also saw significant developments in 'Diocesanisation' in the remaining Lahore diocese. In September 1943, a Conference of Indian women members of the CIBC and missionaries of the CMS and CEZMS in the Punjab had been held. This was consciously 'Church centric,' focussing on how the Mission could 'decrease' to become the 'handmaid and servant' of the Indian Church. Also in 1943, a temporary Board of Women's Work, formed by the Diocesan Council two years previously, was enlarged and reconstituted. The Board attempted to coordinate the establishment of training institutions for Indian women Church workers in the diocese. A Diocesan Women Workers fund was set up for this purpose. Branches of a Women's Auxiliary to the Church were also established so that women could 'find fellowship in worship and service' and help to 'forward the activities of the Church in parish and diocese.' Twenty-five such bodies (twenty-three Indian and two English) had been initiated by 1946, of which the CMS

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<sup>37</sup> Archives of St Stephen's Community, Delhi. Minute Book March 1917-October 1927. Meeting of November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1922.

<sup>38</sup> Roseveare, *DELHI*. pp.87, 90.

missionary, Ruth Salmon, became Secretary in charge.<sup>39</sup> Full 'Diocesanisation' did not occur until the aftermath of Partition, however. In October 1949, the first Diocesan Women's Conference was held (in two sections due to the division of the Punjab). All women's work was placed under the direct control of the diocese, and all workers, whether foreign missionaries or Indian women, were licensed by the bishop. 'We shall be greatly enriched by being linked in one organization with the St Hilda's people,' wrote Ruth Salmon in her Annual Letter to CMS.<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, efforts towards 'Diocesanisation' greatly increased the interaction and cooperation between missionaries of CMS and SPG (and of other missionary societies). In her Annual Letter of 1941 from the Lahore diocese, Olive Cocks recognised that progress towards unity had already been made. 'Years ago St Hilda's Association of Deaconesses and Grey Ladies lived and worked apart from us of the C.M.S.,' she wrote. 'Now we are drawing closer and closer together. I was asked to address their conference last Christmas on the problems of the Indian section of the Church. Their special sphere had hitherto been on the Anglo-Indian and European section. Now they are all out to help the Indian side as much as possible and to bridge the gulf between the communities within the Church. Many have visited our C.M.S. stations and we now feel that we are one team.'<sup>41</sup> In its efforts to improve the training of Indian women, the CMS and CEZMS Joint Conference came into closer contact with St Hilda's. In the early 1940s, in response to requests to train candidates for the female diaconate, St Hilda's had begun to formulate a scheme of training for women's ministry in the Indian Church. This scheme was presented before the Synod in 1942. The Head Deaconess of St Hilda's, Dorothy Stokes, requested the help of

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<sup>39</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Ruth Salmon, 1944. See also 'Report on the Joint Committee of the CMS & CEZMS (Women's Advisory Group 1937-1939; Women's Joint Committee 1940-1947)' in CMS, Birmingham. ASW C2/2 C-G Correspondence and papers: Miss Elsie Thorpe, correspondent to the Committee 1938-47.

<sup>40</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Ruth Salmon, 1949.

<sup>41</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Olive Cocks, 1941.

other missionary societies with such a scheme, and explained it to a meeting of the Conference of CMS and CEZMS. A CEZMS Deaconess, Beatrice Kidgell, was also enlisted to help with such training.<sup>42</sup> Training weeks were also held at Deaconess House in Lahore for high-school teachers and English-speaking educated Indian women.<sup>43</sup> In other dioceses, SPG and CMS women workers also cooperated in women's training initiatives, for example in the establishment of missionary training centres at Khatauli in the United Provinces and at the Women's Christian College in Madras.<sup>44</sup> Interestingly, when commenting on inter-mission efforts in their reports and letters, women missionaries never commented upon the different Churchmanships of CMS and SPG. The only reference to this is in a letter sent to Miss Elsie Thorpe of the CMS Women's Advisory Group India Committee in May 1938 by George Ingram of CMS, Tundla. Discussing the plan for a joint CMS and SPG training centre at Khatauli, Mr Ingram noted that the two SPG women workers who had volunteered to serve there were 'very high Church' in their views. He argued for the training centre to be truly a collaborative effort, reflecting the churchmanship of both societies, 'it is up to CMS to see that an equally strong lady worker with the evangelical point of view' was appointed to the staff.<sup>45</sup> Significantly, women missionaries themselves did not express any concerns about this.

### *The Church of South India*

Women missionaries of CMS and SPG certainly were concerned, however, by the most famous and groundbreaking change in the Anglican Church in India during this

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<sup>42</sup> 'Copy of letter from the Head Deaconess D.M. Stokes' and 'Various minutes of the CMS and CEZMS Women's Joint Conference in Lahore' in CMS, Birmingham. ASW C2/2B Women's Joint Committee CMS and CEZMS: India Secretary's file 1939-43. See also: SPG, Birmingham. E95/9 1942. Head Deaconess' Report to Chapter.

<sup>43</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Ruth Salmon, 1944.

<sup>44</sup> CMS, Birmingham. ASW C2 – Women's Advisory Group papers.

<sup>45</sup> Letter of 11<sup>th</sup> May 1938 from George Ingram to Elsie Thorpe in CMS, Birmingham. ASW C2/2 A-H minutes, papers and correspondence 1937-1954.

period: the formation of the Church of South India on 27<sup>th</sup> September 1947. In her account of the CSI's inauguration, Deaconess Carol Graham immediately acknowledged it was a day of mixed feelings. While the closing hymn of the Communion Service had 'burst forth triumphantly' with the words 'One Church, one Faith, one Lord,' she admitted 'there can have been few in that vast congregation who did not remember 'many a day of darkness, many a day of strife' when it seemed as if the negotiations were at a standstill....' Thoughts were not only upon those who had not lived to see the fulfilment of their labours towards Union, but also upon 'familiar figures' who had been kept away by 'difficulties.'<sup>46</sup> The foundation of the Church of South India had been highly contentious. For the Anglican missionaries of SPG and for the Society itself, it proved a source of especial anguish, bitterness, and strife. 'I suppose that there has been more agony in S.P.G. House over this business than in any other connection within living memory,' wrote its Secretary, Bishop Roberts, to Lilian Evans of Tinnevely, three days after inauguration.<sup>47</sup> From their own personal perspectives, most SPG women missionaries would certainly have agreed.

The movement towards Church Union in South India had started as early as 1910, when Congregational and Presbyterian bodies came together to form the South India United Church (S.I.U.C.). They were joined in 1919 by Christians from the Basel Mission in Malabar.<sup>48</sup> In 1919, a meeting had been held of thirty-three Anglicans and members of the S.I.U.C. (all but two Indian) at Tranquebar. This made an urgent plea for unity, since Christians found themselves 'rendered weak and relatively impotent' by their 'unhappy divisions' in the 'titanic task of winning India for Christ.' These divisions, it stressed, were

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<sup>46</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E95/9 Madras. 1947. Deaconess Carol Graham.

<sup>47</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/2 F2/ Correspondence with missionaries, 1947-48.

<sup>48</sup> Thompson, *Into all lands*. p.594.

ones Indians had not created and did not ‘desire to perpetuate.’<sup>49</sup> The Lambeth Quadrilateral, the four points laid down by Anglican bishops in 1888, was proposed as a basis for Union. These were: common acceptance of the Bible, the historic Creeds, the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, and the historic episcopate. In 1929, the first draft of a Union Scheme was published. It received general approval from the Lambeth Conference the following year. A final decision on the Scheme was not sought until 1941, however, and the 1930s were taken up by discussion of the difficulties posed by Union. In January 1943, the Scheme was accepted by Methodists. The S.I.U.C., despite strong opposition within its ranks, approved it in 1946. The General Council of the Anglican Church in India – the CIBC – voted, by a 75% majority, in favour of the Scheme in 1945. A further vote was held in January 1947, however, owing to continued opposition of some members. This time, although Union was approved, only seven bishops were in favour and six against, thirty priests for and twenty-two against, and thirty-three laity for and seven against.<sup>50</sup>

The struggle for unity in South India had not occurred in isolation. It was part of a wider global initiative of ecumenism, stimulated by the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910. Although the Conference was explicitly prohibited from discussing actual proposals for Church Union, it did encourage and establish structures to enable interdenominational cooperation between missionary societies, most notably the International Missionary Council which was founded in 1921. In his contribution to the debate on Commission VIII, ‘Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity,’ the Chinese pastor, Cheng Jingyi advocated ‘in the near future, a united Christian Church without any denominational distinctions.’<sup>51</sup> A radical and controversial attempt towards this end had

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<sup>49</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/2 F1. Correspondence and Pieces of Conversation re. South India Church Union. 1947-48. Uncorrected Proof. Documents Concerning S.P.G. and The Church of South India. p.6.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Stanley. *The World Missionary Conference*. p.108.

been made in June 1913 at Kikuyu in British East Africa. A conference of Anglicans, Presbyterians, and other Protestants was held to discuss a federation of constituent Churches based upon common acceptance of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. At the close of the conference, the Anglican Bishop of Mombasa, assisted by a Church of Scotland missionary, presided over a celebration of Holy Communion according to the rites of the Book of Common Prayer. Almost all the delegates, regardless of denomination, received the sacrament. Such intercommunion was unprecedented and met with a storm of conservative Anglican protest. Further conferences were held at Kikuyu in 1918, 1922, and 1926 to no avail.<sup>52</sup> Efforts towards Church Union were also taking place in China and Japan. A federation of eight Japanese Protestant churches was formed in 1911, thirty years before the inauguration of the United Church of Christ in 1941. In China, the Church of Christ was formed in 1927, uniting sixteen (mainly Presbyterian and Congregational) denominational groups.<sup>53</sup>

The attitudes of Anglicans to such interdenominationalism were mixed. Some Anglo-Catholics were suspicious and wary that it might lead to the sacrifice of essential Church principles. This had been demonstrated at Edinburgh in 1910. While the evangelical CMS had sent an eighty-nine person delegation to the Conference (the largest of any missionary society), high-Church support was more hesitant. An SPG Delegation was sent to the Conference, but the Society's Standing Committee had initially been hostile and much of its membership remained so. *The Church Times* railed against the Conference's claim to speak for 'universal Christendom' while excluding Catholicism, branding it no more than an 'informal gathering of sects.' The 1913 Conference at Kikuyu was equally stridently dismissed as 'the latest [and 'possibly the most deplorable'] attempt

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<sup>52</sup> O'Connor, *Three Centuries of Mission*. p.96. Bernard Palmer, *Gadfly for God. A History of the Church Times*. (London, 1991). p.90.

<sup>53</sup> Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference*. p.310.

at ecclesiastical jerry-building.’<sup>54</sup> Long before the foundation of the Church of South India, therefore, the idea of Church Union provoked heated debate and division.

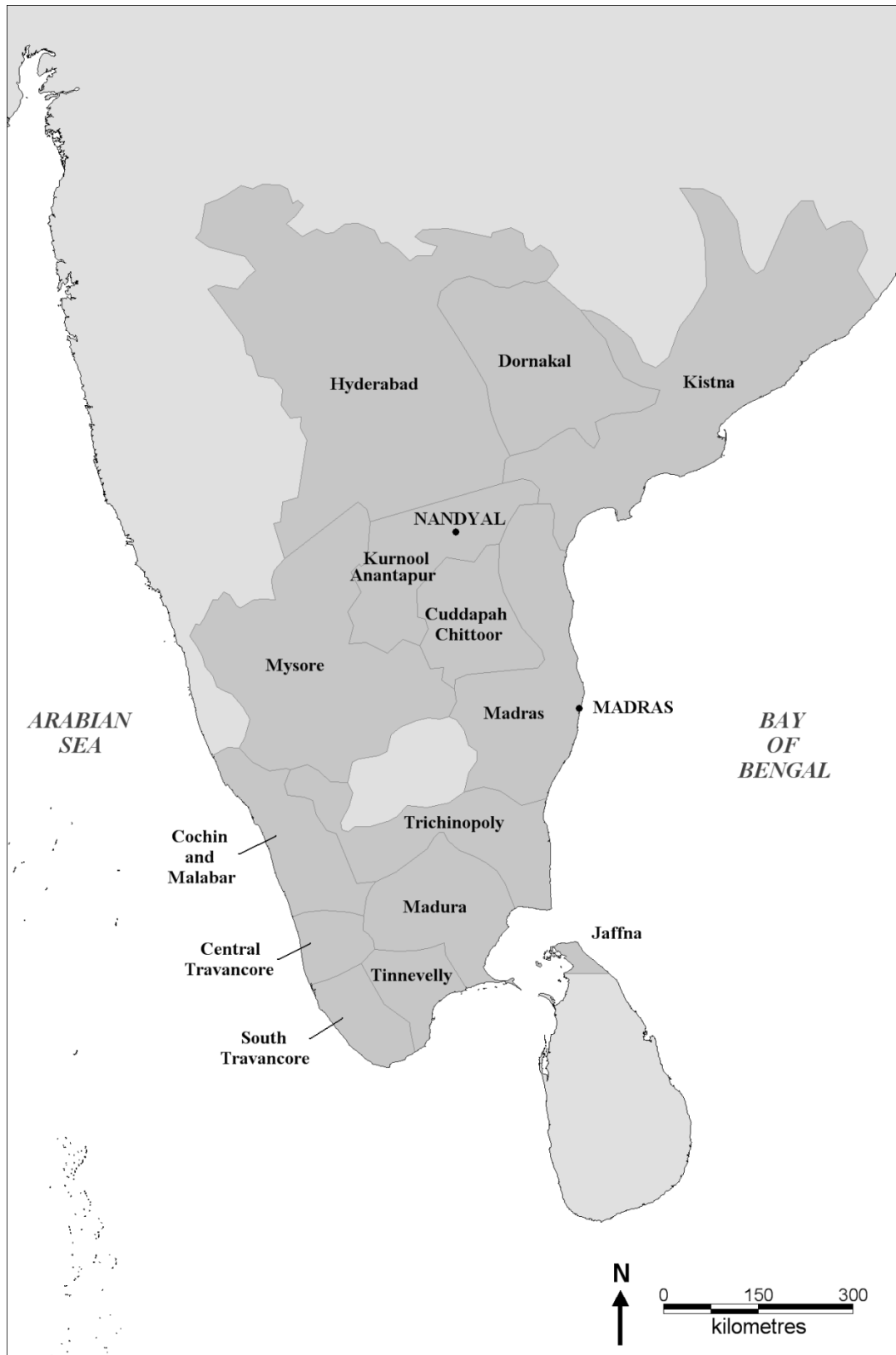
The final Scheme for the Church of South India presented it as an ever-evolving experiment. Rather than marking the achievement of Union, its inauguration would be the beginning of an interim period of thirty years, in which the Church’s composite bodies would try to grow together in faith and unity. The Scheme involved the unification of the four Anglican dioceses of Madras, Dornakal, Tinnevely and Travancore, which would then cease to be part of the Anglican provinces of the CIBC. Instead, they would become fourteen dioceses of the South Indian Church [see Figure 4.1.]. The new Church would encompass just over one million Christians – 500,000 Anglicans, 225,000 Methodists, and 290,000 from the S.I.U.C. The Church accepted the Scriptures as the standard of faith and the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds (although the use of such was not compulsory in worship). Baptism was essential for entry into the CSI and a public profession of faith during a service was necessary to receive Holy Communion. Confirmation was not imperative. Ministers of the CSI were to be known as presbyters and all newly-appointed ministers would receive episcopal ordination. Re-ordination of non-episcopally ordained ministers from the Free Churches entering the Union was not required, however. To safeguard the consciences of individual Anglican congregations who objected to the administering of Holy Communion by non-episcopally-ordained ministers, a ‘Pledge’ was instituted. In this, the Church promised not to impose upon congregations forms of worship and ministry against which they had conscientious objections. Exceptions could be made, however, if ‘pastoral needs obviously demand other arrangements.’<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Palmer, *Gadfly for God*. pp.89-90.

<sup>55</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/2 F1. Correspondence and Pieces of Conversation re. South India Church Union. 1947-48. Uncorrected Proof. Documents Concerning S.P.G. and The Church of South India. p.7.

**Figure 4.1.**  
**Map of dioceses in the new Church of South India, 1947.**



**The unshaded central district represents the North Tamil Council of the S.I.U.C. which did not enter the Union at inauguration**

As the final proposals for Union were being approved in the early 1940s, a veritable war of words developed within Anglican circles. In a storm of books, pamphlets, and articles in *The Church Times* and *Record*, advocates of the Scheme including the Right Reverend A.T.P. Williams, Bishop of Durham, and the Reverend Max Warren, General Secretary of CMS, went head to head with its opponents. Nine pamphlets criticising various aspects of the Scheme were published by the Council for the Defence of Church Principles, including T.S. Eliot's notorious 'Reunion by Destruction' in 1944.<sup>56</sup> The Council had been established by the Church Union and other societies as a temporary organisation for 'preservation of those fundamental principles of the Faith and Order of the Catholic Church, which are clearly taught and enjoined in the Book of Common Prayer,' and which were now 'endangered' by the Union proposals.<sup>57</sup> Supporters of Union maintained the denominational differences of Western Protestantism were artificial and irrelevant in an Indian context, 'mostly a question of chance and geography' rather than conviction.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, due to the geographical division of mission territories, it was possible for members of the same family to belong to different churches and be prevented from communicating together. Uniting the South Indian Church would not sacrifice fundamental principles, but immeasurably strengthen Indian Christianity.<sup>59</sup> Anglican criticism of the scheme focused largely upon the continuity of the historic episcopate. The interim arrangements, allowing a non-episcopally-ordained presbyter to administer the Word and

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<sup>56</sup> See for example: Rt. Rev. A.T.P. Williams, 'Church Union in South India. A Reply to Mr T.S. Eliot's "Reunion by Destruction."' (SCM Press, London, 1944); Rev. Max Warren, 'A Vital Issue. Church Union in South India. Part II – Objections Examined,' (CMS, London, 1942); Rev. Max Warren, 'The Whole Church. An Anglican Consideration of the SICU Scheme.' (SPCK, 1943); T.S. Eliot, 'Reunion by Destruction. Reflections on a Scheme for Church Union in South India. Addressed to the Laity.' (The Council for the Defence of Church Principals, 1944).

<sup>57</sup> Eliot, 'Reunion by Destruction.' Inside cover piece.

<sup>58</sup> Rev. Joseph Muir, Rev W.J. Noble, Rt. Rev. E.J. Palmer & Rev. G.E. Phillips, 'Why South India Churches Are Considering Union.' (London, 1929). p.11.

<sup>59</sup> See for example: C.S. Milford, 'The Last Hurdle in South India. Union to be Inaugurated in September' in *The Record*. (Friday 7<sup>th</sup> February, 1947). p.91. For an earlier example of this argument see: 'An Indian Manifesto on Church Union' (signatories included Bishop Azariah of Dornakal), in *Dornakal Diocesan Magazine*. (August 1930). p.12.

the Sacraments, would violate ‘apostolic succession’: the tradition of episcopacy inherited from the early church. The validity of his order and of his celebration of the Eucharist was questioned. It was feared ‘the Pledge’ would be insufficient to protect Anglican congregations from his ministrations. It was also feared the Scheme did not adequately protect the Church from heresy. Individuals were not required to assent to every ‘word and phrase’ in the Creeds and ‘reasonable liberty of interpretation’ was permitted. As Eliot put it, it was considered that a ‘Church to be erected upon the foundation of divergence’ was doomed to be an ‘utter failure.’ ‘Twenty patient years to build what is only an elaborate artifice!’ he exclaimed. ‘Twenty years to construct a pantomime horse!’<sup>60</sup>

Of course, the two Anglican missionary societies in South India, CMS and SPG, were intimately involved in such debate. As might be expected from a Society in favour of ‘comprehensiveness,’ the attitude of CMS to Church Union was relatively uncomplicated.<sup>61</sup> CMS missionaries worked in all four dioceses of the CIBC in South India: Madras, Dornakal, Tinnevely, and Travancore. By 1947, the Society was spending nearly £40,000 per annum on South Indian work.<sup>62</sup> As early as February 1930, CMS had issued a pronouncement in favour of the Union scheme, declaring that its Committee saw in the claim of the proposed United Church ‘not only the expression of a legitimate desire for Christian freedom but also the fulfilment of the work of the foreign mission foreshadowed in the ideals for missionary policy enunciated so long ago as 1851 by Henry Venn.’ The CMS Committee believed the provisional arrangements for Union did not ‘violate the historic traditions of the Church of England,’ but were part of a movement ‘in

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<sup>60</sup> Eliot, ‘Reunion by Destruction.’ pp.17, 21.

<sup>61</sup> In fact, the CMS Secretary, Max Warren, argued in his 1943 pamphlet, ‘The Whole Church. An Anglican consideration of the SICU Scheme’ that the accommodation involved in reunion was in line with the traditional ‘comprehensiveness’ of the Church of England, in contrast to the ‘fences of demarcation’ of the Church of Rome. p.15.

<sup>62</sup> Rev C.S. Milford, ‘Towards Christian Unity in the New India,’ in *C.M.S. Outlook*. (August 1947). pp.1-2.

accordance with the mind of Christ.’<sup>63</sup> CMS approval was reemphasised by a resolution of the General Committee of October 20<sup>th</sup> 1942, which pronounced the Scheme ‘in full accord with the principles and policy which have guided the Society throughout its history.’<sup>64</sup> In an article in *C.M.S. Outlook* in July 1946, the India Secretary, Reverend C.S. Milford, noted that the United Church would no longer be in full communion with the Church of England, but stressed there had been no schism, nor would there be any condemnation of members of the Church of England communicating with or working in the CSI. ‘[E]very member of C.M.S. must surely feel that we are not only permitted, but definitely called by God to do so,’ he wrote. The Society had resolved to allow its existing missionaries to continue their ministry within the area of the South India Church under episcopal licence and to send out new missionaries to work in such areas. It would also make grants from its general funds for their maintenance and for other missionary work to be carried out by the Society within the CSI.<sup>65</sup> From their Annual Letters, it is clear that CMS women missionaries in South India shared their Society’s welcoming of Union. Although recognising the uncertainties and difficulties the transition would bring, they expressed faith in the scheme’s ‘undoubted honesty of motive and pure desire for unity,’ and looked forward to continuing their evangelical witness in the united Church.<sup>66</sup>

For SPG, however, South Indian Church Union was more contentious an issue. In 1947, the Society employed forty-four missionaries in three of the South Indian dioceses – Madras, Dornakal, and Tinnevely. It sent annual grants of approximately £25,000 for the salary of its missionaries and Indian workers, and for the upkeep of its schools, colleges,

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<sup>63</sup> ‘A Pronouncement on the Proposed Scheme of Union for South India,’ in *The Church Missionary Outlook*. (February 1930). pp.35-36.

<sup>64</sup> ‘Church Union in South India. Resolution of the C.M.S. General Committee,’ in *C.M.S. Outlook*. (December 1942). p.2.

<sup>65</sup> Rev. C.S. Milford, ‘A Venture of Faith in South India,’ in *C.M.S. Outlook*. (July 1946). p.1.

<sup>66</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Nina Hewett, 1945.

and hospitals.<sup>67</sup> Although CMS was also an Anglican society, SPG was the ‘official’ Society of the Church of England, founded at the request of its Convocation to be its agent in the Church’s work overseas. This was enshrined in its charters. As an SPG pamphlet put it in 1947, ‘its business was not to “make up its own mind” but rather to give effect to the mind of the Church when that had been duly expressed.’<sup>68</sup> This made matters extremely difficult for the Society as the Union proposals developed. Letters from its archives reveal that as early as 1929, SPG was under great pressure to air its opinion. In April 1932, for example, its Secretary, Reverend Stacy Waddy told the Bishop of Nasik that he was feeling ‘very troubled and helpless’ in the face of clamour for ‘some definite announcement.’<sup>69</sup> Mr Waddy, and SPG’s Standing Committee in 1933, emphasised that it was not the province, nor the tradition, of the Society to give judgement on Church policy and order. It was required to follow the direction of the Church of England’s bishops.<sup>70</sup> By the 1940s, however, with the inauguration of the CSI imminent, SPG could not escape action. Unfortunately, ‘no official verdict’ had been pronounced on the final Scheme by the Church. Although the Lambeth Conference of 1930 had given its general approval, it had been unable to meet in 1940 and many controversial amendments had subsequently been made. Lambeth would not meet again until 1948 but the date for the inauguration of the CSI had already been set for 27<sup>th</sup> September 1947. SPG had to make some practical decisions about, and pronounce upon, the future status of its missionaries and institutions in the new Church. While the Society did not want to weaken the Anglican contribution to the CSI (financially and spiritually), as the ‘official’ society of the Church of England, it was bound to represent all shades of Church opinion. It also had to consider its work

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<sup>67</sup> Thompson, *Into All Lands*. p.595.

<sup>68</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/2 F1. Correspondence and Pieces of Conversation re. South India Church Union. 1947-48. Uncorrected Proof. Documents Concerning S.P.G. and The Church of South India. p.11.

<sup>69</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/1 F3. South India Union, 1929 to 1933 letters. Waddy to Nasik, April 29<sup>th</sup> 1932.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* 1933. S.P.G. and South India. From the Chairman of the Standing Committee.

elsewhere – in South Africa, the West Indies, Borneo, and China. If the Society's income dropped as a result of its support for the Scheme, these missions would also suffer.<sup>71</sup>

In April 1945, SPG's Standing Committee appointed a special advisory group of eleven men with wide experience of the Society, India, and the Church, to suggest possible action.<sup>72</sup> Its members included its (recently-appointed) Secretary, Basil Roberts, former Bishop of Singapore, and the former Bishop of Colombo, Mark Carpenter-Garnier. Significantly for this study, they also included the Chairman of the India Sub-Committee and former Bishop of Tinnevely, Frederick Western, brother of the late Mary P. Western, SPG missionary in the Lahore and Chota Nagpur dioceses, and the Bishop of St Albans, Philip Loyd, who had worked closely with SPG women missionaries in his previous post as Bishop of Nasik.<sup>73</sup> After the first meeting of this body, missionaries in South India received a letter in July 1945 from the Secretary on the subject of Church Union, informing them of the Society's efforts to 'determine what powers we possess under the Charter to assist a Church which is not in formal and cooperative communion with the Church of England.' Interestingly, given subsequent events, the letter emphasised the positive attitude SPG would take towards the Union Scheme. 'In the absence of any information to the contrary,' the Secretary wrote, 'we assume that it will be your spontaneous wish and intention, so far as material circumstances allow, to pursue your ministry and service under the new regime and to represent the catholic tradition of faith and order which will be an essential element in any genuine and stable reconciliation.' He asserted that for this reason, SPG would be 'most reluctant either to withdraw support from an experiment which has been commended by the Lambeth Conference to the sympathy of the Church, or to bring any pressure to bear upon your conscience in a decision which rests

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<sup>71</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/2 F1. Correspondence and Pieces of Conversation etc. Documents Concerning S.P.G. and The Church of South India. pp.11-13.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* p.11.

<sup>73</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/2 F1. Correspondence and Pieces of Conversation re. South India Church Union. Report of the South India Church Union Advisory Group. p.1.

primarily between you and your Bishop.’ Missionaries were encouraged to discuss their views with the Society<sup>74</sup> and kept informed of the Advisory Body’s progress.<sup>75</sup> Its members met ten times and, on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1947, submitted their final report to SPG.

The Advisory Body had failed to agree, thus Majority and Minority reports were submitted. Both agreed SPG was debarred by its charters from giving grants to dioceses which were not in communion with the Church of England. Its grants to Madras, Dornakal, and Tinnevely would therefore end in December 1947. Interdenominational institutions receiving SPG grants would continue to be supported. Missionaries who did not wish to join the Union would be compensated or transferred elsewhere. The Majority and Minority reports differed, however, over the degree of financial support that should be given to SPG workers and institutions joining the CSI. The Majority (7 members) recommended sending a SPG representative to South India to distribute grants to former SPG missionaries, provided they were not practising nor professing anything ‘prejudicial to Anglican formularies and standards.’ The Minority (4 members) felt such action would be ‘morally indefensible,’ implying sanction of the Scheme, and financially-threatening, ‘inevitably’ leading to a ‘widespread withdrawal of support.’ It should be explored whether missionaries could continue SPG work in South India ‘in friendly association and fellowship with the new body’ without joining the Union. Failing this, an honorarium equal to one year’s emoluments would be paid to those joining the new Church.<sup>76</sup>

Following a long debate in Standing Committee, the Minority Report was adopted by 68 votes to 34. It was declared that the Society ‘pronounced no judgement concerning the proposed united Church and its members, but awaits the judgement of the Church through duly constituted authority, in accordance with which it will, if necessary, take

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<sup>74</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/2 F2. Correspondence with missionaries, 1947-8. Letter of July 1945.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. Letter of 21<sup>st</sup> May 1946.

<sup>76</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/2 F1. Correspondence and Pieces of Conversation re. South India Church Union. Report of the South India Church Union Advisory Group.

further action.<sup>77</sup> Judgement or not, SPG had certainly taken an historic step, announcing the near end of its considerable presence in South India. The day after the momentous Standing Committee meeting, cables were dispatched from London to the Bishops of Dornakal, Madras, and Tinnevely telling them of its decision and instructing them to ‘inform missionaries to whom letter of explanation and sympathy follows.’<sup>78</sup> In this letter of 21<sup>st</sup> May, Bishop Roberts explained that SPG had ‘reasserted its traditional deference to the judgement of the Church,’ but urged that missionaries ‘should not regard the decision as a reflection upon the loyalty of those who will nevertheless elect to pledge their services to the United Church.’ He asked them to inform the Society as soon as possible of what they proposed to do, emphasising ‘the ultimate choice must rest with your own conscience.’<sup>79</sup>

While SPG had now allayed the consciences of its supporters who could not countenance financial aid to the new CSI, it had not satisfied those who felt conscience bound to continue to aid former SPG work in the South. The Society’s President, Geoffrey Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury, proposed the creation of a Special Fund for South India. A second meeting of Standing Committee was called for 26<sup>th</sup> June 1947, over which the President himself presided. In a long speech, the Archbishop emphasised responsibility for the creation of the CSI rested solely with the CIBC and not the Church of England. The Lambeth Conference of 1948 would decide the form of relations between the latter and ex-Anglicans entering the CSI. In the meantime, Anglicans who entered the new Church were under no censure and, unlike other members of the United Church, would enjoy full Anglican status if returning to the Church of England. It was entirely reasonable, therefore, that SPG supporters should wish to give them financial assistance. After heated debate, it was resolved by 58 votes to 19 that subscriptions towards former SPG work in South India

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<sup>77</sup> Thompson, *Into All Lands*. p.597.

<sup>78</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/2 F2. Correspondence with missionaries, 1947-48. Cable of 9<sup>th</sup> May 1947.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* Letter of 21<sup>st</sup> May 1947.

could be paid 'into a separate account, provided that such payments do not necessary involve any verdict on the status or principles of the South India Scheme.' The name 'separate account' was substituted for 'special fund' as in SPG financial terminology the latter was part of the official funds of the society and consequently implied official sanction.<sup>80</sup> Supporters wishing to contribute to South India could earmark their donations 'South India Separate Account.' The Society would, however, make no appeal for such donations.<sup>81</sup>

On 10<sup>th</sup> July, SPG missionaries in South India were sent another letter from the Secretary informing them of recent developments. Bishop Roberts admitted the Society 'could not expect to escape criticism and protest.' 'Nor can we complain of the shocked surprise or even violent remonstrance with which members of the fellowship have reacted to the painful announcement of S.P.G. policy,' he continued. 'But do not, I beg you, allow yourselves to suppose that the S.P.G. staff or even the promoters of the report approach the consequences of their findings with anything but the acutest distress of mind and heart. They have been actuated, as we believe you have been, by loyalty to conscience....'<sup>82</sup>

#### *Missionaries' reactions to South Indian Union*

Bishop Roberts was not exaggerating when he wrote of missionaries' 'shocked surprise' and 'violent remonstrance.' Following the decision of 8<sup>th</sup> May, a deluge of letters arrived at the Society's Tufton Street headquarters conveying missionaries' reactions. The SPG archives contain letters from fifteen of the Society's women missionaries in the South

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<sup>80</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/2 F1. Correspondence and Pieces of Conversation re. South India Church Union. 1947-48. Uncorrected Proof. Documents Concerning S.P.G. and The Church of South India. pp.13-15.

<sup>81</sup> Thompson, *Into All Lands*. p.597.

<sup>82</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/2 F2. Correspondence with missionaries, 1947-48. Letter of 10<sup>th</sup> July 1947.

Indian dioceses, giving their opinions and discussing their future plans.<sup>83</sup> Almost all displayed grief at SPG's decision to stand apart from the South Indian Scheme, which was variously described as a 'stunning blow'<sup>84</sup> and a 'most tragic and grievous thing'<sup>85</sup> leaving missionaries 'greatly distressed,'<sup>86</sup> 'sick at heart,'<sup>87</sup> 'very hurt,'<sup>88</sup> and a 'bit bitter.'<sup>89</sup> Anxiety was commonly expressed for the Indians amongst whom they worked and for the future of the work without SPG support. 'How can we who have been working among our people all these years, and who can only continue the same teaching, tell our people that S.P.G. now does not approve of their plucky pioneer movement towards unity,' complained Lilian Evans of Nazareth in the Tinnevely diocese. 'It is difficult for us to believe that our beloved Society cannot see how Our Lord Himself has been drawing us all together, so that we may present a strong united front.'<sup>90</sup> Mary Kirby, who worked at Sevananda Ashram in the Dornakal diocese, conveyed a similar sense of abandonment and betrayal: 'trust in the old Society has been badly let down, because of the sudden way in which it has been done, and the realisation that the Church of England means more to many S.P.G. supporters than the Church of God – the one Catholic Church, of which we are still loyal members, and mean to make a Catholic contribution, not merely C of E to the Church of South India.'<sup>91</sup> Others also emphasised they had a duty to make a real Catholic contribution to the new Church and gave their opinion that Union was divinely inspired.<sup>92</sup> Women missionaries expressed concern that anti-Union forces in England were

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid. The total number of SPG women missionaries in South India varies depending on lists. There were approximately twenty.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. Swingler to Secretary.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. Bosanquet to Secretary. 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1947.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. Teale to Secretary..

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. Rowe to Secretary.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. Marsh to Secretary.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. Kirby to Secretary.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. Evans to Secretary. 30<sup>th</sup> May 1947.

<sup>91</sup> Kirby to Secretary. 9<sup>th</sup> June 1947.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. Teale to Secretary. 30<sup>th</sup> May 1947.

prejudicing opinion against the new Church.<sup>93</sup> Dorothea Teale mentioned an ‘untrue’ article in *The Church Times* of 16<sup>th</sup> May, which alleged members of the CSI were not obliged to believe in the Virgin Birth or the Resurrection. A friend had also told her ‘there is even an anti-union campaign supported by money.’ She did not know whether this was the case, but stated ‘[i]f such be true, then it is a shameful disgrace to the Church.’<sup>94</sup>

Of course, Bishop Roberts received similar missives from male missionaries. Interestingly, these letters, though alike in content, received much quicker responses from headquarters. Of the ten women missionaries who wrote to SPG House about Union in May, June and July 1947 and to whose letters we have a reply, only four received an answer before September. Two of these required more immediate attention as they were unwilling to join the Union. Another was at the heart of the difficulties in the Nandyal (see below). The last, Benedicta Rowe, perhaps merited a prompt response as she made suggestions for the continuance of support to SPG institutions, which Bishop Roberts may have felt obliged to comment upon (and reject).

Benedicta Rowe’s letter is noteworthy. Miss Rowe was a fifty-year-old honorary missionary, who had worked at the Women’s Christian College in Madras since 1935. She was from a clerical family – her father had been a pioneering headmaster at Tonbridge School,<sup>95</sup> – possessed M.A. and B.Litt. degrees from Lady Margaret Hall in Oxford, and had worked as a tutor to Oxford Home Students. She had published a number of articles on medieval history in *English Historical Review* and other academic journals, as well as contributing to a 1944 collection of essays entitled *The predicament of the church*.<sup>96</sup>

Perhaps unsurprisingly given her academic background, Miss Rowe’s letter, unlike those

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid. See Edwards to Secretary. 8<sup>th</sup> June 1947.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. Teale to Secretary. 30<sup>th</sup> May 1947.

<sup>95</sup> See ‘The Rev. T.B. Rowe, Obituary,’ in *The Times*. Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> January 1905. p.8.

<sup>96</sup> For example, Benedicta J.H. Rowe, ‘A Contemporary Account of the Hundred Years’ War from 1415 to 1429,’ in *English Historical Review*. Vol.41, No.164. (October, 1926). Benedicta Rowe, ‘The disunited church: Why? And how long?’ in A.D. Lindsay (and others), *The predicament of the church; contemporary essays*. (London, 1944).

of her fellow women missionaries, engaged rigorously on an intellectual and practical level with the problems confronting the CSI and SPG. Interestingly, unlike the majority of her colleagues, she did not criticise SPG's decision of 8<sup>th</sup> May, recognising the Society could not support a church outside the Anglican communion. She argued, however, 'there does seem something unsatisfactory and I am tempted to say actually wrong, in S.P.G.'s leaving institutions which have arisen through its action and in reliance on its support?' Although she imagined the Society would have considered all possibilities, Miss Rowe put forward two suggestions to prevent a shedding of responsibility towards SPG institutions. A capitalised grant could be given as a gesture of goodwill towards the new Church and the Anglican flock. Alternatively, an arrangement could be made with CMS and CEZMS by which SPG took over some of their responsibilities elsewhere in the world and they assumed responsibility for former SPG work in South India.<sup>97</sup>

Miss Rowe then engaged with the problem of her own split loyalties: to the Anglican Church and Catholic principles, and to the work 'which I believe I was sent to by the will of God,' to her fellow Indian Anglicans, and to the CIBC. Unlike her colleagues, she presented an evidenced justification for her inclination to join the CSI. In so doing, she demonstrated a sophisticated knowledge of the constitutional authorities of the Church, noting that while it would have been desirable to wait for the decision of the Lambeth Conference of 1948, the CIBC had no obligation to wait. She argued that as the Church had been willing to accept intercommunion at conferences "for unity" then this surely could be extended to non-episcopal ministries. Miss Rowe concluded with an honest account of her own difficulties of conscience. She believed the Basis of Union and Constitution, to which she had to subscribe before inauguration, seemed 'like treachery to the Catholic movement within the Anglican Church' from the point of view of *The Church*

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<sup>97</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/2 F2. Correspondence with missionaries, 1947-48. Rowe to Secretary. 19<sup>th</sup> July 1947.

*Times* and the Council for the Defence of Church Principles (with whose principles she agreed but whose tone she deplored). On the other hand, not to join the Union seemed like ‘deserting the people among whom one is serving, the Indian Anglicans in S.I. and like disloyalty to the authority of CIBC.’ She was ‘beginning to think that the right thing to do [was] to go out into the wilderness’ and ‘sink or swim’ with the Anglican flock in Madras. She felt ‘strongly’ that to countenance a dissident Anglican ministry within the united Church would be ‘quite wrong’ and an act of schism.<sup>98</sup>

Bishop Roberts responded to Miss Rowe’s letter on 13<sup>th</sup> August. Although he welcomed her ‘friendly and constructive advice,’ he emphasised her proposals for transfer of capital and the exchange of work with CMS and CEZMS had already been considered and rejected by SPG. He hoped the separate account would produce enough money for South India ‘at least to avert shipwreck,’ pointing out the possibility of a change in the Society’s attitude following Lambeth in 1948. The emergence of ‘non-cooperating groups’ in the Dornakal diocese might also alter matters. The Bishop believed Miss Rowe’s influence would be one of ‘moderation and conciliation,’ and although ‘the discipline of hard thinking’ could not be avoided, ‘mutual prayers for the guidance of the Holy Spirit’ could bring reassurance.<sup>99</sup>

The remainder of SPG women missionaries received replies from the Secretary much later, some even as late as 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> September 1947. To the majority, Bishop Roberts expressed ‘guilt’ for his ‘remissness’ and the fact that their letter had been ‘overlooked.’ In some replies, he explained that the South India issue has involved him in such ‘a flood of personal and official correspondence’ that ‘the enquiries of missionaries who had special problems to settle’ had received first attention.<sup>100</sup> Although he acknowledged they could not be ‘reproached for defending [the Scheme] with such vigour

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. Secretary to Rowe. 13<sup>th</sup> August 1947.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. Secretary to Teale. 12<sup>th</sup> September 1947.

and spirit,' the Secretary did not engage with women missionaries' statements of grief and betrayal.<sup>101</sup> Interestingly, Bishop Roberts was much prompter in answering missives from male clergy. Of the nine SPG clergy who sent letters to London in May, June and July 1947 for which we have replies, all received answers before September. Indeed, some received an almost immediate response: Reverend M.C. Langton of Palamcottah wrote to SPG on 25<sup>th</sup> May and received a reply on 31<sup>st</sup>!<sup>102</sup> Some of these clergy did have 'special problems' to settle. It is also likely, however, that the future plans and reactions of clergymen to Union were considered of greater significance than those of lay female missionaries. Perhaps the predominately emotional nature of women missionaries' letters, concentrating upon their feelings rather than any intellectual analysis of the scheme, further discouraged a response?

Pro-Union SPG missionaries did not confine their protest against the Society's actions to private letters, however. In August 1947, seventeen women missionaries joined four SPG priests and a priest's wife in signing an 'Open Letter' to members of the Church in England, which was circulated as a pamphlet and published in the *Record*.<sup>103</sup> This asserted their belief that Union was 'the Will of God' into which they, as 'loyal Anglicans,' could enter with a 'clear conscience.' It quoted the Archbishop of Canterbury's address to Convocation in 1945, in which he described their act as 'separation,' not 'schism.' The letter highlighted the difficulties that would be faced in South India due to SPG's withdrawal, pleading that all who had donated money in the past would earmark future donations for the separate account, and asking for further financial help and prayers. In a postscript, it also attempted to remove 'misgivings and

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid. Secretary to Kirby. 12<sup>th</sup> September 1947.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. Langton Correspondence.

<sup>103</sup> *The Record*. Friday 29<sup>th</sup> August 1947. p.515.

misunderstandings' around contentious issues in the Union debate, including apostolic succession, adherence to the Nicene Creed, and the Pledge.<sup>104</sup>

Women missionaries of the CMS in South India made little comment about the attitude of their fellow Anglican society to the CSI.<sup>105</sup> This is perhaps unsurprising given general attitude of caution displayed by CMS Headquarters in response to SPG's withdrawal. Although regretting this decision and supporting propaganda in favour of the scheme, CMS was reluctant to antagonise SPG. There was no mention of the SPG's decision in the *C.M.S. Outlook*.<sup>106</sup> On repeated occasions, the CMS Secretary, Max Warren, and the India Secretary, C.S. Milford, emphasised their Society did not wish to 'take advantage' of the situation in order to increase its own support.<sup>107</sup> 'I have myself on many occasions pleaded the S.P.G. point of view as one which was entitled to the fullest respect,' Warren reassured Bishop Roberts in June 1948, 'and as I think you know we have done our level best from Salisbury Square to check any sort of tendency in the country to exploit the divergent policy of the two Societies on this question.'<sup>108</sup> CMS female missionaries did express sympathy towards their fellow Anglican missionaries and Indian Christians in SPG areas, however. In her annual letter from Palamcottah in 1948, for example, Annie Lindsey remarked upon 'the loyalty and devotion' of SPG missionaries (and Christians whose Mother Society was SPG) who had 'sacrificed much on coming in to the C.S.I.' She saw this sacrifice as 'a strength' to the new Church: 'When I think what

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<sup>104</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/2 F2. South India Church Union. Correspondence with missionaries, 1947-48. 'An Open Letter from South India.'

<sup>105</sup> See CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Muriel King, 1947. Joyce Peel, 1948.

<sup>106</sup> *C.M.S. Outlook*. (January-December 1947).

<sup>107</sup> CMS, Birmingham. ASW AP3 Church Union schemes 1936-1959. Vol II. 1946-1947. 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1947 – Rev C.S. Milford to Bishop Michael Hollis. 18<sup>th</sup> June 1947 – Milford to Rev. Anthony Hanson. 15<sup>th</sup> September 1947 – Milford to 'Ralphe' (Rev J.R. Peacey). See also SPG, Rhodes House. CSI/2 F2. South Indian Church Union. Correspondence with missionaries, 1947-48. 31<sup>st</sup> May 1948 – Roberts to Warren. 14<sup>th</sup> June 1948 – Warren to Roberts.

<sup>108</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/2 F2. South Indian Church Union. Correspondence with missionaries, 1947-48. 14<sup>th</sup> June 1948 – Warren to Roberts.

the fellowship of C.M.S. means to me, and know that being in the fellowship of S.P.G. meant at least as much to them, I begin to realise how much they have given up.’<sup>109</sup>

*Opponents of Union – the cases of Miss Dunning and Miss Schubert*

Not all SPG women missionaries decided to join the Church of South India. Two women, Sheila Dunning and Fanny Schubert, informed the Society they could not agree to the Basis of Union. Sheila Dunning was a teacher at Holy Cross School in Nandyal, Dornakal diocese. She had been appointed in 1941 and worked together with Edith Marsh. In letters to the Society of 21<sup>st</sup><sup>110</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> July 1947, Miss Dunning expressed sadness that she would have to leave Nandyal due to her inability to assent to Union. She had hoped to stay until the end of the school year in April 1948 but had been informed by Bishop Elliott that this would be impossible. She was fearful for, and sought to ‘uphold the cause’ of those Indians in Nandyal who did not wish to join the Union, believing them to be motivated (like herself) by conscience rather than ignorance or financial considerations as the pro-Unionists were arguing. Interestingly, Miss Dunning’s support for these continuing Anglicans led her to criticise her fellow SPG missionaries. ‘I know I have only been here a short time,’ she told Bishop Roberts, ‘but I do think that although some of the other missionaries have known these people for years, they do not really understand their deep convictions, and their hope that the opposition will die down once Union begins, is not going to be fulfilled.’<sup>111</sup>

Miss Dunning’s relationship with her colleague at Holy Cross, Edith Marsh, is particularly interesting. She stressed she was unsure whether Miss Marsh knew the majority of the school’s staff had signed an anti-Union petition as ‘I am not discussing it

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<sup>109</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Annie Lindsey, 1948.

<sup>110</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/2 F2. South India Church Union. Correspondence with missionaries, 1947-48. Dunning to Secretary. 21<sup>st</sup> July 1947.

<sup>111</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/13 F1. Diocese of Nandyal. Correspondence 1947-1948. Dunning to Secretary. 26<sup>th</sup> July 1947.

with her. I have never discussed Union with the Staff, though Miss Marsh has with our Hostel Staff.’<sup>112</sup> Edith Marsh had been at Nandyal since 1938. Although sympathetic to protesters, she accepted Union in South India and had been a signatory to the ‘Open Letter.’ In a quiet but pointed way, she was extremely critical of SPG’s actions. ‘Can you imagine the whole of Lancashire’s finance in every way being cut off in six months and the panic which would ensure[?]’ she asked Bishop Roberts, ‘that is what you have done here but there’s no panic, only infinite sadness, infinite difficulties which you in your lovely house will never understand.’<sup>113</sup> While never explicitly critical of one another, Misses Marsh and Dunning’s letters demonstrate clear disagreement over the motivations of the anti-Union signatories. While Miss Marsh argued the petitioners ‘are the people who give their daughters to London Mission families without a qualm of conscience or a thought of doctrine...’<sup>114</sup> her colleague told Bishop Roberts that most Nandyal Anglicans with LMS spouses remained committed to their tradition.<sup>115</sup>

Miss Dunning continued to defend the anti-Unionists following her return to England in October 1947, enlisting Bishop Roberts’ help in writing a speech on South India to be presented to a chapter meeting of Huddersfield Rural Deanery, in which her father was a vicar.<sup>116</sup> She was also more explicitly critical of her fellow missionaries. On 20<sup>th</sup> January 1948, she wrote to Bishop Roberts telling him of a ‘most distressing’ letter she had received that morning from her Telugu teacher at Nandyal. This spoke of provocative demonstrations by CSI supporters upon the arrival of the Metropolitan’s Commissary. It also claimed Miss Dunning’s former colleagues were acting in an inappropriate manner. ‘There is Miss Lamb who is simply washing her money. She has

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Marsh to Secretary. 20<sup>th</sup> July 1947.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Dunning to Secretary. 26<sup>th</sup> July 1947.

<sup>116</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/2 F2. Correspondence with missionaries, 1947-48. Dunning to Secretary. 5<sup>th</sup> December 1947. CSI/13 F1. Diocese of Nandyal Correspondence, 1947-48. Secretary to Dunning, 28<sup>th</sup> January 1948. Dunning to Secretary, 4<sup>th</sup> February 1948.

given lot of money [sic] for the propaganda work of the CSI,' the correspondent alleged. 'There is also Miss Kirby who is doing some mischief. Miss Marsh is forcing all girls to attend the C.S.I. services. Now as you know the heads of institutions are C.S.I. people. How can we work under them?' Miss Dunning declared herself particularly troubled about anti-Union parents fearing discrimination at Holy Cross School as they 'know Miss Marsh has the power to refuse children.' 'The missionaries who have joined the Union are doing what has never been done before (with the exception of the Roman Catholics in the past),' she argued, 'and that is conducting propaganda among the members of another body.'<sup>117</sup> This and Miss Dunning's previous letters provide a fascinating insight into the extent of missionary disagreement in South India. She clearly had great faith in the truthfulness of her correspondent. She accepted wholeheartedly his claims against her fellow missionaries and was doubtful of the actions of her former co-worker, Edith Marsh. In this matter of conscience, Miss Dunning was clearly more prepared to trust an Indian who shared her convictions against Union than her pro-Union colleagues.

The other missionary who did not wish to join the CSI was Fanny Schubert. Her decision is unsurprising given her strongly felt Anglo-Catholic principles. After all, in 1920, she had offered to resign from St Ebba's School upon discovering her colleague did not believe in sacramental confession (see Chapter Two). Miss Schubert had now worked for SPG for twenty-seven and a half years and had served at All Saints' Training School in Trichinopoly since 1928. In her letters to SPG, she presented her anti-Union position as a personal choice based on conscience. Unlike Miss Dunning, she refrained from judgement and criticism of her colleagues, emphasising 'there are no frictions or tensions here or in my relations with any one, even though one personally cannot quite walk the same

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<sup>117</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/2 F2. Correspondence with missionaries, 1947-48. Dunning to Secretary. 20<sup>th</sup> January 1948.

way.’<sup>118</sup> Interestingly, Miss Schubert’s primary concern was not her own position in a united Church, but the welfare of her colleague, the Principal of All Saints’, Getsie Samuel. She felt a sense of ‘obligation’ to her long-serving colleague, who was too old to look for government employment and could not be transferred to an equivalent educational post outside the South due to language.<sup>119</sup> Bishop Roberts was sympathetic but could not see a way for their Society to help. He believed Miss Samuel’s ‘uneasiness’ towards Union was ‘attributable much more to doubt about the survival of the School than to any personal scruples of conscience.’ He hoped provisions for the continuance of All Saints’ could be made from the separate account, and that the SPG Committee could add a bonus to her provident fund in recognition of pre-Union service and in view of her insecure future.<sup>120</sup>

Fanny Schubert’s own future as a ‘recalcitrant’<sup>121</sup> in South India is notable. Despite her failure to subscribe to Union, she (unlike Miss Dunning) was permitted to remain at her post by the Bishop of Trichinopoly to help All Saints’ and Miss Samuel through ecclesiastical and political transition. Her salary continued to be paid by SPG’s Finance Department. Two years later, however, her presence seems to have started to cause problems. As the future of All Saints’ had now been decided – it was to become a Diocesan Training School – Miss Schubert informed SPG that she could ‘no longer be free lance.’ Not wanting to ‘do anything that would be awkward either for the C.S.I. or my own society,’ she had applied for a passage home.<sup>122</sup> She did not demand future work abroad with SPG as she was approaching retirement and ‘in a way my heart is in India.’<sup>123</sup> Miss Schubert emphasised her stay in the South had never been intended to be, nor had been, controversial. ‘There has never been any move here to stand out of the Union,’ she

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<sup>118</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/13 F1. Diocese of Nandyal Correspondence, 1947-48. Schubert to Secretary. 30<sup>th</sup> July 1947.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. Schubert to Secretary. 30<sup>th</sup> July 1947; 19<sup>th</sup> August 1947; 29<sup>th</sup> October 1947.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. Secretary to Schubert. 9<sup>th</sup> December 1947. (See also 11<sup>th</sup> August & 7<sup>th</sup> November 1947).

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. Schubert to Secretary. 30<sup>th</sup> July 1947.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. Schubert to Secretary. 19<sup>th</sup> October 1949.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. Schubert to Secretary. 11<sup>th</sup> December 1949.

stressed, 'in fact we have here in a way been a stabilizing influence in this little corner for feelings have run high and naturally it might seem hopeful to use a person who had not signed the pledge, as a focus for a spot of trouble. But we have quite firmly and I hope kindly explained that there was no possibility of using All Saints' for that purpose.'<sup>124</sup> All the same, W.A. Partridge, Honorary Secretary of SPG's Madras Fund and authorised to deal with Miss Schubert's case, reported that Bishop Thorp of Trichinopoly had found the presence in All Saints' of 'an independent Missionary of Miss Schubert's views' created 'difficulties.'<sup>125</sup> It was determined that she should return home following the end of the school year in April 1950. In March, however, Getsie Samuel was appointed Principal of St Christopher's College in Madras. A Methodist missionary, Miss Renshaw, was appointed to All Saints' in her place. Admitting an apparent 'complete change of mind on our part,' Bishop Thorp requested SPG permit Miss Schubert to stay on until she arrived from furlough and settled into school routine.<sup>126</sup> This was unreservedly approved.<sup>127</sup> It was not impossible, therefore, for 'recalcitrant' missionaries to continue their work in South India. Individual circumstances played a large part in this, however. Miss Schubert's long experience and willingness to work in cooperation with the united Church (although not personally a member) would surely have made her stay more acceptable to the Bishop. Equally, she was helped by the fact that Trichinopoly, unlike Nandyal where Miss Dunning was located, was not a centre of anti-Union protest, where her presence as a 'recalcitrant' could prove divisive and incendiary.

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid. Partridge to Secretary. 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1949.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. Bishop Thorp to Secretary. 31<sup>st</sup> March 1950.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid. Secretary to Bishop Thorp. 4<sup>th</sup> April 1950.

### *Controversy in Nandyal*

As Miss Dunning's letters demonstrate, Nandyal was the epicentre of especial controversy over Church Union. A Telugu-speaking area of approximately 148 by 144 miles, it was one of three archdeaconries in the Dornakal diocese and had been an area of SPG work since the early-nineteenth century. Most Anglicans in Nandyal were Mala 'untouchables', whose traditional occupation was weaving. The other archdeaconries, Kistna Godvari and the Deccan, were administered respectively by CMS and LMS missionaries.<sup>128</sup> In 1947, there were seven SPG women missionaries in the Dornakal diocese, three clergymen including an Archdeacon (all of whom were married), a male doctor and his wife. Four women were in Nandyal itself: Edith Marsh and Sheila Dunning worked at Holy Cross Training School, Emily Cutcliffe was in charge of Nandyal Women's Industries, and Dr Elizabeth Hymans De Tiel was Medical Superintendent of St Werburgh's Hospital. Of the remaining three, Mary Kirby and Deaconess Hilda Lamb were at Sevandanda Ashram in Nandikothur, and Emily Wardle, who usually worked at Nandyal, was on furlough in England.

During July 1947, SPG began to receive petitions from Anglicans in Nandyal, expressing their desire to remain outside the CSI. A letter to the Secretary from P.S. Devasahayam, Convenor of a meeting of the SPG Christ Church, Giddalur, noted, for example, the congregation's unanimous resolve 'to remain as members of the S.P.G. Church which has been preaching the Holy Gospel to us from the beginning and have brought us up in the doctrines and traditions of the Church of England.'<sup>129</sup> Petitioners claimed they had not been adequately consulted about the Union and that it was against their consciences to join. Mr K.J. Samuel, Secretary of the so-called Orthodox S.P.G.

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<sup>128</sup> Constance M. Millington, *An Ecumenical Venture. The History of Nandyal Diocese in Andhra Pradesh. (1947-1990)*. (Bangalore, 1993). pp.1-24.

<sup>129</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/13. Diocese of Nandyal. Correspondence. 1947-48. Devasahayam to Secretary. 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1947.

Telugu Christian Union told the Secretary: ‘We are for Union of Churches but not for this kind of Union, wherein ordination becomes a matter of private opinion and where faith in “Virgin birth” and “Resurrection” is left to option and confirmation a matter redundant.’<sup>130</sup> It was alleged that ‘99% of the Village Congregations are against this scheme.’<sup>131</sup> SPG was urged to take action to safeguard the spiritual welfare of these Anglicans, allowing them to remain true to their faith and loyal to the Society in the face of pressure to join the CSI. In acknowledging these letters, Bishop Roberts informed petitioners while SPG was greatly concerned about their position, the matter had to be settled by local Church authorities before the Society could act.<sup>132</sup>

On the advice of the Metropolitan of the CIBC, a Board of Enquiry was established and on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1947, three representatives each of the CIBC and CSI with the Bishop of Bombay as Chairman met to take evidence at Nandyal. The Commission recognised that at least twenty-one clergy and 25,000 laity out of a total Anglican community of 44,000 had refused to assent to Union. While misrepresentation and ignorance had played some part in this decision, so too had ‘genuine convictions regarding the need to safeguard the Catholic Faith’ and ‘genuine loyalty and love towards the Mother Church.’ It recommended that until a permanent decision could be taken by the CIBC, the Metropolitan should appoint a Commissary to exercise pastoral oversight of the ‘Orthodox Telugus.’ The Commissary would act in consultation with the two CSI bishops of the area over the use of Church buildings and institutions, and would not interfere with the Anglicans who had accepted Union.<sup>133</sup> The Commission’s report was approved by the Metropolitan and the Rev. E. Sambayya arrived in Nandyal as Commissary on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1947.

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid. Samuel to Secretary. 11<sup>th</sup> July 1947.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. Giddalur Deanery Representative to the Metropolitan of India. 7<sup>th</sup> August 1947.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. Secretary’s replies to Devasahayam, Samuel etc.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. ‘Orthodox Telugu Christians.’ January 1948.

The real reasons behind the anti-Union movement in Nandyal are difficult to determine. Misunderstandings certainly played a part. There is much disagreement between sources as to whether lay Christians in Nandyal were adequately informed about the Union proposals. In a letter to SPG in August 1947, for example, Emily Wardle claimed Bishop Azariah of Dornakal and his successor, Bishop Elliott had been ‘most careful to explain and report every stage of the negotiations in the Telugu Diocesan Magazine...’ Before she herself had left India, she had also attended a gathering of teachers in Jamalamadagu Deanery at which the Deanery Chairman had explained and discussed Union and its effects.<sup>134</sup> Certainly, Union was examined at length in the English-speaking *Dornakal Diocesan Magazine*.<sup>135</sup> On the other hand, the degree of access to such periodicals and meetings is questionable, especially amongst largely illiterate villages. For this reason, Constance Milligan points out, inaccurate rumours spread uncontrollably.<sup>136</sup> Local conditions were especially significant in this. The Commission’s report suggested that Nandyal’s comparatively-isolated position had led to a ‘narrowness of outlook’ and a ‘strong local devotion’ to SPG and its Catholic Churchmanship. This was augmented by a ‘surprisingly large’ degree of dependence upon the Mission.<sup>137</sup> Much was made of the fact that the Nandyal Pastorate and Church Committee had not objected to Union in advance of SPG’s decision of May 1947. While financial fears might have influenced anti-Unionists, they may also have misinterpreted this policy as a ‘theological judgement’ upon the scheme by their trusted and beloved Society.<sup>138</sup> Local feuds also contributed to the conflict. L.V. Azariah, in his 1958 ‘Study of the History of Christianity in the Nandyal Area’ highlighted that the Nandyal Church Committee was divided upon geographical

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<sup>134</sup> Wardle to Secretary, 27<sup>th</sup> August 1947.

<sup>135</sup> UTC, Bangalore. Periodicals. *Dornakal Diocesan Magazine*. 1928-1941.

<sup>136</sup> Millington, *An Ecumenical Venture*. p.70.

<sup>137</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/12 F2. Diocese of Nandyal. Report of the Committee appointed to consider the situation in the Nandyal Area. 4<sup>th</sup> December 1947.

<sup>138</sup> L.V. Azariah, ‘A Study of the History of Christianity in the Nandyal Area.’ Col. Dipl. Thesis United Theological College, Bangalore. (1958). p.32.

lines. Almost all members of the NCC who were ready to proceed with Union in July 1947 were relatives or from Renadu – the West of the Archdeaconry. The anti-Unionists were largely from Thurpunadu – the East.<sup>139</sup> Although it had repercussions on a global scale, the Nandyal controversy had its roots in the peculiar conditions and politics of the locality.

Nandyal was not the only area in the Church of South India which objected to Union. There were several other instances of protest. Before inauguration in 1947, for example, a case was filed in Nagercoil challenging the vote of the Travancore Church Council of the SIUC in favour of Church Union and seeking an injunction to prevent its implementation. This was dismissed by the District and High Courts. Yet, a small minority of anti-Unionists from 10 of the 470 congregations in the diocese called themselves ‘London Missionary Churches’ and laid claim to LMS properties, in spite of a lack of support from the pro-Union LMS Board. There were numerous disturbances with anti-CSI protesters interrupting services and preventing CSI members from entering local churches. In August 1948, another case, ‘the Kadamalaikuntu Case,’ was filed against the anti-Unionists in the District Court, seeking an injunction to prevent them from obstructing CSI representatives. This was won in 1951. This led to unsuccessful retaliatory cases as the ‘LMS Travancore Christians’ attempted to assert their rights.<sup>140</sup> In Cuddapah in Tinnevely, ten to twenty thousand Christians evangelised by the LMS also refused to assent to Union.<sup>141</sup> Anglican anti-Unionists also existed outside Nandyal. At Secunderabad a case was filed by the so-called ‘Association of the Continuing Anglican Communion Secunderabad’ against ‘The Church Union of South India.’ The recourse of individual Anglican communities to litigation against the CSI was condemned by the CIBC. In fact,

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid. p.33.

<sup>140</sup> UTC, Bangalore. CSI (2) Letters and papers regarding the Secunderabad and Kadamalaikuntu court cases after 1947.

<sup>141</sup> Anthony Hanson, ‘Should an Anglican support the CSI? 7 Objections Considered.’ (CMS London, June 1951). pp.25-26.

in contrast to the Nandyal Anglicans, the Anglicans of Secunderabad seemed to hold grievances against the CIBC too, as the Metropolitan was explicitly named in the suit. It (unsuccessfully) sought to establish that the merger of Anglican Christians with the SIUC was illegal and that the CSI had no right to former Anglican properties in the area. In August 1955, the suit was finally dismissed.<sup>142</sup> CMS and SPG women missionaries were not involved in these disturbances, although Doris Fleet, CMS missionary in Travancore, did refer in her Annual Letter to the ‘temporary tragedy’ that some Malayees should have been ‘so unready’ for the workings of Union.<sup>143</sup> In Nandyal, however, SPG women missionaries became embroiled in controversy.

*The Metropolitan’s Commissary and Deaconess Lamb*

The appointment of a Metropolitan’s Commissary to minister to the ‘loyal Anglicans’ of Nandyal did not herald the end of the dispute. From the start, the Reverend Emani Sambayya’s presence proved incendiary. He was welcomed not only by anti-Unionists but by a demonstration of adherents to the CSI, brandishing placards and black flags. One particular contretemps closely involved the SPG missionary, Deaconess Hilda Lamb. The fifty-eight year old Deaconess had served the Society as an honorary missionary in the Nandyal area since 1920. She had been a delegate in January 1947 to the General Council of the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon, which had voted to accept Union. Although she had originally voted against the newly-revised Pledge, she had subsequently ‘thrown in [her] lot’ with CSI, severing her connection with SPG.<sup>144</sup> In February 1948, however, she sent a letter and several related documents through the Society’s Secretary to its President, the Archbishop of Canterbury, for consideration by

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Doris Fleet, 1948.

<sup>144</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/2 F2: South India Church Union. Correspondence with missionaries. 1947-48. Lamb to Secretary. 18<sup>th</sup> June 1947.

Standing Committee. These, as well as an accompanying letter by Bishop Sumitra of the Cuddapah diocese,<sup>145</sup> alleged that the Commissary was abusing and acting in excess of his powers. Their contentions were supported by the Bishop of Madras, Michael Hollis, the Reverend J.S.M. Hooper, Honorary Secretary of the Continuation Committee of the CMS, and the Reverend R.M. Barton, a former SPG missionary. According to the Deaconess, the Commissary had claimed authority over SPG institutions with a speed and manner she deemed ‘utterly incredible.’<sup>146</sup> Her personal experience of him had also been confrontational. He had written to Bishop Sumitra demanding her transfer, falsely accusing her of moving ‘about the area doing propaganda for the Church of South India with gifts in money and in kind.’ While she was away, he had also sent Reverend G. Jonathan to Kalasapad as ‘S.P.G. Deanery Chairman’ without word of this appointment. When the teacher in residence had refused Jonathan the key to her room, ‘[t]here was great abuse from some and threatening to break into the room’ until the police intervened.<sup>147</sup> Both Bishop Roberts and the Archbishop of Canterbury refused to engage with the Deaconess’ complaints, however. The Secretary emphasised that the Commissary was responsible to the Metropolitan of the CIBC. SPG could not intervene in South Indian matters unless there had been allegations of misuse of its properties and funds, which there had not.<sup>148</sup>

Deaconess Lamb would not be silenced, however. On 30<sup>th</sup> March 1948, she cabled SPG, asking the Society to defer any decisions about South India due to ‘serious developments.’<sup>149</sup> In an explanatory letter of 7<sup>th</sup> April, she described how anti-Union activists in Kalasapad had locked the Church, preventing its use for the whole of the Easter Festival. She again alleged the Commissary was not working in cooperation with the

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<sup>145</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/13 F1: Diocese of Nandyal. Correspondence 1947-48. Bishop Sumitra to Archbishop of Canterbury. 25<sup>th</sup> February 1948.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. Deaconess Lamb to Archbishop of Canterbury. [February 1948].

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. Concerning Kalasapad Deanery, Cuddapah-Chittoor Diocese.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid. Secretary to Lamb. 15<sup>th</sup> March 1948. CSI/12 F2: Diocese of Nandyal. Archbishop of Canterbury to Lamb. 10<sup>th</sup> March 1948.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid. Cable. 30<sup>th</sup> March 1948.

bishops of the South Indian Church. 'The Society is knowingly, and with all its resources backing up the "absolute discretion" of a man who will probably be in the area a few months at most; but if he succeeds in his efforts, will leave behind him hasty and hardened religious divisions... in families, villages and areas; and in many, a bitter hatred and encouraged contempt for the great national Church...' she argued. The CSI was, after all, these Christians' 'own natural home, into which, with very few exceptions, their leaders Indian and English of life-long S.P.G. allegiance and outlook, Bishops, Archdeacons, Canons and missionaries have entered, besides of course many Priests.'<sup>150</sup> Once again, however, Bishop Roberts was reluctant to engage with the Deaconess' protest. Although admittedly 'very sad reading,' he believed her report did not 'give a complete picture of the situation' nor take into account all factors influencing SPG policy. It could not be denied that the CSI was not in communion with the Church of England or that anti-Unionists constituted 'a considerable majority' in the Nandyal area. The Society was unconcerned by the actions of the Commissary. The Secretary unequivocally refused to publicise her grievances as she had asked, since he had refused to publicise those of the other side and would not 'be party to the circulation of matter which will have the inevitable effect of provoking recriminations and counter-charges.'<sup>151</sup>

Deaconess Lamb's involvement in the situation in Nandyal reveals the extent of missionaries' sense of connection to SPG. Although the Deaconess had entered the CSI and disagreed with SPG's decision to withdraw from South India, she tried to use the Society as a recourse in difficulty, trusting that after her long years of membership it would not ignore her plea.<sup>152</sup> It further illustrates the extent to which an apparent dispute over theology could escalate due to clashes of personality and degenerate into petty

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<sup>150</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/13. F1: Diocese of Nandyal. Correspondence 1947-1948. Lamb to Secretary. 7<sup>th</sup> April 1948.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. Secretary to Lamb. 20<sup>th</sup> April 1948.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid. Lamb to Archbishop of Canterbury. [February 1948].

sniping and reproach. It demonstrates how easily a missionary could become embroiled in controversy as a spokesperson for the grievances of some and a scapegoat for the grievances of others. It is interesting that a *woman* missionary could become such a figure. Indeed, Deaconess Lamb was requested to write and supported in her entreaties to SPG by four leading clergymen. Yet, her prominent role is unsurprising given her strong character, assertiveness, and zeal,<sup>153</sup> and the fact she was well-known, respected, and (apparently) well-informed after serving SPG for twenty-seven years in the Nandyal area. The accusation made by the Commissary (and repeated by Miss Dunning) that the Deaconess was financing pro-Union propaganda is also significant. While this was probably untrue, it was informed by enough truth to make it an effective means of discrediting her. As the daughter of a wealthy doctor, she certainly possessed considerable personal wealth and had financed her own missionary career.<sup>154</sup> Interestingly, two years later, following her retirement to England, Deaconess Lamb *was* responsible for the soliciting of money for the pro-Union cause as the Honorary Secretary of the Appeal Committee for Women's Work in the Church of South India!<sup>155</sup>

*St Werburgh's Hospital: The case of Dr De Tiel*

Deaconess Lamb was not the only SPG missionary embroiled in controversy. In the summer of 1949, a bitter squabble broke out over the running of St Werburgh's hospital in Nandyal. As early as May 1948, its furloughing Superintendent, Dr Elizabeth De Tiel had asked the Metropolitan's Commissary: 'Will there be a civil war before I

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<sup>153</sup> See Katherine Peacey's assessment of her character in USPG, Rhodes House. CWW142. Original Letters Incoming. 1920. p.60.

<sup>154</sup> For references to her position as an honorary missionary and her father's wealth, see Ibid. p.107. Also CSI/2 F2. South India Church Union. Correspondence with missionaries. 1947-48. Details of S.P.G. Personnel electing to stay within S.I.U.C.

<sup>155</sup> 'Church of South India' Henrietta Bell, Hester Allington, Mildred Rawlinson, Frances Temple. *The Times*. Friday, Jul.28, 1950. p.7.

return[?],<sup>156</sup> Shortly after her arrival, she found herself in the midst of a dispute which brought to the surface tensions over power and influence within Nandyal's community of continuing Anglicans.

In spite of severe deafness, Elizabeth De Tiel had qualified at the Royal Free Hospital in 1926 and served as an honorary SPG missionary and surgeon at St Catherine's Hospital in Cawnpore. In 1949, she was sixty one years old.<sup>157</sup> St Werburgh's Hospital had its beginnings in 1928, when Dr Deevenamma Abraham had commenced medical work for women in the Nandyal area, opening an outpatients clinic and six beds for inpatients in the mission bungalow. A purpose built hospital had been constructed in 1931. By 1949, it dealt with surgical and maternity cases, and catered for male and female inpatients and outpatients. It employed two Indian M.B.B.S. doctors (Mr and Mrs Asirvadam), an Anglo-Indian Nursing Superintendent (Mrs Gotting), a Sister Tutor, a government-certified compounder, and a lab technician, alongside Dr De Tiel herself.<sup>158</sup>

In the summer of 1949, the Metropolitan's Commissary, now the Reverend E.J.M. Wyld, appointed a Commission to enquire into the state of St Werburgh's. In his own words, the hospital had 'unfortunately been the subject of a good deal of controversy within the C.I.B.C. and of course of no little anxiety to Dr De Tiel.'<sup>159</sup> The controversy stemmed from financial concerns. Upon her return from furlough, Dr De Tiel had come to the conclusion that St Werburgh's could no longer maintain a third doctor. As women doctors were most necessary, the male doctor, Dr G. Azariah Asirvadam faced redundancy. The Commission comprised of Dr Scudder, a missionary at Ranipet, as Chairman, Dr L.I. Roberts from Giddalur, and the Rev B.E. Devaraj, headmaster of the SPG Training School in Nandyal. It recommended that the services of Dr Asirvadam be

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<sup>156</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/12 F2. Diocese of Nandyal. De Tiel to Sambayya.

<sup>157</sup> 'Elizabeth Hymans De Tiel, LMSSA,' *The British Medical Journal*, Vo.281, No.6236. (Aug.2, 1980). p.398.

<sup>158</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. MM776. India Annual Reports: St Werburgh's Hospital, Nandyal. 1949.

<sup>159</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/12 F2. Diocese of Nandyal. Wyld to Secretary. 31<sup>st</sup> August 1949.

terminated at the end of three months from 1<sup>st</sup> August 1948. His wife, Dr Vijayamma was to be given permission to resign from November 1<sup>st</sup> 1949 with three month's pay in lieu of notice. If she declined to resign, she would be dismissed with a grant of three month's pay.<sup>160</sup> As Dr Asirvadam refused to discuss the matter with Reverend Wyld, his notice had been sent by post.<sup>161</sup>

From late July and throughout August, however, a huge amount of correspondence was generated as Dr Asirvadam himself, N. Jacob, the President of the Orthodox Christian SPG Union, and K.J. Samuel, its Secretary, made allegations of unfair dismissal to the SPG, the Commissary, and the Metropolitan. These missives included numerous denunciations of Dr De Tiel as Medical Superintendent. She was variously accused of falling 'into the hands of the band of evil doers,' spending the hospitals finances 'as she liked,' and seeking to use the Commission to 'wreak the vengeance' on Dr Asirvadam for dismissing her 'pet clerk' at the hospital (Mr P.I. Devasikhamay) while she was on furlough.<sup>162</sup> Samuel even recommended Dr De Tiel's dismissal due to her deafness and doubtfulness over her medical qualifications.<sup>163</sup> Examples of the self-interest and prejudice of members of the Commission were also given. In contrast to these bad characters, the fact that Dr Asirvadam was the son of a well-known priest was constantly reiterated, and his reappointment urged.<sup>164</sup> Further to such correspondence, a public meeting was held at the SPG High School in Nandyal on 22<sup>nd</sup> August. This passed nine resolutions, including that the hospital's accounts should be checked by an arbitrary body, that Asirvadam's

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid. Rumsey to Secretary. 8<sup>th</sup> August 1949.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. Wyld to Secretary. 31<sup>st</sup> August 1949. Wyld to Asirvadam. 30<sup>th</sup> July 1949.

<sup>162</sup> See Jacob to Metropolitan. 4<sup>th</sup> August 1949. Samuel to Secretary. 10<sup>th</sup> August 1949. Asirvadam to Metropolitan. Undated.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid. Samuel to Secretary. 13<sup>th</sup> August 1949.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid. Samuel to Secretary. 13<sup>th</sup> August 1949.

removal was ‘illegal,’ and that he should be given three years in charge of the hospital to improve finances.<sup>165</sup>

**Figure 4.2.**  
**Staff of St Werburgh’s Hospital, Nandyal, April 1948.<sup>166</sup> [Copyright: USPG]**



**Dr De Tiel is in the centre, Dr Vijayamma Asirvadam to her left, and Dr G. Azariah Asirvadam, is second row, first right. The hospital clerk, Mr P.I. Devasikhamy is second from right at the back.<sup>167</sup>**

As in the dispute between Deaconess Lamb and Sambayya, SPG was reluctant to get involved, asserting the matter should be settled in India itself.<sup>168</sup> Faced with the continual onslaught of vitriolic correspondence from the Orthodox Telugu Union, however, Bishop Roberts lost his temper. ‘Whatever may be the merits of the case,’ he told Mr K.J. Samuel in a tart letter of 7<sup>th</sup> September, ‘I cannot conceal the impression that it is being agitated in the worst possible spirit with little regard for the principles of Church

<sup>165</sup> Ibid. Samuel to Secretary. 28<sup>th</sup> August 1949.

<sup>166</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. Photographs. 1899 Nandyal (India). Staff of St Werburgh’s General Hospital, 7.4.1948.

<sup>167</sup> The original labelling is somewhat confusing, but this can be assumed.

<sup>168</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/12 F2. Diocese of Nandyal. Secretary to Samuel. 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1949.

authority or the restraints of Christian courtesy.’ The Secretary stressed that while SPG had initially recognised the Orthodox SPG Telugu Christian Union, that body ‘surely ceased to have any *raison d’etre* or standing’ following the Metropolitan’s assumption of responsibility over the continuing Anglicans of Nandyal and his appointment of a Commissary. The Union’s threats to invoke the arm of the civil authorities to expel the Metropolitan’s delegate and the Society’s missionaries and its allegations that missionaries and their Indian colleagues – ‘the very people whose championship you presumably welcomed a few months ago’ – were ‘engaged in a sinister conspiracy to engineer an injustice,’ made the inclusion of the letters ‘SPG’ in its title ‘a questionable right.’<sup>169</sup> Mr Samuel did not moderate his agitation, however. Throughout September, he continued to send letters to the Secretary, reiterating many of his previous arguments, as well as denouncing Dr De Tiel, the Reverend T.P. Rumsey (a continuing-Anglican missionary of the Society and Secretary to the Commissary), and now, SPG itself. He expressed anger that neither the Secretary nor the Metropolitan had addressed him in his position as Secretary of the Orthodox Telugu S.P.G. Christian Union in their replies to his letters, although ‘[i]t was I who made the CIBC and the SPG to exist in these parts.’<sup>170</sup> He stressed that the Orthodox Union was the property of the people, and even threatened ‘[i]f the Metropolitan is not going to permit us to exist as a separate missionary Society in CIBC we have to invite our Mother Church, the Roman Catholicism where our principles are maintained to receive us back.’ If this was impossible, they would become Congregationalists!<sup>171</sup> Ultimately, however, Samuel’s threats and appeals were fruitless.

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid. Secretary to Samuel. 7<sup>th</sup> September 1949.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. Samuel to Secretary. 7<sup>th</sup> September 1949.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. Samuel to Secretary. 16<sup>th</sup> September 1949.

Dr Asirvadam was not reinstated,<sup>172</sup> a new female doctor was appointed, and Dr De Tiel remained at St Werburgh's until her retirement to England in 1960.<sup>173</sup>

The St Werburgh's dispute is interesting for a number of reasons. For a start, it was a dispute between anti-Union factions. The issue was no longer (even nominally) theological. Pro-Unionists and the Union itself were hardly mentioned in the debate. This is particularly noteworthy given that Dr De Tiel was a pro-Union missionary and a signatory to the 'Open Letter.'<sup>174</sup> In the heated atmosphere of Nandyal, a domestic hospital issue was transformed as local leaders of the continuing Anglicans tried to maintain power and influence. Once again, the unsophisticated, backbiting nature of the Nandyal quarrel is evident with Dr De Tiel, as missionary in charge, a focus of especial vitriol. The doctor's attitude to the crisis is also significant. Whatever her personal views on the Asirvadams, the Orthodox Telugus, and their insults, she does not appear to have expressed them in writing. Indeed, she is an unusually silent presence in the voluminous correspondence relating to St Werburgh's in the SPG archives. They contain only a letter of September 1947 to Bishop Roberts asking about the future position of the hospital and her letter to Sambayya of May 1948.<sup>175</sup> In her report of the hospital for 1949, Dr De Tiel mentions the impossibility of paying the male doctor's salary and the consequent departure of the Asirvadams, but gives no indication of the resultant upset.<sup>176</sup> Perhaps she believed the hospital dispute was a matter for local authorities, not the Society, or perhaps she realised SPG would be unimpressed if she became involved in the vicious circle of mudslinging consuming the Nandyal district?

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<sup>172</sup> He and his wife went to work at the CMS medical mission in Lusadia. See Hardiman, *Missionaries and their medicine*. p.201.

<sup>173</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. MM776. India Annual Reports: St Werburgh's Hospital, Nandyal. 1949, 1950, 1960.

<sup>174</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/2 F2. South India Church Union. Correspondence with missionaries, 1947-48. 'An Open Letter from South India.'

<sup>175</sup> CSI/12 F2. Diocese of Nandyal. De Tiel to Roberts. 17th September 1947. De Tiel to Sambayya. 16<sup>th</sup> May 1948.

<sup>176</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. MM776. India Annual Reports: St Werburgh's Hospital, Nandyal. 1949.

*The long term effects of South Indian Union.*

Aside from the initial heartache at SPG's decision to withdraw from South India and the consequent disturbances, Church Union had a significant impact upon SPG and CMS women missionaries' work in the South. SPG was not the only 'official' Church of England organ which ceased to operate in the new Church. In December 1947, the Mothers' Union had also declared itself unable under its constitution to continue work in an area outside the Anglican Communion.<sup>177</sup> At the time of the CSI's inauguration, women's work varied greatly over the South Indian dioceses. Almost every congregation had some form of women's meeting.<sup>178</sup> Mothers' Union branches existed in all four Anglican dioceses with a membership of 20,000. There were six fulltime MU workers (three European and three Indians), who were entirely financed by the Union in England. It was agreed that their salaries would continue to be paid for three years after inauguration, in the hope that the CSI would then establish its own equivalent society.<sup>179</sup> In some areas, systematic training of clergymen's and catechists' wives had been instituted, and a 'sisterhood' for Indian and European women had been founded at CMS' Bethel Ashram in Travancore. Methodists had also begun efforts to form a lay order for the ministry of women. Yet, a means of allowing all women to play a full part in the united Church was necessary.<sup>180</sup>

In February 1948, a 'purely ad hoc' conference for women leaders was held in Trichinopoly.<sup>181</sup> The thirty-two delegates discussed the possibility of having one women's

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<sup>177</sup> Cordelia Moyse, *A History of the Mothers' Union. Anglicanism and Globalisation, 1876-2008.* (Woodbridge, 2009). p.205.

<sup>178</sup> Carol Graham, 'The Church of South India,' (1951). p.15.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid. Appendix E: 'The Mothers' Union and the Church of South India.' pp.28-29.

<sup>180</sup> Graham, *Between Two Worlds.* p.45.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid. p.46. See also 'Report on the Conference for Leaders of Women's Work in the Church of South India, Trichinopoly, February 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> 1948.' USPG, Rhodes House. CSI/13 F1. Diocese of Nandyal. Correspondence 1947-48.

organisation for the whole CSI. It was decided to form a Women's Fellowship with a special section for married women called the Mothers' Union of the CSI. This was presented to and sanctioned by Synod in March 1948 and a Committee was formed to determine its constitution with Deaconess Carol Graham as General Secretary. The Fellowship was inaugurated in September 1949.<sup>182</sup> Its four declared objectives were: 'to unite members in prayer, service and witness; to set an example of truly Christian life; to uphold the sanctity and permanence of Christian marriage; to help mothers in their responsibility for the Christian upbringing of their children.' Members pledged themselves to be true to and to promote these objectives in their daily life. The Mothers' Union section also had to subscribe to four pledges, including faithfulness to their marriage vows and baptising and instructing their children in the faith.<sup>183</sup> In Bangalore, the Fellowship brought together over two hundred women from all four traditions and eleven different congregations, speaking four different languages.<sup>184</sup> In 1950, the closing CEZ orphanage in Bangalore was converted into a retreat house and holiday home for women church workers of the whole of the CSI, known as Vishranthi Nilayam, the house of refreshment.<sup>185</sup>

The Conference of February 1948 also initiated steps to establish a Women's Order in the CSI. In December, a Conference on the Life and Work of Women in the Church was held in Madras, which discussed the prejudice, insecurity, financial and status difficulties faced by single women church workers. The existing orders in the Church – the Bethel Ashram Fellowship, the Deaconess Order of the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Church Sisters of the former diocese of Dornakal – gave advice and evidence. It was unanimously decided that some kind of Order was necessary to 'integrate [single women]

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<sup>182</sup> UTC, Bangalore. VPC William Elphick. E3 Letters to his mother, 1943-53. 25<sup>th</sup> September 1949.

<sup>183</sup> Graham, 'The Church of South India.' p.17.

<sup>184</sup> Graham, *Between Two Worlds*. p.46.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.* p.50.

more closely into the life of the Church.’ Over the next eighteen months, the matter was discussed at Diocesan Councils, retreats and regional conferences, and a number of women experimented with a provisional Rule of Life. In September 1951, over fifty Indian and European workers met together for three days of prayer and discussion. Proposals for the formation of an Order were forwarded to Synod and accepted. The Common Rule of the Women’s Order of the CSI committed members to a consistent devotional life, self-discipline in work, use of money, and personal relationships, fellowship with other members in prayer and meetings, and regular evangelism. At the time of its inauguration in Bangalore on Whit Sunday 1952, it had twenty-seven sisters and ten probationers of varied backgrounds, some well-educated professional women and others village evangelists.<sup>186</sup> A Fellowship of Associates with a modified Rule was also founded for women who could not join (perhaps due to marriage) but were in sympathy with the Order’s ideals.<sup>187</sup>

The formation of the CSI, therefore, united and systematised women’s work to an unprecedented level. CMS and SPG missionaries now worked in unison as members of a ‘Diocesanised’ Women’s Fellowship. The reorganisation precipitated by Union also meant women’s work in the South became more ‘Indianised’ in form. Although women missionaries participated in discussions about the nature of the CSI Women’s Fellowship and Order, Indian women played a leading role in shaping the institutions of their Church. The majority of delegates to the February 1948 Conference (at least nineteen of the thirty-two) were Indian.<sup>188</sup> Although Deaconess Graham was asked to be the first General Secretary of the Fellowship, she was soon replaced by the Indian sister Beatrice Daniel.<sup>189</sup> She also deliberately chose the title of ‘Elder Sister’ of the Women’s Order rather than the

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<sup>186</sup> Graham, ‘The Church of South India.’ pp.34-38.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid. p.39.

<sup>188</sup> ‘Report on the Conference for Leaders of Women’s Work in the Church of South India, Trichinopoly, February 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> 1948.’ SPG, Rhodes House. CSI/13 F1. Diocese of Nandyal. Correspondence 1947-48.

<sup>189</sup> Graham, *Between Two Worlds*. p.52.

more dictatorial ‘Mother Superior,’ sharing this role with another Indian sister, Rachel Joseph [Figure 4.3].<sup>190</sup>

**Figure 4.3.**  
**‘Elder Sisters’ of the Women’s Order of the Church of South India, Rachel Joseph and Deaconess Carol Graham, c.1950s.<sup>191</sup> [Copyright: CMS]**



The formation of the Church of South India also had an impact upon women missionaries’ position within their home Church. The attitudes of male and female missionaries of SPG and CMS reveal once again the disengagement between the mission field and the Anglican Church in England. SPG missionaries repeatedly emphasised that those at home could not understand the peculiar conditions in South India which made Union necessary and desirable. They found the vigour of the opposition to the CSI within the Church of England incomprehensible and deeply distressing. SPG missionaries who joined the CSI found themselves particularly alienated and shunned by some sections of

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid. p.49. The leadership of the Order was entirely transferred to Indian hands in December 1959, see Graham, ‘The Church of South India.’ (1960 edition). p.19.

<sup>191</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Unofficial. Miss Lilian Annie Davies. Z1. Photographs.

the home Church. For many, this came as a tremendous shock. In her autobiography, Deaconess Carol Graham described a painful trip home in 1950. 'Life had been so absorbing in India that we hardly realised the suspicion still existing in England...' she recalled. It was 'a devastating blow to discover the atmosphere which still prevailed... Again and again one found a notice in the Church porch forbidding anyone who had joined the C.S.I. to receive Holy Communion. People who had hitherto received one with open arms turned a cold shoulder and often there seemed no point of contact.'<sup>192</sup> As the Deaconess admitted and as emphasised in her obituary in the *Daily Telegraph*, her experience 'coming from something that seemed so utterly satisfying and God-given to find oneself largely estranged from what had been such a wonderful heritage was very bitter and left a wound which took a long time to heal.'<sup>193</sup> In fact, this sense of estrangement from the Anglican Church at home probably informed the Deaconess' decision upon her retirement to England to form a non-denominational community at Farncombe to 'work and pray for the unity of all Christians.' 'How can I now be a mere Anglican?' she reportedly asked.<sup>194</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Women missionaries' relationship with the Church of England was complicated and diluted due to their service overseas. Geographical distance alongside the different concerns and immediate demands of the mission field meant missionaries were often removed from, and less interested in, contemporary debates within the home Church. This was particularly the case for women who, unlike their clergyman colleagues, were not part of the Church's hierarchy and would not occupy a vicarage upon retirement from the field

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<sup>192</sup> The refusal of communion to Anglicans who had entered the CSI was not endorsed by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

<sup>193</sup> Graham, *Between Two Worlds*. pp.50-51. Obituary from *Daily Telegraph* (19<sup>th</sup> April 1989) reproduced in P. Dharmagnani (ed.), *Sister Carol Graham. The Beloved 'Amma.'* (Madras, 1989). p.5.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.* p.7.

– unless, of course, it was their brother’s or father’s! Women missionaries did participate in debates concerning the Church in the mission field, especially the formation of the CSI. This is unsurprising given the profound effects Union would have upon their work. Significantly, however, the pamphlet warfare between advocates and opponents of the Scheme was a male affair. The only female missionary publication on the subject came after the Union’s inauguration: Deaconess Carol Graham published an article on the CSI in the *International Review of Missions* in 1948 and a pamphlet in 1951.<sup>195</sup> These contributions were entirely different in tone and content to male writings on the scheme, focusing upon the practicalities of women’s work in the new Church, not upon doctrine and Church principles. Women missionaries were hardly uninterested in, or uninformed about the Union proposals prior to inauguration. As noted in Chapter One, some were members of diocesan conferences. Others were delegates to the General Council of the CIBC in Madras which decided upon Union. In the 1930s, women missionaries of CMS and SPG had organised three conferences on the subject of Union for Anglican, Methodist, and SIUC women workers in the South.<sup>196</sup> Here again, women’s emphasis was distinctive, concentrating upon the situation on the ground in South India rather than intellectual, theological debates stemming from Anglican divisions at home. While women’s conferences touched upon doctrinal issues, debating such questions as ‘what are the necessary parts of a Church service?’ they discussed them within a frame of reference understandable to their Indian colleagues. They were concerned primarily with practicalities – the ways in which Union would alter these women’s work.<sup>197</sup> As the

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<sup>195</sup> Carol Graham, ‘The Inauguration of the Church of South India,’ *International Review of Missions*. Vol.37. No.1. (January 1948). pp.49-53. Graham, ‘The Church of South India.’

<sup>196</sup> *Church Union News and Views*. ‘Women’s Conference on Church Union,’ Vol.III. No.6. (May 1933), pp.197-198. ‘Women’s Conference on Church Union,’ Vol.V. No.6. (Dec 1934). pp.50-52. ‘Report on Third Women’s Conference on Church Union,’ Vol.VIII. No.8. (March 1938). pp.98-99. These were at Palamcottah in 1933, Madura in 1934, Trichy in 1938. A Church Union Conference for Women was also held at Courtallum in 1941.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

following chapter will demonstrate, women missionaries' displayed a similarly local mindset in the face of global developments when reacting to Indian nationalism.

Significantly, and perhaps surprisingly, most women's commitment and attachment to the Church in the mission field proved stronger than their allegiance to their missionary society and to the Church of England. Although continuing Anglicans in the CSI were apparently under no censure, SPG's withdrawal of support and the vehement condemnation of the United Church by Anglo-Catholics in England, meant it was no small decision for SPG women missionaries to continue work in the South. For CMS missionaries, albeit to a lesser extent, it was still a watershed moment, since for the first time the Society was allying itself with a Church outside the Anglican communion. Ironically, service in the mission field distanced and even estranged women missionaries from the very Church which had sent them out. They had not yet ceased to work in India but they had 'Indianised' themselves, transferring their allegiances from the home Church and mission to the emergent Indian Church. In colonial parlance, they had 'gone native!'

## Chapter Five: Missionaries and the Raj.

Perhaps women missionaries' most complicated relationship was with the British Raj. The last quarter of a century has seen a blossoming of historiography investigating the relationship between mission and Empire. In the introduction to his work, *Imperial Fault Lines*, Jeffrey Cox deftly identifies three 'master narratives' used to categorise missionaries in imperial India.<sup>1</sup> Stereotypically, they have been depicted as marginal figures, isolated from and sneered at by the society of the Raj due to their zealous proselytising and their intimate association with all types of Indian.<sup>2</sup> Yet, they have also been accused of being 'imperial functionaries,' linked to the colonial rulers, not only by their race, nationality and culture, but also by their methods which sought to colonise 'native' hearts and minds.<sup>3</sup> More sympathetic narratives have countered this, however, emphasising that missionary motives and priorities were different from those of the Raj.<sup>4</sup> The historiography of mission and imperialism, therefore, is one of 'many contradictions.'<sup>5</sup> Women missionaries' position within, and attitudes towards, the Raj were also contradictory. In studies of mission and Empire, the opinions of women are usually overlooked<sup>6</sup>: perhaps they are assumed to be the same as men? Yet, as previous chapters have shown, female missionaries were highly-educated and assertive women, who were clearly capable of thinking for themselves. Their views of the imperial regime, emergent Indian nationalism, and the impact of nationalist protest upon their work, deserve more detailed exploration. Unlike the majority of studies, this chapter will also examine the

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<sup>1</sup> Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*. pp. 1-19.

<sup>2</sup> See for example: Forster, *A Passage to India*.

<sup>3</sup> See for example: Comaroff, *Of revelation and revolution*. For the links between British imperialism and Christianity, see also: Studdert-Kennedy, *Providence and the Raj*.

<sup>4</sup> See for example: Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*. Porter, *Religion versus empire?: British Protestant missions and overseas expansion, 1700-1914*.

<sup>5</sup> Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*. p.18.

<sup>6</sup> See for example: Elizabeth Susan Alexander, *The Attitudes of British Protestant Missionaries towards nationalism in India. With Special Reference to Madras Presidency, 1919-1927*. (Delhi, 1994). Alexander uses published reports and periodicals of missionary societies to examine their views of the nationalist movement. In all but one instance, the views she cites seem to be those of men. The exception is a letter from Miss Marcella Sherwood of the CEZMS – see p.29.

ways in which missionaries dealt with the coming of Independence, its violent aftermath, and the new states of India and Pakistan.<sup>7</sup>

### *The marginalised missionary?*

The caricature of the ‘Bible thumping’<sup>8</sup> missionary, isolated from and scorned by the high society of the British Raj, is well known. E.M. Forster in *A Passage to India*, for example, used missionaries’ geographical isolation in Chandrapore as a metaphor for their wider social exclusion. He described ‘the devoted missionaries who lived out beyond the slaughterhouses, always travelled third on the railways, and never came up to the Club.’<sup>9</sup>

Outside fiction, missionaries were also portrayed as ‘not quite pukka.’ As Francis DeCaro and Rosan Jordan highlight in their article, ‘The Wrong Topi,’ the sun helmet acted as a powerful symbol of ‘difference.’ A popular Raj joke concerned an army officer who tried to persuade two women to purchase khaki rather than white pith helmets in a London outfitters. When the women proved intransigent, he exclaimed: “I assure you, nobody wears those except missionaries” “Oh, but we *are* missionaries,” they replied.<sup>10</sup> Such humour was based on reality. Autobiographical writings attest to the differentiation of missionaries in this manner. In her memoir, ‘Miss-sahib,’ Desirée Battye recalls an incident soon after her arrival in India in 1939, where she was working as Personal Secretary to the Resident of Mashir, Sialkot and Hunsa. She was prevented from leaving the house in her topi by the Resident’s cry: “Take that ghastly thing off at once.” When she asked what was wrong with her helmet, he replied confusingly: “There’s nothing WRONG with it, you can’t wear it, that’s all.” Desirée was saved from bewilderment by the

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<sup>7</sup> Curiously, the majority of works on missionaries in India do not deal with Independence in any detail. Cox’s *Imperial Fault Lines*, for example, ends in 1940.

<sup>8</sup> CSAS, Cambridge. Memsahibs Questionnaires. Mrs Olivia Hamilton.

<sup>9</sup> Forster, *A Passage to India*. p.30.

<sup>10</sup> Francis A. DeCaro and Rosan A. Jordan, ‘The Wrong Topi: Personal Narratives, Ritual and the Sun Helmet as a Symbol,’ *Western Folklore*, Vol.43. No.4. (Oct.1984).

Resident's wife who explained: "It's just that WE don't wear white ones – they're missionary topis."<sup>11</sup> Through the very colour of their sun helmets, therefore, missionaries were designated as outsiders. Yet, as Jordan and DeCaro emphasise, they were only 'partial outsiders.' The fact that they wore topis at all signified they were 'potentially part of the communitas,' although these topis were, nevertheless, 'not quite right.'<sup>12</sup> Like their pith helmets, missionaries were somehow the same, but different.

**Figure 5.1.**  
**'The wrong topi?' Staff of the Criminal Tribes Settlement, Hubli with the Bishop of Bombay (right), November 1937.<sup>13</sup> [Copyright: USPG]**



**Interestingly, the missionaries of the government-financed Settlement – Reverend A.L. Bradbury, Caroline Edwards, and R.U. Wilson – have 'pukka' khaki topis, while the Bishop has a white, missionary helmet.**

It is interesting that most references to missionary isolation and 'difference' in jokes, tales, and literature seem to concern women. It is women, more often than not, who

<sup>11</sup> CSAS, Cambridge. Memsahib Memoirs. Desirée Battye, 'Miss-Sahib.' pp.97-98.

<sup>12</sup> DeCaro and Jordan, 'The Wrong Topi,' p.243.

<sup>13</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. Photographs. 702 Hubli (India) 32 Photos of the Church of the Holy Name and Hubli settlement etc.

make the embarrassing mistake of wearing ‘the wrong topi.’<sup>14</sup> Marginalised female missionaries also feature in Paul Scott’s *Raj Quartet*.<sup>15</sup> This might be explained by the greater degree of ‘difference’ between white women under the Raj than between white men. Women missionaries subverted the ideal role of a white woman in India: as ‘incorporated’ wives, emblems of imperial honour and guardians of their race.<sup>16</sup> They were usually single and professionally employed; they were in God’s, not the Empire’s, service; and most significantly, they worked in close association with Indians. It was undesirable to be confused with a woman missionary as it associated one with a separate and challenging set of mores, loyalties and priorities. ‘Difference’ was less pronounced among men as male missionaries, of the Anglican variety at least, were not such problematic figures. As ordained ministers of the Church, they fitted more smoothly into the imperial hierarchy, sometimes acting as Chaplains to the British community. Equally, while it was hardly unusual for a white man to work amongst Indians, in working *and living* amongst Indians, women missionaries overstepped the usual, rigidly-defined boundaries for their sex.

The stereotype of the marginalised missionary is somewhat overdrawn, however. Records of SPG and CMS suggest missionaries were not completely ‘out beyond the slaughterhouses’ and hardly unwilling or unable to interact with Raj society. Contact occurred in a number of ways.

In their reports and letters, women missionaries recorded numerous visits by imperial notables to their institutions. Viceroys, Governors, other important personages from the civil station, or more frequently, their wives, attended fetes and Guide rallies,

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<sup>14</sup> The memsahibs’ autobiographies at the Cambridge Centre for South Asian Studies include another example of this. See CSAS, Cambridge. Memsahib Memoirs. Margery Hall, ‘And the Nights were more terrible than the Days.’ p.3.

<sup>15</sup> Miss Edwina Crane and Miss Barbie Bachelor in Paul Scott, *The Towers of Silence*.

<sup>16</sup> There are numerous works on the role of the colonial ‘memsahib.’ See for example: Macmillan, *Women of the Raj* and Procida, *Married to the empire*.

opened new buildings, and distributed prizes in mission hospitals and schools [Figure 5.2.]. As may be expected, this occurred particularly in the imperial capital of Delhi. In 1922 alone, St Stephen's Hospital was visited by Lady Rawlinson, Lady Edwards (the wife of the Surgeon General of India), and the Vicereine herself, Lady Reading.<sup>17</sup> The logbook of Queen Mary's School, which I consulted in Delhi, had been signed by two other Vicereines, Lady Hardinge in 1913 and 1914, and Lady Chelmsford in 1917 [Figure 5.3.].<sup>18</sup> Prizes were also distributed at schools in Delhi in the 1920s and 1930s by Lady Birdwood (who was President of the Delhi Mission Association), and the Vicereines Lady Reading, Lady Irwin and Lady Willingdon. Viceregal attendance at other mission stations was less common, but other dignitaries did visit. Lady Haig, wife of the Governor of the United Provinces, was a frequent visitor to the CMS' Queen Victoria High School in Agra in the 1930s.<sup>19</sup> Such visits are much more rarely mentioned in reports from the 1940s. This is probably attributable to wartime conditions, which curtailed celebratory events.

Eminent personages also donated money to missionary institutions. The Minutes of St Stephen's Community in Delhi record a donation of Rs10,000 in March 1931 from Lady Irwin for St Stephen's Hospital, St Mary's Home, and work amongst women in Delhi.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Alice Steward, Principal of the CMS Girls' School in Jeyi, recorded a donation of £500 in 1934 from Lady Willingdon, which had not only cleared the Mission from debt, but paid for the dispensary's annual supply of drugs.<sup>21</sup>

Lesser mortals of the civil station also helped women missionaries' work in a number of ways. They made donations of money and materials, assisted with sales of work, and organised other fundraising efforts. Again, most 'contact' seems to have been

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<sup>17</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E77d 1922. Lahore. Dr Scott.

<sup>18</sup> Queen Mary's School, Delhi. Logbook December 1912-22.2.54.

<sup>19</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2 1935-1939. F.M. Bickersteth. 1935, 1937. M.I. Sterling. 1938.

<sup>20</sup> Archive of St Stephen's Community, Delhi. Minutes of St Stephen's Community 1928-38. Meeting 28<sup>th</sup> March 1931.

<sup>21</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Alice Margaret Steward. 1934.

**Figure 5.2.**  
**Cecilia Norris of St Stephen's Community, Delhi, and Lady Linlithgow during the Vicereine's visit to St Michael's School, Jangpura, late 1930s.<sup>22</sup> [Copyright: USPG]**



with 'memsahibs' rather than their husbands. In her Annual Letter of 1926, M.P.

Mallinson gave a particularly detailed account of help given to the CMS Girls' School in Srinagar. Officials' wives and other residents had contributed soap, combs and towels to the missionaries' cleanliness campaign, and a Forest Officer had donated a bathtub! Two ladies, realising the lack of space for games at the school, had invited the girls in batches to their gardens for sports and 'a sumptuous tea.' Others had organised a children's 'Fairy Play' and donated the proceeds. The daughter of the British Chaplain helped out in the school three times a week, teaching drill, sewing and handiwork.<sup>23</sup> This is not the only instance of women of the civil station working in missionary institutions. In 1920, for example, Helen Jerwood of St Stephen's Community noted that three memsahibs had

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<sup>22</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. Photographs. Delhi CMD 130 Album.

<sup>23</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. M.P. Mallinson. 1926.

taken class at Queen Mary's School.<sup>24</sup> Occasionally, memsahibs also assisted in hospitals.<sup>25</sup>

**Figure 5.3.**  
**Note from Lady Hardinge in the logbook of Queen Mary's School, Delhi, 1913.**<sup>26</sup>

The images originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright. They are taken from entries with the Queen Mary's School logbook, *Logbook December 1912-22.2.54*, which is kept at Queen Mary's School in Delhi. The images are also found in the Bodleian hard copy of this thesis.

**Also in the logbook, Lady Chelmsford's signature, 1917**

It must be highlighted, however, that women missionaries did not write often of the residents of the civil station. Equally, some of their reports suggest the latter were not always active in their support of missionary endeavour. While attempting to interest 'civil lines people' in her work, Tirzah Barnes, Principal of the SPG Epiphany School in Cawnpore, found 'they have all washed their hands of the mission because they have been

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<sup>24</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E75b 1920. Lahore. Miss Jerwood.

<sup>25</sup> See for example: CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Eleanor France. 1942.

<sup>26</sup> Queen Mary's School, Delhi. Logbook December 1912-22.2.54.

only asked for money and have never been consulted or invited to see the spending of it. When the mem-sahibs found I wanted their advice and the benefit of their Indian experience they were all so ready to help.’<sup>27</sup> A similar view was expressed by C.B. Allinson of the CMS hospital in Dera Ismail Khan. ‘[T]he lack of real Missionary knowledge of some of our own people is startling,’ she observed. One soldier’s wife had told her: “Well now I know what is done with the money I will never again refuse to help.”<sup>28</sup> The reports and letters imply members of the Raj were not hostile or apathetic to missions per se. Once their interest and support had been directly engaged by missionaries, they were usually eager to help. Ordinarily, however, they were ignorant of missionary work or felt it to be something from which they were excluded.

While members of the Raj might have visited, donated to, and helped at missionary institutions, however, Forster’s assertion that missionaries ‘never came to the Club’ seems to have been correct. Women missionaries rarely socialised with members of the civil station. Members of St Stephen’s Community in Delhi were invited to stay at Viceregal Lodge in Simla. ‘[T]he garden was lovely after the dust of Delhi, and their Excellencies were most kind,’ remarked Rita Jackson after one such trip in 1930.<sup>29</sup> Yet, this was exceptional and took place during holiday periods. Usually, women missionaries were far too busy with their work to attend social events. When interviewed, Dr Ruth Roseveare emphasised that although she was invited to functions, these did not fit easily into the schedule of St Stephen’s Hospital: ‘There was no time for parties. Life wasn’t like that. We were caring for people – that was the only thing that mattered.’<sup>30</sup> Mission authorities also discouraged too frequent distractions. This is evident in the disapproval expressed by

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<sup>27</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW282. Letters Received (India, Burma). 1926. p.60.

<sup>28</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1935-1939. Miss C.B. Allinson. 1937.

<sup>29</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E85c 1930. Lahore. Miss Jackson.

<sup>30</sup> Transcript of interviews with Dr Ruth Roseveare. Interview 1. Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

St Hilda's Society at the friendship between Dorothy Carty and Lady Alexandra Hailey (see Chapter Two).<sup>31</sup>

In some cases, however, women missionaries worked directly for the imperial power. Between 1919 and 1950, at least nine single women missionaries of the SPG worked at the Criminal Tribes Settlement in Hubli in the Bombay Presidency. 'Criminal tribes' were groups identified by the British Raj for whom crime was a profession, passed on from one generation to the next. The 1911 Criminal Tribes Act had extended the powers of a previous act of 1871. It allowed local government to label any suspicious gang or tribe as 'criminal,' and to insist that its members were registered and compelled to live in a settlement where their movements were strictly controlled. Such settlements were intended to educate and reform their inmates, providing them with alternative means of livelihood. The Governor of the Punjab, Sir John Hewett, had invited the Salvation Army to take charge of settlements in his province. In 1919, the SPG was asked by the Governor of Bombay to take charge of a new settlement at Hubli.<sup>32</sup> Women missionaries initiated educational, evangelistic and medical work, attempting to teach the inhabitants cleanliness, moral responsibility, sports, games, and handicrafts. SPG did not have to finance these workers as their salaries, outfit and passages were paid for by a government grant. One of the most famous missionaries at Hubli was Caroline Edwards, who served at the settlement from its foundation until her retirement in 1939, receiving both the MBE and Kaiser-i-Hind silver medal for her work. In the 1930s, Miss Edwards also served the imperial regime as a magistrate in Hubli's newly-formed Children's Court, which dealt with cases

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<sup>31</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW146. Original Letters Incoming. 1922. See especially the letters of Deaconess Katherine Beynon on p.19.

<sup>32</sup> C.M. Edwards, *Criminal Tribes at Hubli, 1920-1930*. (Westminster, 1931). See also: Anand A. Yang (ed.), *Crime and Criminality in British India*. (Tucson, 1985); Meena Radhakrishna, *Dishonoured by History. 'Criminal Tribes' and British Colonial Policy*. (New Delhi, 2001); Y.M. Simhadri, *The Ex-Criminal Tribes of India*. (New Delhi, 1979).

of crime amongst destitute children.<sup>33</sup> This work was continued by her colleague, Dorothy Warwick.<sup>34</sup> The arrangement at Hubli seems to have been mutually beneficial. The government gained an eager workforce, committed to the uplift of ‘criminals.’ The Mission also benefitted. The government grant for Hubli’s workforce allowed more missionaries to be in the field without cost to the Society. Secondly, missionaries found great scope in their work amongst such outcasts. In her review, *Criminal Tribes at Hubli, 1920-1930*, Miss Edwards herself declared: ‘we, the workers, are proud to be associated with Government [in the work]... [W]e see in the raising of the Criminal Tribes opportunities of work for God and India such as we have not had before.’<sup>35</sup>

In one instance, that of Mrs Lilian Starr, missionary service to the Raj was particularly extraordinary.<sup>36</sup> The daughter of missionaries, Mrs Starr had started work for CMS in 1913 as a nurse at the Afghan Mission Hospital in Peshawar. In 1915, she married her colleague, the head doctor, Vernon Harold Starr. Three years later, however, Vernon Starr was murdered by two Afridi men who had come to his bungalow at night, apparently needing help.<sup>37</sup> Lilian went to serve at an Indian Military Hospital in Cairo and then returned to England. In 1920, however, she persuaded CMS to let her return to work in Peshawar, against the advice of her colleagues who felt it would be unsafe.<sup>38</sup> In April 1923, there was another atrocity on the Frontier. When Major Archibald Jenner Ellis, a British army officer, was away on duty, Afridi tribesmen entered his bungalow at Kohat, murdered his wife and kidnapped his fifteen year old daughter, Mollie. The Chief

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<sup>33</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW323. Missionary Preparation Union (Women’s Division). Leaflets and Circular Letters, c.1920-1940. Advent 1938.

<sup>34</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E95/2. Bombay. 1940. Miss Warwick.

<sup>35</sup> Edwards, *Criminal Tribes at Hubli*, p.17.

<sup>36</sup> Although Mrs Starr was at one time a missionary wife, she is included in this study as for the majority of her career and during the incident discussed she was employed as a single woman missionary.

<sup>37</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Overseas. G2 I4/O Punjab and Sindh. 1918. See also Mrs Starr’s account of her husband’s life and legacy, published under pseudonym. John Oxenham, *Vernon Harold Starr: 1882-1918 and after*. (London, 1920)

<sup>38</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Overseas. G2 I4/O Punjab and Sindh. 1920.

Commissioner of the North West Frontier Province, Sir John Maffey, suspected the raid had been carried out by the notorious criminals, Ajab and Shazada Khan, in retaliation for the imprisonment of their fellow gang members for stealing rifles from a Frontier Police Post. He also suspected Mollie had been taken by the gang into the mountainous Tirah region near the Afghan border. This was tribal territory – the frontier tribes would not betray the gang and if a British force attempted to rescue Mollie, the gang could easily slip away into Afghanistan. Maffey decided, therefore, to send a highly-unusual and controversial rescue party of Afridi tribesmen, loyal to the Raj, and Mrs Lilian Starr!

With her knowledge of tribal languages and culture, her nursing skills, and her fearless nature, Maffey felt Lilian Starr was an ideal choice. Her gender was also tactically beneficial. The rescue party had to pass through five different tribal territories on the way to Khanki Bazar, where it was rumoured Miss Ellis was being held. Mrs Starr's presence was used as a lever to cross tribal boundaries. It was stressed that in Islamic law, women were not harmed, and foreigners were traditionally welcomed as guests. At 7am in the morning on 22<sup>nd</sup> April, Lilian Starr was finally permitted to see a tired but unharmed Mollie Ellis in the house of Akhunzada, the Mullah of Khanki Bazar. Negotiations then proceeded for Mollie's release. At one point, feeling that they were being deceived by the negotiators, the Khan brothers burst into the room where Mollie and Mrs Starr were. In the subsequent confrontation, Lilian deployed her knowledge of Islamic custom. It was, she pointed out, against custom for unknown men to enter the women's quarters of a house, especially a mullah's house where they were under his protection. This incident angered the mullah who cursed the brothers and insisted Mollie Ellis be escorted out of his

territory. By April 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Afridi negotiators had reached an agreement with the kidnapers, and Mollie Ellis was safely reunited with her father.<sup>39</sup>

**Figure 5.4.**  
**‘The Heroine of Peshawar.’<sup>40</sup> [Copyright: *Look & Learn*]**



**An indication of Mrs Starr’s lasting fame: artwork of Lilian Starr, Mollie Ellis, and the Afridi kidnapers, *Look & Learn* magazine, 17<sup>th</sup> June 1967**

Lilian Starr’s part in the rescue highlights the complex relationship between missionaries and the British Raj. The story was printed worldwide and Lilian was heralded as ‘the Heroine of Peshawar.’ [Figure 5.4.]<sup>41</sup> She was awarded the Kaisar-i-Hind medal,

<sup>39</sup> There are numerous accounts of the rescue mission, including Mrs Starr’s own: Lilian Starr, *Tales of Tirah and Lesser Tibet*. (London, 1924). See also: Michael E. Lambert, *The Kidnapping of Mollie Ellis by Afridi Tribesmen*. (Ottawa, 2009). Sybil Oldfield, *Women Humanitarians. A Biographical Dictionary of British Women Active between 1900 and 1950. ‘Doers of the Word.’* (London, 2001), pp.228-229.

<sup>40</sup> ‘The Heroine of Peshawar,’ *Look & Learn* History Picture Library.

<sup>41</sup> See for example: ‘Miss Ellis Safe: Woman’s Heroic Mission,’ *The Times*, Monday April 23<sup>rd</sup> 1923, p.12, Issue: 43322, col.F. ‘English Girl Saved From Afghan Captors: Woman Physician Rescues Mollie Ellis, Whom Tribesmen Had Kidnapped,’ *The New York Times*, April 23<sup>rd</sup> 1923, p.2. Interestingly, in this and a

first class, and the life-saving medal of St John of Jerusalem. In his forward to her published account, *Tales of Tirah and Lesser Tibet*, Sir John Maffey wrote effusively of her great service to the Empire. When ‘[a]ll the King’s horses and all the King’s men could only make matters worse, and British prestige shone dim,’ Mrs Starr ‘[w]ith the charm of her fair face and a woman’s course... carried our standard for us behind those iron hills where no Englishman may pass.’ Not only had she rescued Mollie Ellis, but she had ‘made a British mark on the heart of Tirah better than all the drums and trampling of an army corps.’<sup>42</sup> Lilian had not been under any illusions about the wider political significance of the rescue mission. She had been informed of this by Maffey at their initial meeting<sup>43</sup>, and, at the end of her book, she gave details of subsequent steps taken by the British to pacify and better control the frontier tribal regions.<sup>44</sup> She stressed her gladness to have been of use to the British administration.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, her book was dedicated to Sir John Maffey ‘in gratitude to him for giving me the opportunity of rendering service.’<sup>46</sup>

It is clear, however, that Lilian Starr saw the rescue mission as providing her with much more than the opportunity to help the British Raj. Her celebrity in its aftermath meant she was offered the chance to lecture in America. CMS pressed her to return to England to take part in its new recruitment campaign, but she was determined to stay in Peshawar.<sup>47</sup> She argued her presence was all the more needed now. She did not want to waste the opportunity of being the first Western woman in Afridi tribal territory. During the rescue mission, she had seized every chance to talk to Afridi women and to distribute medicine to those in need. She hoped more Afridis from Tirah would now be encouraged

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subsequent article (27<sup>th</sup> April) in *The New York Times*, Mrs Starr is not described as a missionary but as a ‘woman physician.’

<sup>42</sup> Lilian Starr, *Tales of Tirah and Lesser Tibet*. pp.161-162.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p.168.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, pp.245-247.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p.168.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. Dedication.

<sup>47</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Overseas. G2 I4/O. Punjab and Sindh. 1923. See in particular: 122. Starr, Mrs. (Peshawar) ‘Comments on the proposal that she should return to England in connexion with the campaign at home.’

to come to the hospital for medical treatment and spiritual teaching. For Lilian Starr, therefore, the trip into tribal territory was an opportunity to expand the scope of the Mission. She did not see it as an act of heroism, but ‘literally just the extension of the normal motive and habit of a nursing-sister’ and a missionary into a region of dramatic urgency and peril.<sup>48</sup> Sir John Maffey had enabled her to render service, not only to the British Empire, but to the Afridis themselves, to CMS, and, of course, to God.

### *Missionaries and Indian nationalism*

Obviously, women missionaries were not operating in a vacuum in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, but in an ever-changing India. Their views of, and connections with, the British Raj were influenced by the growing Indian nationalist movement. The effects of nationalist campaigns upon their work varied depending upon the geography of their mission.

Both CMS and SPG were affected by the Gandhian satyagraha in protest against the Rowlatt Bills and the consequent outbreak of unrest in the Punjab in 1919. In Lahore, the members of St Hilda’s Society were ‘interned’ in the Cathedral compound during Holy Week, and slept in their clothes with their possessions packed in case evacuation was necessary.<sup>49</sup> CMS was more seriously affected, as it had a station in the storm-centre, Amritsar. The Mission Church was burned down and the book depot and pastor’s house destroyed.<sup>50</sup> The compound of the CMS Middle School for girls was stormed. One of its missionary teachers, Helen Scott, took the girls to hide in an enclosed bathing space. ‘The mob went straight to the big building, set fire to many things, broke open cupboards and desks got bundles of the children’s clothing poured petrol over them and burnt them,’ she

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<sup>48</sup> Basil Matthews’ Forward in Starr, *Tales of Tirah and Lesser Tibet*. p.12.

<sup>49</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW139. Original Letters Received. 1919. p.20. Quarterly letter of Deaconess Kate Hemery.

<sup>50</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Overseas. G2 14/O. Punjab and Sind Mission. Original Papers. 1919. Document 68 – Seditious Rioting in the Punjab.

reported to CMS. At last, the police were able to get through to the school, followed by the Deputy Commissioner and an escort of cavalry, and the mob was dispersed. Miss Scott, the other teachers and the girls were taken to Amritsar Fort for safety.<sup>51</sup> Also sheltered at the Fort were the missionaries and girls of the Alexandra High School, as well as missionaries from the city's hospitals and from Tarn Taran. Women missionaries from the stations of Jandiala, Gojra and Batala were evacuated to safer places, and the Head of the Mission, Reverend C.M. Gough, went with British soldiers and 'two armoured cars with machine guns' to fetch the women of Clarkabad and Asrapur.<sup>52</sup> Amritsar was also, of course, the site of the notorious attack upon Marcella Sherwood, a missionary of CEZMS, who had been pursued by a crowd of rioters, knocked off her bicycle and badly beaten. In consequence, General Dyer had issued his infamous 'crawling order.' He had also used the 'outrage' perpetrated against Miss Sherwood as justification for firing upon the crowd at Jallianwalla Bagh. Miss Sherwood lived with two CMS missionaries: Miss Allinson and Miss Claydon. The latter sent an account to Mr Gough, giving details of the attack upon her colleague 'as I heard them from her own lips.'<sup>53</sup>

Women missionaries' accounts of the anti-Rowlatt agitation provide interesting insights into their beliefs and priorities. The unrest in the Punjab, the attack on Miss Sherwood, the declaration of martial law, and, of course, the Amritsar massacre itself, were discussed in newspapers all over the world. It is curious, therefore, that there was little discussion of these events in women missionaries' letters and reports. The disturbances were not mentioned at all in personal letters sent to the SPG Women's Secretary from the Lucknow, Bombay and Madras dioceses. Indeed, only two of the

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid. Document 73 – Miss H.M. Scott's Narrative of the Attack on the Amritsar CMS Middle School for Girls.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. Document 68 – Seditious Rioting in the Punjab.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. Document 81 – To Mr Gough from Lora Claydon.

fourteen women who wrote letters from the Lahore diocese mentioned the unrest.<sup>54</sup> CMS missionaries also made little reference to the violence. The only lengthy accounts are in the Annual Letters of the Amritsar missionaries and of Dora Gough, the daughter of the Mission Secretary, and in the statements of Helen Scott and Lora Claydon amongst the papers of the Punjab and Sindh Mission. It is particularly surprising that only one of the CMS and SPG accounts mentions the attack on Miss Sherwood, as one would imagine women missionaries to be especially concerned by violence against one of their number.

The language used in the few existing accounts of the disturbances is also interesting. Women missionaries hardly mentioned the motivations of the rioters. Instead, they were constantly described and depersonalised as an unruly, anonymous ‘mob.’ The account of Lora Claydon of CMS is the only one to mention the Rowlatt Bills. She claimed she and her colleagues had ‘felt that trouble was coming’ in Amritsar. They had ‘heard that the true facts about the Rowlatt Bill had been misunderstood’ and had done their ‘best to tell the people what the Rowlatt Bill really meant...’<sup>55</sup> Other missionaries seem to have been more shocked and surprised by the outbreak. ‘Of course we knew that agitators were at work and that the atmosphere was surcharged, but the storm broke unexpectedly suddenly,’ Marion Price of the Alexandra High School told CMS.<sup>56</sup> Her reference to ‘agitators’ is significant, as it is one of the rare explanations offered for the existence of violent ‘mobs.’ Perhaps it was taken for granted that such rioting was inevitable in India when, as Deaconess Kate Hemery put it, the ‘latent violent passion of a non-Christian and for the most part uneducated mob’ was roused.<sup>57</sup>

In most cases, women missionaries differentiated this lawless ‘mob’ from the majority of Indians amongst whom they lived and worked. Lora Claydon, for example,

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<sup>54</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW139. Original Letters Received. 1919.

<sup>55</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Overseas. G2 I4/O. Punjab and Sindh Mission. Original Papers. 1919. Document 81.

<sup>56</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Marion Price. 1919.

<sup>57</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW139. Original Letters Received. 1919. p.20. Deaconess Kate Hemery.

drew comfort from the help given to Miss Sherwood by Giyan Singh, a strict Hindu.<sup>58</sup>

Rather than showing missionaries that their labours in Amritsar had been in vain, ‘this time of trouble has been the means of showing us how many loyal and true hearts there are in that great city,’ she wrote. She believed Giyan Singh’s willingness to risk his life to save a missionary, and to feed and bathe her in spite of his customs, was ‘a wonderful testimony to the value of Christianity,’ as both he and his children had been educated in mission schools.<sup>59</sup> Helen Scott’s narrative is also particularly illuminating on this point. When hiding from the mob, she and the Indian schoolgirls had united in prayer as fellow Christians, asking for God’s help. ‘Even during their fear,’ she wrote, ‘the children and teachers several times over tried to hide me, or get me to hide myself, for they said, “They will kill you first.”’<sup>60</sup> While Miss Scott probably recorded this to show the consideration of the Indians with whom she worked, she also highlighted (perhaps unconsciously) her ‘difference’ from them. Although they were fellow Christians, the Indians recognised Miss Scott’s race set her apart.

Although women missionaries recorded the wrongs wreaked by the mob upon imperial and missionary institutions, little was mentioned about wrongs committed against Indians or the actions of British troops in quelling disorder. There was complete silence about Dyer’s notorious actions at Jallianwalla Bagh. Deaconess Kate Hemery of St Hilda’s Society is one of the few who suggested that Indians may have had some justification for their actions. The Deaconess clearly associated herself with the British administration, using the word ‘we’ when describing British military action. She accepted Indian concerns that the British would ‘hate them after this’ without appreciating that the events of 1919 might have caused substantial *Indian* ill-feeling. Yet, she did acknowledge the British had ‘been to blame on many occasions’ for their treatment of Indians. ‘The way some English

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<sup>58</sup> It is interesting that Miss Claydon refers at first to Dr Singh as a ‘Hindu’ and then later as a ‘Sikh.’

<sup>59</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Overseas. G2 I4/O. Punjab and Sindh Mission. Original Papers. Document 81.

<sup>60</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Overseas. G2 I4/O. Punjab and Sindh Mission. Original Papers. Document 73.

treat the Indian fills one with shame,' she wrote, '...they forget it is not forgotten and in the case of any trouble, those of us who have treated them in this way cannot hope to be spared.'<sup>61</sup>

It is also significant that while British troops were responsible for the restoration of order and, in many cases, the evacuation of women missionaries from places of danger, they were not mentioned in great detail in the accounts. Instead, women missionaries wrote of the *divine* protection they had received: 'that Great Unseen Hand that seemed to stop the onrush of the maddened mob as they came on to kill us.'<sup>62</sup> CMS missionaries were typically loquacious in this vein, but Deaconess Kate Hemery of the SPG also noted, in more reserved, high-Anglican terms, how the Easter Eucharist at the Cathedral in Lahore had been 'very deep... as we felt how wonderfully we had been preserved through danger.'<sup>63</sup> Women missionaries' response to the violence was also rooted in their Christianity. The conclusion to Miss Scott's account of the attack on the CMS Middle School in Amritsar is particularly striking. She noted that both the Middle School and the Alexandra High School had been indefinitely closed, meaning missionary work in the city had 'suffered sorely.' She felt, however, 'this will be, under God a strengthening of the Christian life of our community and that God is working His Purpose out...'<sup>64</sup>

Apart from the disturbances in the Punjab in 1919, the initial phase of Gandhian non-cooperation had little effect upon missionary work. In a few places, it was noted that school numbers and subscriptions had declined. Hartals and boycotts were also disruptive in the United Provinces. Mary Laurence of the CMS reported camping in the district around Meerut had become more difficult 'as "Gandhi-ism" meant preventing our getting

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<sup>61</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW139. Original Letters Received. 1919. p.20. Deaconess Kate Hemery.

<sup>62</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Overseas. G2 I4/O. Punjab and Sindh Mission. Original Papers. Document 81.

<sup>63</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW139. Original Letters Received. 1919. p.20. Deaconess Kate Hemery.

<sup>64</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Overseas, G2 I4/O. Punjab and Sindh Mission. Original Papers. Document 73.

carts and water, selling Gospels and in some villages a rowdy crew stopped the work altogether.<sup>65</sup> Annie Lowick, a CMS missionary at Ghaziabad had been beaten with a heavy lathi by two men, while asleep on her verandah. Interestingly, Miss Lowick was dismissive of this incident. She did not link it directly with the nationalist disturbances, but left it to the penultimate paragraph of her Annual Letter, portraying it as nothing but an annoying hindrance to the work. ‘No serious injuries resulted,’ she informed CMS, ‘only a broken rib and several bruises which kept me unable to move for 3 weeks...[!]’<sup>66</sup>

Civil disobedience in the 1930s also had ‘remarkably little effect’ upon missionary work.<sup>67</sup> Of the fifty-seven missionary reports submitted to SPG in 1930 for the dioceses of Lahore, Lucknow, Bombay, Nasik, Madras, and Dornakal, only twelve mentioned the political upheaval in India at all. In all but three of these cases, missionaries were reporting that they had not been seriously affected by the troubles. The exceptions were in the Ahmednagar district of Nasik, where unrest had caused a temporary decline in the sale of woven cloth made at the Mission’s widows’ homes,<sup>68</sup> and at Queen Mary’s School in Delhi, where the work had been disrupted by noisy demonstrations in the street alongside.<sup>69</sup> CMS Annual Letters also made little mention of disturbances. In the majority of places, work continued as usual. Miss Stuttaford’s assessment of the situation in her report of work at Karanji in the Nasik diocese is typical in its focus upon local concerns. ‘The crash of air ship, the Round Table Conference, these big matters leave us unmoved,’ she contended. ‘The Swaraj movement merely serves as a stimulus to conversation when the motor bus breaks down or as food for bazar chatter.’ Instead, it was matters of immediate, local effect which were of most importance to the Indians amongst whom she

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<sup>65</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Miss Mary Hayes Laurence. 1921.

<sup>66</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL G2. 1916-1934. Miss Annie E. Lowick. 1919.

<sup>67</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E85d 1930. Lahore. Dr Houlton.

<sup>68</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E85c 1930. Nasik. Miss Ward.

<sup>69</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E85c 1930. Lahore. Miss Fenn.

worked: 'The failure of the cotton crop, the price of corn, the building of a bridge or new road which means work, these are the things that matter.'<sup>70</sup>

Gandhi's 'Quit India' campaign of 1942 was also little mentioned by women missionaries. Only five of the thirty-four reports submitted to SPG made any reference to unrest.<sup>71</sup> Queen Mary's School in Delhi had suffered again from disturbances. A 'howling' mob had invaded the compound and the girls had been evacuated.<sup>72</sup> It is difficult to tell whether other St Stephen's institutions were also affected. Interestingly, the section of Miss Froggatt's report dealing with the disturbances at Queen Mary's is asterisked, and at the end of the report, Gladys Mowll, the Acting Head of St Stephen's Community, has written: 'N.B. Nothing in connection with the riots in Delhi should be put into print or quoted as the Head of Mission would strongly disapprove.'<sup>73</sup> The Head of Mission was an Indian, Canon Arabindo Nath Mukerji. Perhaps his disapproval prevented other missionaries in Delhi from writing of the effects of violence. Mukerji may have feared negative images of India would provoke a decline in foreign financial support for the Mission. Alternatively, Miss Mowll may have been self-censoring, frightened of offending her Indian colleague. CMS work seems to have been equally free from disruption. The exception was St John's College, Agra, which was closed for a month when students went on a sympathy strike over the arrest of Congress leaders.<sup>74</sup>

Even when writing of disturbances to their work, women missionaries rarely made any political statements. They hardly mentioned Gandhi or commented upon the

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<sup>70</sup>USPG, Rhodes House. E85c 1930. Nasik. Miss Stuttaford.

<sup>71</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E95/2 1942. Bombay. Miss Briscoe. E95/9 1942. Lahore. Miss Ellison. Miss Froggatt. E95/8 1942. Lucknow. Miss Peterken. E95/12 1942. Nasik. Miss Broomfield.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. Miss Froggatt.

<sup>74</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Mildred Gibbs. 1942.

legitimacy of the nationalist campaigns. Their silence is especially startling considering the role of missionaries was much discussed in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s as Indians attempted to define 'the Nation.' The new 'politics of numbers' meant Christian conversion was feared by Hindu, Muslim and Sikh leaders. Several missionary celebrities, including Charles Freer Andrews and Bishop Azariah, debated publicly with the Mahatma. In defining ideals of citizenship, Gandhi, Nehru, the 'untouchable' leader, Bhimrao Ambedkar, and reformist groups like the Arya and Brahma Samajs, engaged with missionary notions of social service and uplift.<sup>75</sup> For a start, women missionaries' reticence might be explained by a concerted policy on the part of missionary societies to keep out of politics in the countries in which they worked. This had also been advocated by the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference in 1910.<sup>76</sup> Societies may have feared missionaries' involvement would draw attention to their foreignness, fuelling nationalist campaigns that Christianity was denationalising. Missionaries may have been deterred from giving their opinions in letters and reports because they knew they could not be published. It was not impossible, however, for missionaries to raise controversial matters in these documents. They did so often, simply marking contentious sections as 'not for publication.' Perhaps they feared the Society's disapproval if they went against its policy of political neutrality. Delays in the postal service between India and England might also have meant missionaries were reluctant to comment on ever-changing political circumstances.

The rare occasions upon which women missionaries gave an opinion of Indian nationalism are particularly illuminating. The Minute Books of St Stephen's Community provide us with one indication of the attitudes of its members. In a meeting of 7<sup>th</sup> November 1930, the Community agreed to sign its assent to a letter to be sent to the

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<sup>75</sup> See for example, Carey Anthony Watt, *Serving the Nation. Cultures of Service, Association and Citizenship in Colonial India*. (Oxford, 2005).

<sup>76</sup> Alexander, *The Attitudes of British Protestant missionaries towards nationalism in India*. p.6.

British press by various missionary societies on the occasion of the Round Table Conference. This letter attested that the present ‘misunderstanding, distrust and bitterness’ in India was due to ‘the growing sense of ignominy in the minds of Indian people that the destiny of the nation lies in the hands of another people.’ ‘To us the national awakening is a very real thing,’ the letter continued, ‘and it is our belief that no settlement will be satisfactory that does not respect Indian sentiment and make for the recovery of national self-respect. India is now of age and can speak for herself.’<sup>77</sup>

This letter is especially interesting for three reasons. It is important to highlight the subtleties of the language used. Firstly, the Christian perspective and motivations of its signatories were clearly defined. The letter admitted that missionaries usually kept apart from politics: ‘We are not politicians, and we realise that party politics as such lie outside our sphere...’ Its writers declared they had been compelled to write because the present movement transcended politics. The misunderstandings and bitterness caused had had a profound impact upon Indian life. The letter also proposed explicitly Christian solutions to the unrest. Its signatories asserted their ‘deepest Christian conviction’ that Indians should be allowed to decide their future constitution. They also argued for ‘an adequate and final solution’ of the political problems, ‘a wide diffusion of a more Christian spirit of goodwill, and a restoration of mutual respect and trust.’ Secondly, and linked to the first point, it is noteworthy that the letter did not propose any political solutions for India. Although its signatories were in favour of allowing Indians to speak for themselves, this was in the context of peaceful negotiations with the British Government, where ‘Indian representatives’ had been chosen by the latter. They did not endorse Gandhian methods of protest or Congress demands for complete Independence. Lastly, there seems to have been no lengthy discussion of the letter and its contents by the missionaries of St Stephen’s

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<sup>77</sup> Archives of St Stephen’s Community, Delhi. Minutes of St Stephen’s Community. 1928-1938. Meeting 7<sup>th</sup> November 1930.

Community. The Minute Book records the letter was read aloud and it was agreed that the Community should sign. While the missionaries of St Stephen's engaged in long debates about their work and their Rule, they do not appear to have thought it necessary to discuss politics. Indeed, the letter was the last point to be raised in their meeting, suggesting other matters were considered of greater importance. This was the only time politics was mentioned in the Minutes of the Community between 1917 and 1950.

In the 1940s, there are a few instances where missionaries discussed politics in their Annual Letters and reports. Dorothy Lyon of Kinnaird College in Lahore wondered whether the 'missionary promise to keep out of politics' had 'caused us, ostrich-like, to rationalise ourselves out of taking the right kind of interest and to justify our reading comfortable newspapers.' She feared that to some students, missionaries' aloofness from politics had 'seemed like lack of understanding.'<sup>78</sup> Other missionaries commented upon the failure of the Stafford Cripps negotiations. Olive Cocks, the Secretary of the CMS Punjab and Sindh Mission, and Mildred Gibbs of St John's College, Agra, recognised the strength and popularity of Gandhi and Congress. Miss Gibbs described the latter as 'certainly the best organized political party, the only one that can even make the claim to speak for India as a whole without absurdity...', although she considered this claim to be somewhat 'Fascist in mentality.' Both women believed the somewhat 'unreal' and idealistic nature of Indian politics to be responsible for the breakdown in negotiations. Once again, the Christian priorities of missionaries are clear. All three coupled their discussion of politics with discussion of the future of missionary work and the need to strengthen the Indian Church for the coming of political self-government.<sup>79</sup> The nature of these women's work may explain their knowledge of and interest in politics, in contrast to the silence of their colleagues. Miss Lyon and Miss Gibbs worked amongst students, who

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<sup>78</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Dorothy Lyon. 1941.

<sup>79</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Dorothy Lyon, 1941. Olive Cocks. 1942. Mildred Gibbs, 1942.

were keenly involved in the nationalist movement. As Mission Secretary, Miss Cocks would have needed to be well-informed about matters affecting the whole of the Mission's work. Their views are likely to have been less insular than the majority of their colleagues, who rarely travelled from their postings.

Silence over the nature and legitimacy of *British* governance in India remained all-pervading, however. The only exception to this is a report from 1942 by Winifred Briscoe, an SPG missionary at the Criminal Tribes Settlement in Hubli. Miss Briscoe candidly expressed her sense of guilt at being connected with imperial rule in India. She described her disappointment at the failure of the Cripps proposal. 'I felt so happy when I read [it],' she recalled. 'At last I thought we are doing the right thing. I remember... for the first time feeling that I should no longer be in the miserable position of being one of the ruling race who was ruling over a people who bitterly resent it, and who are panting for the freedom, we so talk about.' She recounted how the police in Hubli had been obliged to fire to disperse a crowd of protestors – two young boys were killed and a fourteen-year-old boy lost his leg. 'I happened one day to be in the hospital where he was and I saw him,' she wrote. 'I felt somehow guilty... I felt that however mistaken the Congress and other Indian people may now be, things need never have got to this state if we British in India had behaved differently, and had had a different attitude.' Miss Briscoe had begun to realise that her Indian friends had grievances that she, as a British person, could not begin to understand. She had been particularly shocked when a 'most delightful' Brahmin convert of high standing had objected to having a victory sign painted on his door as he did not think it was necessarily right for the British to win the war. Following her shock, she had debated why Indians might think like this: 'I think a good many do feel that if we win we

shall be more uppish than ever.’<sup>80</sup> It is likely Miss Briscoe’s awareness of politics and her feelings of complicity in the actions of the Raj were heightened by the fact that, as a missionary of the Criminal Tribes Settlement, she was in direct government service. Once again, missionaries’ location seems to have affected their involvement in politics.

During the Second World War, women missionaries certainly displayed their support for the British war effort. Mission pupils and staff took Red Cross and ARP training, and organised fundraising events and prayer vigils for peace and victory.<sup>81</sup> In Clarkabad, children performed a play by the CMS missionary, Winifred Newstead, designed to demonstrate to villagers the different phases of the war and the horrors being suffered by the people of Europe. The final tableau was particularly patriotic, linking the British cause directly to Christianity. It showed Britannia and the Archangel Michael as Leader of the Lord’s Hosts standing in front, with all those fighting for right and justice holding a flag at the back. In this position, the children sang, ‘Onward Christian Soldiers,’ and ‘God Save the King.’ ‘[W]e tried to show how God was using Great Britain and her Commonwealth of Nations, helped by members of the free nations, to overcome all this cruelty and oppression,’ Miss Newstead explained.<sup>82</sup> Women missionaries did show awareness of nationalist sensitivities, however. Irene Birkinshaw of CMS and Sarah Tollett of SPG were keen to emphasise that such activities had actually been initiated by their sympathetic Indian colleagues.<sup>83</sup>

In general terms, it seems women missionaries’ attitudes to the British Raj and to Indian nationalism were influenced by complex and, sometimes contradictory, factors. On the whole, they kept apart from politics. It may have been Mission policy to do so, but

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<sup>80</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E95/2. Bombay. 1942. Miss Briscoe.

<sup>81</sup> See USPG, Rhodes House. E95/2 Bombay. 1940. Miss S.E. Tollett.

<sup>82</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Winifred Newstead. 1941.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. Miss M. Irene. Birkinshaw. 1940. USPG, Rhodes House. E95/2 Bombay. 1940. Miss S.E. Tollett.

even in private letters and Minute books, political issues were hardly discussed. Their reticence stemmed not so much from adherence to a deliberate policy of non-interference as from their disinterest and parochialism. Evelyn Ashdown's remark in 1930 about Queen Mary's School: 'we are too busy to take part in politics' seems to have been the rule.<sup>84</sup> Women missionaries seem to have been preoccupied by their work of teaching, preaching and caring for the sick. It was only when this work was directly disrupted by nationalist upheaval that they made any political comment. This happened rarely after the initial waves of anti-British protest in the Punjab in 1919, as violence became inter-communal. Geography was also important: missionaries in the South wrote almost nothing of nationalism. Women's focus on immediate local concerns can also be explained by the fact that they rarely travelled from their posts. Only a few, who worked amongst politically-motivated students at city colleges, had substantial contact with nationalist ideologies and debates.

Women missionaries' apparent apoliticism must also be placed in context. During the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, women in Britain were just beginning to find their political voice. Women's suffrage and right to stand for Parliament had only been obtained in 1918, and equality of franchise with men was not achieved until 1928. In the interwar period, women became increasingly active members of mainstream political parties and voluntary organisations, including the Women's Co-operative Guild and the Women's Institute.<sup>85</sup> Yet, women in the mission field were distanced from developments at home. Progress in the Empire was far slower – a generational timelag between events in England and in India was often commented upon. Imperial politics remained a largely male preserve. It is unsurprising, therefore, that women missionaries were somewhat disengaged.

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<sup>84</sup>USPG, Rhodes House. E85c 1930. Miss Ashdown.

<sup>85</sup> Caitriona Beaumont, 'The Women's Movement, Politics and Citizenship, 1918-1950s,' in Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (ed.), *Women in Twentieth-Century Britain*.

On the rare occasions when women missionaries did remark upon politics, they seemed reluctant to condemn the British Government of India. Although they did not endorse Gandhian methods, however, they were sensitive to India's awakening to national consciousness and in favour of self-determination in the political sphere. This support stemmed from a distinctly Christian perspective. As we have seen, the aim of missionaries' work was to create an independent Indian Church, which governed and financed itself. Awakening 'national self-respect' in the political sphere provided opportunities for the religious sphere – eager Church workers, and emancipated, educated leaders who could be encouraged towards the freedom offered by Christianity. Missionaries were interested in building-up the Empire of Christ, not the British Empire – their priorities were not the same as their compatriots in the Raj. Although they bemoaned the unrest which seemed to accompany India's 'national awakening,' they saw the 'awakening' itself as an opportunity.

### *Independence and after*

This uniqueness of missionary priorities is seen clearly in the reactions of women missionaries to Independence itself and its aftermath. The outbreak of violence and the upheavals of Partition severely affected missionary work in Delhi and the Punjab. In letters to England, the missionaries of St Stephen's Community described in great detail the crisis around them. '[T]rains are being attacked in every direction near Delhi, travelling is impossible,' wrote Evelyn Ashdown on 4<sup>th</sup> September. 'We are under a perpetual curfew, and Delhi is swarming with Punjab refugees all vowing vengeance and taking it out on any harmless M[uslim] they can get hold of... It is really massacre going on all round.'<sup>86</sup> The Mission's servants, Mir Jan, Mohammed Jan, and their families had been murdered. St

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<sup>86</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E95/2. Delhi. 1947 Reports. Letters of Evelyn Ashdown. 4<sup>th</sup> September 1947.

Stephen's Hospital was closed, as a group of Hindus threatened to attack it for treating Muslim patients. Miss Ashdown and other members of the Community went to help at the refugee camps. Dr Ruth Roseveare remembered her work in the camp at Humayan's Tomb as 'very scary': 'there were wounded people there, they needed help, and they were queuing, queuing outside the tent where I was working, and some of them falling dead in the queue, out of the queue, or running home because they couldn't wait any longer, they couldn't stand on their own feet. They hadn't got enough medicines to go around. It was awful.'<sup>87</sup>

CMS missionaries were also caught up in the upheaval. Ruth Salmon, the Women's Secretary in Lahore, described 'murders, arson, and looting' in her Annual Letter and in a detailed diary of the disturbances.<sup>88</sup> There was also unrest in the CMS stations of Multan, Quetta, Asrapur and Amritsar. Miss Salmon went out in an armed truck, transporting Muslim refugees, to take anti-cholera vaccine to the outstations and to collect nurses for the hospitals. She stressed the 'enormous problem' of refugees, who were attacked and looted on trains and on the road. 'The road from Lahore to Amritsar is lined with graves, and so are other roads and piles of animal (and other) skeletons at intervals,' she wrote. Her colleagues, Drs Harry Holland and Dick Wooton, and Sisters Kathleen Weatherhead and Evelyn Stocken, had established a store of medical supplies at CMS House and went out to distribute them to refugee units.<sup>89</sup>

Once again, despite describing the disturbances themselves in great detail, women missionaries made little comment upon politics or upon the legitimacy of Independence itself, even in their personal letters. The language used in their accounts is particularly interesting. Unusually for SPG missionaries and in contrast to their previous reports, it was

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<sup>87</sup> Transcript of interview with Dr Ruth Roseveare. Interview 1: Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

<sup>88</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Ruth Salmon. 1948.

<sup>89</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Unofficial. Acc.353. Miss Ruth Salmon. O1. Notebook: itinerating work in Gojra district – extremely detailed account of 1947 disturbances and India/Pakistan partition. (Written in February 1948). 1934-1947.

overtly religious, full of Biblical analogies and phraseology. The clearest example of this is in a letter by Dr Ruth Roseveare of St Stephen's Hospital in Delhi. Dr Roseveare drew comfort amidst 'the vast horror of fear and suffering' in her knowledge of 'a new Kingdom' of Heaven in contrast to the 'littleness of the present time.' 'It is we who are on the march to the promised land, who here on earth find no permanent dwelling place, whose loyalty is not here but whose citizenship in heaven,' she urged. Dr Roseveare believed the message of Christ: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" took on a new and practical meaning amidst such 'Satanic evil' where men had rejected God for 'love of self and man's kingdoms.' She hoped some, in the midst of the chaos, would find Christ's way.<sup>90</sup> Unlike their British compatriots in imperial service, therefore, it could be argued that missionaries actually enjoyed a renewed sense of purpose and legitimacy in the bloody aftermath of Independence. In the midst of communal violence, missionaries more keenly felt their duty, together with Indian Christians, to spread Christ's message of hope, reconciliation and love. This is also evident in Sister Kathleen Weatherhead's description of refugee work in her Annual Letter of 1948. She considered this work 'simply thrilling' and a 'privilege.' 'Though one could not do direct preaching and teaching amongst the refugees,' she wrote, 'the opportunity to shew forth Christ and His saving love and power by life and action seemed to me far greater than any time or place I've been in during my 8 years as a missionary... It was as though one were living in N.T. [New Testament] days and Christ Himself were there challenging and bringing light.' Miss Weatherhead felt Independence had given missionaries (and Indian Christians) a wake-up call, an opportunity to renew themselves as 'white' rather than indolent 'grey' Christians.<sup>91</sup> For the majority of missionaries, therefore, the focus at Independence was upon practicalities and opportunities, not politics. They simply tried to carry on their work as best they could.

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<sup>90</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CMD106. Letters received from Delhi during the 1947 disturbances. Unsigned account of the disturbances - 8 pages.

<sup>91</sup> CMS, Birmingham AL ASW. 1940-1949. Kathleen Weatherhead. 1948.

Indeed, the minutes of the first meeting of St Stephen's Community since Independence in November 1947 did not even mention the change in governance or the upheaval in Delhi. They simply recorded, as usual, the movement of Community members, plans for the Annual Retreat, and discussions over the Provident Fund!<sup>92</sup>

This focus continued in the years following Independence. In the longer term, Partition and the end of Empire had far-reaching effects upon missionary work. Partition had divided the geographical area of the Lahore diocese. The missionaries of St Hilda's Society working at Auckland House School in Simla were cut off from their mother house.<sup>93</sup> The Punjab and Sindh Mission of CMS had also been split. Winifred Creed Meredith, the Assistant Secretary of the Mission and the Head of the Women's Auxiliary, wrote of the difficulties Indian workers faced in crossing the border. 'All this trouble resulted in our East Panjab folk feeling entirely cut off from Lahore and made them feel as though they were orphans!' she reported. Miss Meredith had consequently moved her headquarters to Amritsar. The First Diocesan Conference, held in October 1949, was held in two sections – one for the East Punjab at Tarn Taran, and one for the West Punjab in Lahore.<sup>94</sup>

The upheaval in population at Partition had also influenced missionary work. The nature of Queen Mary's School in Delhi changed dramatically after the departure of many Muslim pupils for Pakistan. Strict purdah was dropped and the school faced an influx of West Punjabi refugees. The CMS Hospitals in the Punjab and the North West Frontier also experienced severe difficulties. 'The nursing standard in Pakistan has gone back at least 25 years since partition,' claimed Sister Kathleen Weatherhead of the Afghan Mission

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<sup>92</sup> Archives of St Stephen's Community, Delhi. Minutes of St Stephen's Community. 1938-1970. Meeting 28<sup>th</sup> November 1947.

<sup>93</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E95/9 Lahore. 1947. Head Deaconess' Report.

<sup>94</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Winifred Creed Meredith. 1949.

Hospital in Peshawar.<sup>95</sup> Many nurses had left for India, and English nurses had returned home. As Muslim girls had yet to take nurses' training in large numbers, hospitals struggled to get staff.<sup>96</sup> They also suffered from rising prices and shortages of food, drugs, and materials.

Government policies in the new states of Indian and Pakistan also affected missionary work. Missionaries wrote frequently of the 'general confusion of educational administration' due to numerous changes in curriculum.<sup>97</sup> They found the introduction of compulsory Hindi instruction in Indian schools very difficult, especially due to a shortage of textbooks, and bemoaned declining standards of English. CMS missionaries in the United Provinces found the Government's reorganisation of education particularly trying. '[I]t is very difficult to keep abreast of the constant flow of Government orders and instructions especially as they are constantly being 'modified' or altered,' wrote Miss Bickersteth of St John's College in Agra.<sup>98</sup> In 1949, five weeks before the beginning of term, the Government had announced certain grades of teacher training were to be discontinued. Just a week before term, however, this order was rescinded. 'Such changes give a feeling of instability and a lack of confidence, and it is difficult to plan ahead with any certainty,' Miss Bickersteth complained.<sup>99</sup> Exam papers had also been leaked and openly sold.<sup>100</sup> Missionary teachers mourned declining standards – a favouring of 'quantity' over 'quality.'<sup>101</sup> Amidst this confusion, missionaries also had to make serious decisions about religious teaching in their schools. In India, Mission schools with government grants faced a tighter implementation of the conscience clause. In the new

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<sup>95</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Kathleen Weatherhead. 1949.

<sup>96</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Eleanor France. 1948.

<sup>97</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Mildred Gibbs. 1949.

<sup>98</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. F.M. Bickersteth. 1948.

<sup>99</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. F.M. Bickersteth. 1949. See also – Mildred Gibbs. 1949.

<sup>100</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Mildred Gibbs. 1949.

<sup>101</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Mary Cowan. 1949. F.M. Bickersteth. 1949.

Islamic state of Pakistan, they also faced the prospect of being compelled to teach the Qur'an.

Women missionaries responded to the upheaval and uncertainties of the years following Independence in characteristic manner. As always, their central policy was to strengthen the Church in India and Pakistan.<sup>102</sup> Even more than before, 'Indianisation,' 'Diocesanisation' and Church unity were of paramount importance. In the Lahore diocese, for example, Deaconess Dorothy Stokes of St Hilda's, and Ruth Salmon and A.F. Atkins of CMS, worked with Miss Nattress of the Canadian Mission in forming the constitution of the new Diocesan Women's Conference.<sup>103</sup>

In the South, where Christian influence was stronger, women missionaries worked directly with the new government. In Madras, for example, Jennie Forrester of SPG assisted on several government committees for the reorganisation of education. She had been uncertain whether it was right for a missionary to take on such time-consuming work, but felt it was important that Christian voices were heard in the new India. Miss Forrester used this opportunity for the benefit of her missionary work. In one meeting, for instance, she persuaded her fellow committee members to drop a proposal, (on the grounds that it was controversial), that teaching on 'the fundamental unity of all religions' should be included on the school syllabus. Such syncretism was against Christian beliefs and would have been extremely problematic for Christian teachers if part of a compulsory syllabus.<sup>104</sup>

While women missionaries catalogued their many difficulties in their reports, they were never defeatist. They stressed that they were 'also challenged by a sense of unlimited potentialities' and opportunities.<sup>105</sup> Significantly, they highlighted the advantages they felt

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<sup>102</sup> See for example: CMS, Birmingham. Unofficial. Acc.353. Ruth Salmon. O1. Notebook.

<sup>103</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Ruth Salmon. 1948.

<sup>104</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. E95/9 1947. Madras. Miss Forrester.

<sup>105</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. F.M. Bickersteth. 1948.

of no longer being connected with the ruling race: 'this separation from British Imperialism will mean a new birth, a new freedom, and a new inspiration.'<sup>106</sup> Missionaries' main frustrations were not with the effects of Independence, but with the Mission itself. They lamented that lack of mission finances and recruits from home prevented them from seizing their opportunities in the new India and Pakistan. Writing of nurses' training, Marian Scott of the Afghan Mission Hospital in Peshawar emphasised: 'At the moment the field is ours, but as soon as Pakistan can train sufficient Moslems to take our place, we shall no longer be wanted – but we cannot act as we would for lack of personnel and equipment.'<sup>107</sup> The mission field was an increasingly difficult place for women missionaries after 1947, but they were eager to respond to its challenges. The attitude of Evelyn Ashdown at the height of the post-Partition violence was typical: 'Awful as all this is,' she wrote, 'I would not have missed it...'<sup>108</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Women missionaries certainly occupied a profoundly ambiguous position in British India. In the eyes of their compatriots in imperial service, they were somehow the same, but different: part of the *communitas*, but 'not quite *pukka*.' Their educational, medical and evangelistic work, and their close association with Indians, differentiated them from the colonial *memsahib*. Yet, in the eyes of Indians, they were surely associated with the imperial regime due to their race and nationality, their contacts with the Raj, their Western living conditions, clothing and behaviour. Although they were not 'imperial functionaries' in the sense of preaching the Gospel of Empire, they often essentialised Indian culture and assumed the superiority of Western institutions and methods in their hospitals and schools. Women missionaries realised, to some extent at least, the

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<sup>106</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. A.F. Atkins, 1947. See also Winifred Creed Meredith. 1948.

<sup>107</sup> CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. Marian Scott. 1948.

<sup>108</sup>USPG. E95/9 Delhi. 1947. Letter of Evelyn Ashdown. 4<sup>th</sup> September 1947.

complexities of their position. Their apoliticism, whether deliberate or unconscious, and their insistence that their citizenship was in heaven and their allegiance to the Empire of Christ, was an implicit acknowledgement of (and a means of overcoming) their problematic and conflicting temporal ties. It also enabled them to legitimate their continued presence in the newly-independent India and Pakistan.

## Epilogue: What Next?

*'Dear India... dear Bharat... thank you for everything, the rough and the smooth. Jai Hind.'*<sup>1</sup>

The careers of women missionaries were not interminable. As death records demonstrate, the majority did not die in the field, but retired to England.<sup>2</sup> Both SPG and CMS had prescribed retirement ages. The former's was fifty-five and the latter's sixty.<sup>3</sup> Although honorary missionaries had to support themselves in retirement, salaried workers received some support from their society. In January 1916, for example, SPG had pledged to set aside £15 per annum for every missionary. When she reached the age of fifty-five, this would be converted into a pension. A missionary appointed at the age of thirty, completing the optimum twenty five years of service, would receive approximately £50 p.a. for the remainder of her life.<sup>4</sup> A retiring missionary's passage home was also paid. In reality, however, many missionaries served in India far beyond retirement age. The length of missionary service varied. It is difficult to obtain accurate statistics about women missionaries' careers and reasons for retirement, but a rudimentary analysis of the missionaries of St Stephen's Community in Delhi, based upon Ruth Roseveare and Niren Biswas' lists of members<sup>5</sup> and my own biographical research, provides a useful snapshot. Between 1917 and 1950, approximately seventy Western women became members of St Stephen's. The majority (forty-three) served for less than twenty years [see Table E.1. below]. Most (twenty-five women) left after less than ten years' service. Of these, seven

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<sup>1</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. X1254. Sent out to Serve by V.M. Hayes. p.237.

<sup>2</sup> Author's biographical database.

<sup>3</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Overseas. G2 I4/O Punjab and Sindh. 1938. Letter of October 18<sup>th</sup> from O.C. Cocks to Mr Cranswick. See also CSAS, Cambridge. Audio Interview & Transcript – Miss Alice Steward.

<sup>4</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW301. Finance Sub-Committee: Women's Pensions Correspondence. (1 box). c.1917-1920.

<sup>5</sup> Ruth Roseveare, *DELHI: Community of St Stephen. 1886-1986.* (privately published, 1987). pp.100-103. Biswas, *Not Mere Memories.* pp.240-246.

resigned to be married, four due to ill-health, and eight for other (largely unstated) reasons. Five were transferred to other mission stations and one died.<sup>6</sup>

**Table E.1.: Length of service (years) of members of St Stephen’s Community in Delhi (1917-1950).**

| <b>Length in years</b>        | <b>0-9</b> | <b>10-19</b> | <b>20-29</b> | <b>30-39</b> | <b>40-49</b> | <b>50-59</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|-------------------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Number of missionaries</b> | 25         | 18           | 13           | 11           | 1            | 2            | 70           |

Source: Biswas, *Not Mere Memories*, pp.240-246.

Of the twenty-seven women who were members of St Stephen’s for over twenty years, four are recorded as having ‘resigned’ and one as having left the community due to ill-health, the remainder (twenty-two) ‘retired.’ All but two of these retirees were fifty-five and over [see Table E.2. below]. Most were between sixty and seventy years old, although three were over eighty! The oldest, Eva Fiennes, was eighty-eight years old, when she retired after fifty-seven years’ service in 1961.<sup>7</sup>

**Table E.2.: Leaving age (years) of ‘retiring’ members of St Stephen’s Community (1917-1950) of over twenty years’ service.**

| <b>Age in years</b>           | <b>50-54</b> | <b>55-59</b> | <b>60-69</b> | <b>70-79</b> | <b>80-89</b> | <b>Unknown</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|-------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| <b>Number of missionaries</b> | 2            | 6            | 9            | 1            | 3            | 1              | 22           |

Source: Biswas, *Not Mere Memories*, pp.240-246, & author’s biographical database.

There is little detailed information about the lives of women missionaries after their retirement from missionary service. The few autobiographies available focus upon missionaries’ work. Correspondence ceased and retired missionaries appear to have disappeared somewhat from their societies’ radars. In November 1970, for example, thirty

<sup>6</sup> Author’s biographical database & Biswas, *Not Mere Memories*. pp.240-246.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

years after her retirement, Nora Karn wrote to the USPG Secretary, asking whether he could make use of her Indian papers. 'I have been 30 years in the East, and my name used to be fairly well known in S.P.G. House but now all the people I knew have gone,' she explained, before giving details of her missionary career in the Punjab and Nasik.<sup>8</sup> Yet, some general comments can be made.

Interestingly, only a tiny number of Western-born missionaries chose to remain in India during retirement. Just two of the seventy women who were members of St Stephen's Community between 1917 and 1950 died in Delhi: Helen Jerwood and Alice Wilkinson.<sup>9</sup> Although she had resigned from the community in 1928, Miss Jerwood never properly retired. She continued working as an honorary educational missionary, founding St Martin's Diocesan School in Delhi only five years before her death (aged eighty-five) in 1965. Miss Wilkinson had retired from St Stephen's in 1937 but continued to live in Delhi with another missionary, Edith Fenn. From 1941 to 1947, she served as President of the Trained Nurses Association of India. She then returned to England and worked as Secretary of the Cambridge Mission to Delhi at SPG House. After retiring from this post, however, she chose to spend her last days in Delhi, dying in St Stephen's Hospital in May 1967, aged ninety-two.<sup>10</sup> Other missionaries of SPG and CMS retired to Indian hill stations. In 1928, for example, Alice Swain retired from SPG's All Saints' School in Trichinopoly to Kotagiri in the Nilgiri Hills.<sup>11</sup> After retiring from CMS work in Jeyi in 1958 (aged seventy-seven!), Alice Steward moved to Hardinge Homes in Simla.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, the archives contain little explanation by these women of their reasons for

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<sup>8</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. X624. Norah Ethel Karn, SPG Missionary in Lahore, 1916-1928; Nasik 1929-1940. Papers.

<sup>9</sup> This figure does not include Mary Marsh, who died while still in missionary service in 1943.

<sup>10</sup> Author's biographical database. See also Biswas, *Not Mere Memories & St Stephen's Hospital, Centenary Celebrations, 1885-1985*. (Delhi, 1985).

<sup>11</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. CWW Box 275/1-2. Original Letters Received (Lucknow, Madras). 1927-1929. Miss A.E. Swain.

<sup>12</sup> CSAS, Cambridge. Audio Interview and Transcript. Miss Alice Steward.

remaining in the subcontinent. Perhaps they could not bear to leave the country in which they had spent their working lives?

The majority of women missionaries did leave India, however, and returned to England to live alone or with family. For those retiring in the late 1940s, retirement was often a relief after long years of wartime service without furlough.<sup>13</sup> Others, retiring later, felt the time was right for their departure. By 1975, for example, Joyce Peel believed foreign missionaries were 'no longer needed' in South India. The Church 'was in the hands of strong and capable leaders,' while the Indian Government's new visa regulations made the replacement of missionaries increasingly difficult. Her 'trained and fully competent' Indian colleague, Sounder, was perfectly capable of assuming her work in Christian drama. Due to the complexities of Tamil, her counselling work was also better done by indigenous South Indians.<sup>14</sup>

Yet, although retirement could be welcome, it was a difficult transition in practical and emotional terms. Dorothea Teale's letters to Canon William Elphick upon her retirement from SPG work in South India in 1947 reveal numerous anxieties about finances and accommodation. Although, after twenty-six years' service, Miss Teale qualified for a pension, she was keen to obtain some part-time work at home. She was uncertain of what kind, however. She was also unsure about her living arrangements. She felt obliged to live with, and care for, her eighty-year old father, although he had sold the family home and was living in a hotel in Folkestone, and although an aunt at Tunbridge Wells had offered her a home when she needed it.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See for example: CMS, Birmingham. AL ASW. 1940-1949. C.B. Allinson, 1940, Amy Nethercote, 1942 etc.

<sup>14</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Unofficial. Acc.763. Miss Joyce Mary Peel. F1. Adventure into Drama: my life and experiences in India, 1948-1975. pp.149-150. For details of the introduction of more stringent visa regulations in the 1950s, see Judith M. Brown, *Nehru. A Political Life*. (Yale, 2003). pp.226-228.

<sup>15</sup> UTC, Bangalore. VPC William Elphick. E6 Letters from SPG bishops, co-workers and friends with carbon copies of replies. Letters from Miss Dorothea Teale. 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1947, 19<sup>th</sup> March 1947, 12<sup>th</sup> April 1947, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1947.

The break with life in India could also be heart-wrenching. ‘As the plane rose into the dark sky, the city lights twinkled brightly like stars below us,’ wrote Joyce Peel, recalling her departure from the subcontinent. ‘...When they disappeared a deep feeling of loss began to engulf me. I shut down on it. A year later... I took part in a group therapy exercise which recalled those repressed feelings of loss. They were released in a totally unexpected flood of tears. The pain of bereavement had only been delayed.’<sup>16</sup> Indeed, twenty years after she had left India, Deaconess Carol Graham admitted in her autobiography: ‘my final departure from the beloved country is something it still seems impossible to write about.’ The Deaconess was hardly underemployed in her retirement. She embarked upon a new and exciting project, establishing an ecumenical sisterhood at Farncombe. Yet, she still missed India.<sup>17</sup> Violet Hayes elaborated upon this sense of loss in the epilogue to her unpublished autobiography, *Sent out to serve*. Missionaries not only mourned the India they had left behind, but also the England they remembered. ‘When I first returned home, I was too tired and too cold for most of the time to think much beyond surviving,’ Violet wrote. ‘I knew I would miss India a lot and I had tried to prepare myself for it. But I had not expected England to be so changed.’ Furloughs spent among people committed to the support of the Church overseas had sheltered her from the views of the vast majority of the British public whom she found to be uninterested in India, or indeed in anything outside their own family circles.<sup>18</sup> In this respect, missionaries’ sense of dislocation was similar to that of British ICS men and army officers and their families who returned from India after Independence to an austere and war-battered ‘homeland,’ where rationing was still in operation and the average Englishman was utterly indifferent to tales of the crumbling empire.<sup>19</sup> ‘Meeting other newly returned missionaries at conferences, I

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<sup>16</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Unofficial. Acc.763. Miss Joyce Mary Peel. F1. Adventure into Drama. p.151.

<sup>17</sup> Carol Graham, *Between Two Worlds*. pp.57, 59-62.

<sup>18</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. X1254: Sent out to Serve by V.M. Hayes. ‘After India.’

<sup>19</sup> See for example: Procida, *Married to the empire*. pp.217-219.

would ask them how they were faring,' Violet Hayes wrote. 'Like a fish out of water,' they said.'<sup>20</sup>

Miss Hayes told herself she would have to adapt. Indeed, she, and several other former missionaries found salaried employment at their society's headquarters. Violet served first as an assistant in SPG's Medical Missions Department and then as Deputy Grants Secretary. Seven other missionaries of St Stephen's Community also worked at SPG House. After returning from India, Hilda Gould, Head of the Community from 1913 to 1936, became hostess of the Visitors' Room. Alice Wilkinson became Secretary of the Cambridge Mission, a post she held until her ninetieth birthday, when she was succeeded by another former missionary, Nora Pedder.<sup>21</sup> In this way, missionaries were able to continue their interest in, and keep in contact with, the mission field.

Bonds of fellowship and communication were also maintained in other ways. Former members of St Stephen's could become 'Associates' of the Community. A Guild was established in 1906, which allowed those who had been members for at least five years to have 'a continued part in [the Community's] life.' Associates met annually in London, exchanged letters, prayed for and gave gifts to the Community.<sup>22</sup> In 1986, there were still nine associates of the Community in retirement in England, seven of which had served in Delhi between 1917 and 1950.<sup>23</sup> A CMS Fellowship of Retired Missionaries had also been founded by Edith Baring-Gould in 1918. For a small subscription (1s 6d per annum), members received a regular newsheet, including a letter by its Chairman, the CMS Secretary, on the state of the mission field and a list of the addresses of other retired missionaries. In 1945, the Fellowship had 780 members, many of whom attended a special

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<sup>20</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. X1254: Sent out to Serve by V.M. Hayes. 'After India.'

<sup>21</sup> Author's biographical database.

<sup>22</sup> Roseveare, *DELHI*. p.95. Biswas, *Not Mere Memories*. pp.32-33.

<sup>23</sup> Roseveare, *DELHI*. p.104. These latter were Mrs Susan Hodson (nee Lister), Misses Evelyn Turner, Ruth Mary Young, Ethel Gotch and Clare Froggatt; Dr Eileen Morris, and Sister Angela Mary (formerly Gwen Cousins).

reunion of retired missionaries to mark the Society's Third Jubilee.<sup>24</sup> Regional Associations also produced newsletters and organised reunions for missionaries from specific areas of the field, for example, the United Provinces Mission.<sup>25</sup>

Significantly, some high-Church SPG missionaries chose to join religious communities upon retirement. Dr Charlotte Houlton, for example, left India at the age of fifty-seven in 1939. After serving as SPG Medical Secretary for eight years, she joined the Anglican Order of the Holy Paraclete at Whitby.<sup>26</sup> Another member of St Stephen's, Dr Meg Haythornthwaite spent her final years with the Sisters of Bethany in Bournemouth.<sup>27</sup> Such decisions were unsurprising. In many ways, religious communities were ideal environments for retired single women missionaries, allowing them to continue to engage in Church work and to enjoy spiritual fellowship, as well as providing them with security of finances and care in old age and infirmity.

Retirement in England, whether peaceful or full of activity, did not weaken women missionaries' attachment to India. For some, memories of the subcontinent were rekindled through writing their memoirs or collecting their papers for submission to the SPG and CMS archives.<sup>28</sup> Correspondence with colleagues in the field continued. Elsie Adams kept in touch with her former work by sponsoring a Bihari child.<sup>29</sup> Others returned to visit old friends and places. After her retirement in 1960, Annie Lindsey revisited South India (aged sixty-five) for a six month tour in 1966 and 1967, and (aged seventy-nine) for the centenary celebrations of the beginning of the Christian church in Palayamkottai in 1980.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> CMS, Birmingham. G/AM5 Fellowship of Retired Missionaries: reports including president's letter... 1940-1948.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid & information from Judith Brown about her CMS missionary parents.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. Other members of St Stephen's to join religious orders were Heather Round-Turner, who joined the Oxford Sisterhood of the Epiphany, and Gwen Cousins, who joined the Society of St Francis in Birmingham.

<sup>28</sup> These included Nora Karn, Caroline Edwards, and Violet Hayes of SPG & Ruth Salmon, Annie Lindsey, and Joyce Peel of CMS.

<sup>29</sup> Information received from Judith Brown about her aunt.

<sup>30</sup> CMS, Birmingham. Unofficial. Acc.791. Miss Annie Lindsey. Z1. Diary of visit to India, 1966-1967, 1980.

‘I felt rather like an Ancient Monument, especially as I found that my greeting song was invariably: ‘Oh God our help in ages past!’” Carol Graham joked, when recounting her four month trip to India (aged seventy-five) in 1972. ‘Still once again I lived in a sari, sat on the floor, ate Indian food, and spoke Telugu, all rather nostalgic but very heart-warming and the perfect break I needed.’<sup>31</sup> Even in little ways, India was remembered. At home near Norwich, for example, Ruth Roseveare would hold curry evenings for friends.<sup>32</sup> As the title of Carol Graham’s autobiography suggests, after their missionary service, missionaries remained caught *Between Two Worlds*.

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<sup>31</sup> Graham, *Between Two Worlds*. p.67.

<sup>32</sup> Ruth Roseveare to author, September 2009.

## Conclusion

In retrospect, the experience of British women missionaries in India from 1917 to 1950 was one of radical change. SPG and CMS women missionaries were themselves products of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century transformation in Britain: beneficiaries of the expansion of educational and professional opportunities for single middle class women, and of their societies' new attitudes to female recruitment. They were also witnesses to profound change in Britain and overseas: the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in India, controversy over Church Union, growing Indian nationalism, and eventual Independence. These global developments precipitated shifts in mission strategy in favour of greater 'Indianisation,' 'Diocesanisation,' and inter-denominationalism, which in turn transformed the character and consequences of women's missionary work. Finally, women missionaries were themselves subjects of change. They were greatly altered by their experiences. Long years in the field often weakened their association with the mission society and the Church in England, and strengthened their ties to India. For some, 'home' in its true sense came to apply to a spot once alien, nearly five thousand miles from Tufton Street and Salisbury Square.

The female missionary experience was also one of tension. Missionary vocation often competed with contradictory calls to marriage, career advancement, familial duties, or the Religious Life. Missionaries in the field clashed with one another and with the Society at home. SPG and CMS administrators in England and in India did not always see eye to eye with Anglican bishops. The Anglican Church in England and in India was particularly divided over Church Union in the South. There were also tensions between missionaries and their compatriots in imperial service, and between missionaries and the Indians with and amongst whom they worked. Indian Christians' ideas for the

development of a self-governing 'native' Church were not always the same as those of their British colleagues.

This thesis has connected the interrelated historiographies of gender, mission, and imperialism, in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of British Anglican women's missionary experience in the early-twentieth century. It has highlighted their unique voice in the history of the British Raj. Unlike many memsahibs, women missionaries were well-trained professional women, who were hardly untutored in Indian religion and culture upon sailing to the subcontinent. Their subsequent views were rooted in the distinct vocabulary they had imbibed in British Churches, schools, hospitals, and missionary training institutions. Their work was different from that of their male colleagues, as was their position within imperial and Church hierarchies. Unlike 'maternal imperialist' philanthropists and feminist campaigners, they were uninterested in politics and convinced mere legislative reform would not improve conditions for Indian women.

This study demonstrates that the historiography of mission and Empire has proven so contradictory precisely because the mission enterprise itself was a mass of contradictions. To some extent, women missionaries were 'imperial functionaries.' Their medical, educational, and welfare institutions operated rather as the social wing of the Raj, supplementing and sharing staff with government establishments, and sometimes receiving government grants. Many women of CMS and SPG were awarded imperial honours for service to the Empire. Women missionaries were also guilty to some degree of institutional racism<sup>1</sup> and 'cultural imperialism.' Western curricula and models of nursing practice were privileged in hospitals and schools. Missionaries displayed almost no understanding of the fact that Indians might possess, or should be allowed to develop, their own methods and

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<sup>1</sup> The concept is outlined by Jeffrey Cox. See for example: Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*.

practices, different but equally valid. For this reason, despite 'Indianisation,' Europeans lingered in superior positions in institutional hierarchies. Yet, it is far too simplistic to suggest that missionaries were imperialists since they sought to 'colonise' 'native' hearts and minds. Missionaries presented themselves as serving the Kingdom of God, not the temporal Empire of Britain. Their goals and priorities were not those of the Raj. The word 'colonise' is also misleading, as it ignores the theological complexities of conversion. Missionaries certainly wished to propagate the Gospel, but not to impose it upon Indians. They regarded themselves as sowers of the seed. Indians could then decide whether to respond to God's 'call.' An individual's heart and mind could only be converted through dialogue between himself and the Divine. Increasingly in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, women missionaries were also recognising that Indians were far better at evangelising their own people.

The difficulties faced by women missionaries in the aftermath of Indian Independence have also been identified. By 1950, although the missionary enterprise was smaller and vastly different in character than thirty years earlier, missionaries were still a considerable presence in the subcontinent. It would be useful to develop these findings, investigating the ultimate decline of this presence in the late-twentieth century and the transition made by SPG and CMS from large societies sending missionaries to the field to charities supporting resident mission partners.

This thesis has also contributed to the history of 'single women' in Britain itself, and to the history of women and religion. Unusual and exceptional among her contemporaries in England, the British woman missionary was at the same time 'a product of her age.' Becoming a missionary was not the natural, inevitable, or indeed desirable option for every 'surplus' woman, but it was not an unexpected or outlandish choice given

the backgrounds from which missionaries came. Gender, religion, and the professions were inextricably intertwined. Women's entrance into medicine, nursing and teaching coincided with the revival of Anglican sisterhoods, the Deaconess movement, and the flourishing of female recruitment to the mission field. Women's work was couched in a language of quasi-religious femininity. The distinctive virtues women were to extend into the public sphere were strikingly similar to those of nuns and missionaries: devotion, service, and self-sacrifice. These were also promoted in girls' education. Yet, not every unmarried, well-educated and professionally-trained woman chose to be a missionary! Far more influential in this decision were women's middle class Anglican backgrounds, which not only gave them access to the educational and professional qualifications required to pursue missionary service, but also exposed them to a tradition and culture of mission. The Church of England and the missionary societies had an elaborate institutional network for cultivating vocations. Among clerical family members, at Sunday schools, Bible study groups, and missionary preparation unions, women received the information *and* the encouragement necessary to bring their 'call' to fruition.

Women missionaries were far from pious and unthinking doormats, however. This study has revealed the extraordinary degree of flexibility demonstrated by SPG and CMS in the recruitment and training of female candidates. While pamphlets by both societies' outlined comprehensive spiritual and practical requirements for applicants, SPG and CMS were far more accommodating in practice. A candidate need not be 'fully formed' but simply 'missionary-hearted' and teachable. Interestingly, 'missionary-hearted' did not mean theologically unquestioning or conservative.

Unlike other studies of female missionaries, this thesis has also delved deeper into the theological and psychological aspects of missionary work. The complexities of the

missionary 'call' have been highlighted. Even the most committed missionary was not immune to desires and pressures to serve elsewhere. Missionary publications and historical accounts have often glossed over the darker side of service in the field. Women missionaries frequently suffered from feelings of frustration, inadequacy, loneliness, and spiritual desolation, as well as relationship clashes with their colleagues. While the male-dominated hierarchies of SPG and CMS offered few mechanisms to which women missionaries could resort in times of difficulty and through which their grievances could be heard, both societies displayed some awareness of contemporary psychiatric vocabulary when dealing with individual cases of distress. Women missionaries, especially of the evangelical CMS, may have been particularly susceptible to emotional problems. In contrast to high-Church Anglicans of the SPG, the evangelical tradition emphasised personal conversion or surrender to Christ over the attainment of grace through the Sacraments. There was no private Confession, hence no individual sacramental assurance of forgiveness. It was all too easy, therefore, for an overstrained missionary to conclude that apparent failure in her work was a sign that the Almighty was displeased and unwilling to bless her efforts, that her sinfulness was great and her love of God feeble and insufficient. Women missionaries also lacked a vocabulary with which to explain their feelings of depression and relationship difficulties. Mental illness remained an underdeveloped area of medicine and a taboo subject in society. Although the emotional and sexual difficulties of single women were increasingly analysed in the 1930s, it is unlikely that women missionaries would have encountered and engaged with such literature. Women interpreted their situation, therefore, in a religious rather than a psychiatric context: unhappiness amounted to spiritual weakness, sinful self-indulgence, and a grievous lack of joy in Christ's love and sacrifice. Taken to extremes, such understanding could lead to irrevocable breakdown. In highlighting these difficulties, this

thesis furthers understanding of women's health at home and in Empire, and women's spirituality, in the early-twentieth century.

This investigation of women missionaries has also proved insightful for the history of the Anglican Church and mission. The 'parochialism' of the female missionary enterprise is striking. More so than their male colleagues, women missionaries appear to have been preoccupied with immediate, local concerns in the mission field. They did not comment upon nationalist disturbances, unless their own work was affected. In spite of constant communication with mission headquarters, they became noticeably detached from debate and developments within the Church at home. This is most clearly demonstrated in their utter incomprehension at SPG's decision to withdraw from South India in 1947 and at Anglo-Catholic hostility to the new CSI.

The exploration of the new mission strategies of 'Indianisation' and 'Diocesanisation' has also proved fruitful. In analysing the transfer of mission authority into Indian hands, this thesis has contributed towards the history of the Anglican Church in India. Yet, 'Indianisation,' in particular, has also proved a far broader and more fascinating concept than the mere ceding of responsibility to missionaries' Indian colleagues. It has raised questions regarding the institutional translatability of the Western missionary enterprise. Women missionaries, especially members of communities, often failed to understand that their long-established, Western-style institutions were unwanted by and irrelevant to the growing Indian Church. It would be profitable to develop this finding in future research, comparing the fate of Anglican women's communities in the subcontinent with that of Roman Catholic convents and examining why the latter proved much more

acceptable and successful.<sup>2</sup> When ‘Indianising’ the staff of their institutions, women missionaries also found it difficult to ‘Indianise’ their mindsets and break away from Western ideas, methods, and modes of behaviour. By the 1930s, however, some were taking steps to render Christianity more applicable to Indian conditions. Ashrams were founded. It was increasingly acknowledged that missionaries’ role in modern India was not to be *the* agents of change but servants to Indian agents. The ‘native’ Church needed to lead and fashion itself.

The ultimate impact made by British women missionaries in India from 1917 to 1950 is open to debate. The common experience of the fictional women with whom this thesis began was one of failure. As Forster would put it, they find it impossible to ‘connect’ with India. ‘I feel we have failed you in every way,’ Sister Clodagh tells the Indian General at the end of *Black Narcissus*, as the sisters retreat from Mopu shaken, humbled, and regretful.<sup>3</sup> In the *Raj Quartet*, Edwina Crane loses faith and is driven to madness, despair, and self-immolation after witnessing the brutal murder of her Indian co-worker.<sup>4</sup> Upon retirement, her successor, Barbie Bachelor, doubts the effectiveness of her missionary career and feels increasingly estranged from God. Laughed at and shunned by imperial society, she eventually dies in lonely senility.<sup>5</sup> The reality of women missionaries’ experiences was more complicated. It is difficult to measure missionary ‘failure’ or ‘success.’ Certainly, the number of converts was small and few possessed a deep understanding of their faith. Promising ‘mass movement’ Christians lapsed repeatedly into ‘heathen’ customs. Nevertheless, missionaries’ educational, medical, and

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<sup>2</sup> Mother Teresa of Calcutta clearly recognised the need to form communities relevant to Indian women. See Mother Teresa & Brian Kolodiejchuk (ed.), *Come Be My Light. The revealing private writings of the Nobel Prize Winner*. (Reading, 2008). pp.50, 76.

<sup>3</sup> Godden, *Black Narcissus*. p.217.

<sup>4</sup> Scott, *The Jewel in the Crown*.

<sup>5</sup> Scott, *The Towers of Silence*.

evangelistic work did act as a valuable resource bank which Indians used for their spiritual and temporal advancement. Women missionaries' undoubtedly altered the lives of the Indian girls educated in their schools and trained as teachers and nurses, and of the recipients of their medical service. Albeit slowly and hesitantly, they prepared Indian Christian women to take their place within an independent India and an independent Indian Church. As well as influencing religious reformers like the Arya Samaj, missionaries' commitment to social service and charity also shaped public discourse in the new India. While Nehru disliked proselytising, he held up missionary social work as a shining example to Hindus. Mission-founded hospitals and schools in India and Pakistan continued to grow in size and popularity.

For the majority of Indians, however, even for the most pious 'untouchable' converts, the immediate reality of life did not change radically as a result of missionary work. Missionary service had a far more profound impact, perhaps, upon women missionaries themselves than upon the Indians they came to serve. Their lives were transformed: from insignificant teachers in Britain to Principals of large Indian schools, where they could organise curricula and experiment with educational methods; from minor sisters in British hospitals to nursing superintendents founding training schools for Indian women; from junior doctors in a male-dominated medical profession to medical superintendents in bustling women's hospitals, treating all manner of tropical diseases. No longer did missionaries live in a land with a long-established Christian culture, where the vast majority of the population were at least nominally Christian. Gone was the security and order of their Church of England parish with its regular services and ministrations of the sacraments. For some, the contrast between their comfortable English homes and conditions in the field was enormous. The Honourable Eva Caroline Twisleton-Wykeham-Fiennes, for example, spent her life in a remote and 'most uncomfortable' house near

Gurgaon, teaching Indian villagers.<sup>6</sup> Should she have chosen to remain in England her circumstances would surely have been dramatically different. Transformation continued once missionaries were in the field. A woman missionary who sailed for India in the 1920s and was approaching retirement in 1950 typically experienced much upheaval. By 1950, her relationship with Indians had shifted from engagement with unknown, inferior, and frighteningly different ‘Others’ to engagement with beloved colleagues, equals in Christ, and perhaps even friends. Women who had arrived in India as respected ‘ma-baps,’ inhabiting the white preserve of the 1920s mission bungalow, now lived as ‘sisters’ alongside their Indian co-workers and worked in schools under Indian Principals. Women who had once felt at home in England’s Anglican parishes were now prepared to ‘throw in their lot’ with a united Indian Church out of communion with their own. Unlike the majority of their compatriots of the departed British Raj, some women even chose to retire and die on Indian soil.

Yet, one thing did not change. Unlike Edwina Crane and Barbie Bachelor, the majority of SPG and CMS women missionaries in India did not lose their faith. Upon her departure from India, Hetty Monkhouse acknowledged: ‘From the time that I offered myself to the S.P.G. from my “dismissal” and good-byes at home, the journey and sea-sickness, with total strangers and in a strange country and climate, when faced with difficult and almost impossible work, or when ill over and over again with fever, or when in pain at night; yes, and even when patients have died and one seems to have failed, even when one has sinned and come short of the standard of a missionary, when pride, ambition, selfishness, or irritability have marred God’s work – yes, in all these times and at every moment God has fulfilled His promise, and made His presence felt.’<sup>7</sup> It is only by delving deeper into such language, somewhat alien to the historians of today, that women

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<sup>6</sup> USPG, Rhodes House. X124. V.M. Hayes, ‘Sent Out to Serve.’ p.13.

<sup>7</sup> Anon, *A Nurse’s Indian Log-Book*. p.122.

missionaries' own measurement of 'success' can be understood. In spite of personal disappointments, frustrations, and an absence of immediate results, the majority felt there had been a purpose to their careers. Success would come in the long term. They had responded to the 'call': 'Go ye into all the world...' They had sown the seeds. They were convinced that, in His own time and in His own way, the ever-present, all-powerful God would bring these to fruition.

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