

Title - The Training of Missionaries

Author – Grattan Guinness

Date – June 1888

Word count - 5562

An address delivered at Exeter Hall by the Rev. H. Grattan Guinness, on the first day of the General Missionary Conference, June, 1888.

We have in this year 1888 reached an important crisis in missions. A hundred years of missionary labour lie behind us, and we gather at this International Convention from east, west, north and south, to study its records, and to learn its lessons, that we may start with fresh knowledge, and renewed energy, for our still unreached goal – the evangelization of the world.

The century has been a glorious one in Gospel work. After ages of apostasy – followed by stormy times of Reformation – the Church awoke a hundred years ago to its duty to publish the Gospel to all mankind. During the century, thousands of devoted labourers have gone forth; hundreds of heathen languages have been learned; the Scriptures translated into them; the Word of God widely proclaimed and some three millions of heathen converted to Christianity. Among all people, the Gospel has proved its soul-transforming power. A co-operative providence has opened the world. Railways and steamers traverse it in every direction. Meanwhile Protestant Great Britain, America and Germany, have largely increased their population and their wealth. England alone, after spending freely on necessaries and luxuries, hoards annually now no less than 240 millions of money. The means to accomplish our God-given work are increased and increasing. What we want now, and what we seek, is full purpose and resolution to *use* the powers we possess. God grant that this Conference may be, as it ought to be, a turning-point in missions – a stage from which the Church will make a fresh start, and push on her glorious warfare against sin and Satan with tenfold courage and energy, resolving by divine help to evangelize the world before the present generation has passed away!

If this is to be done it is clear that there must be an *enormous increase* in the missionary army. The non-Christian nations number over a thousand millions. To give no more than one missionary to every ten thousand of these we should need a hundred thousand missionaries. There are at present only six thousand in the entire field – men and women, all told. A new era, however, seems dawning – witness the hundred missionaries added to the China Inland Mission in 1887, and the thousands of undergraduates in England and America who have recently pledged themselves to missionary work. God is evidently answering prayer, and thrusting forth labourers into his harvest.

We gather here to-day at the outset of this Convention, to consider the *qualifications* and *training* necessary for missionaries. Four points are raised for discussion – the first as to mental and spiritual *qualifications*; the second as to special *training at home*; a third as to *training in the field*; and a fourth as to the advisability of establishing *missionary lectureships* in our colleges. I take up here the first two of these points – the *testing* of

candidates to ascertain their suitability for the work, and their *training* after acceptance, and before being sent out.

And firstly, as to the *qualifications* required. A missionary is an ambassador for Christ to the heathen – or to any non-Christian people. It is of necessity, therefore, that he be a true Christian – an anointed man, one called of God to the ministry of the Gospel, and sent forth by Him. The Church cannot create such labourers; only He who made the world can make a true missionary. No training can manufacture him – no human ordination can fit him for his work. The best musical education cannot make a musician of one who has no ear, nor the ablest instruction an artist of one who has no taste. It is clear that we cannot create even genius, how much less grace. A true missionary, like a true minister, is a supernatural gift to the Church, and to the world, from the ascended Saviour. He ascended up far above all heavens, and gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. He alone gave them then, He alone can give them now. In considering the application of a candidate therefore, the question to be settled, is not, Can he be made into a missionary? But, Has God called him to be such? Have the necessary qualifications been bestowed? Only where this is the case can the training be of any use. If a man or woman is to become a true and useful missionary, there must first be not only genuine conversion, and sincere personal piety, but whole-hearted self-consecration to the work of God, and a call to His holy service; including a strong inward sense of vocation, together with providential indications and adaptations. There must be mental and physical fitness for foreign service, and above all *the spirit of Christ*, for no matter what other qualifications a man may have, he will never be a missionary unless he is filled with Christ-like compassion for the lost, and with a burning desire to seek and save them. This should be the ruling feature of his character. With this almost any special talents may be utilized in missionary service; without it, even the most brilliant are useless. If the heart be intensely set on the salvation of the perishing, love will teach ingenuity, and lead to painstaking and perseverance. Love will overcome all obstacles, and accomplish its object. The love of souls, the longing for their salvation, is one of the leading qualifications that should be looked for.

But even the presence of this does not make testing needless, for there may co-exist with it physical, mental, or moral disqualifications. Delicate or unsound health, a nervous irritability or desponding temperament, a lack of vitality or vigour, personal defects of a serious character, hereditary or acquired tendency to any dangerous malady or bad habit, these are so many *physical disqualifications*. So again, a prevailing mental obtuseness, the absence of general intelligence and common sense, the want of good memory, of the power of attention and observation, of ability to distinguish between things which differ – to reason correctly and to reach right conclusions, - any conspicuous defect in these *mental* requisites should create grave hesitation as to a candidate's fitness for missionary work.

And there are *moral defects* also which would hinder usefulness even if body and mind were all right. Pride, obstinacy, want of docility, of meekness, of sympathy; habits of exaggeration, misrepresentation, or mischief-making; indolence, selfishness, rashness, levity of character, lack of patience and perseverance – of faith and courage, of self-

denial and prayerfulness; all these are prohibitory defects, and the candidate in whom any of these are observed should be recommended at least to wait till he has grown in needful grace.

On the other hand it should be noted that there are defects of a different character, which constitute no real disqualification, because training may, to a great extent, remedy them. Ignorance, lack of habits of study, or of experience, narrow-mindedness arising from want of intercourse with various classes of men, awkwardness of manner, and many and similar faults, indicate only a candidate's need of education and training, and should not stamp him as ineligible.

We turn now to the subject of the TRAINING of accepted candidates. The question stands in the prospectus "Should there be special training for missionary service in addition to general education?" The answer is *Undoubtedly*. God always trains His instruments. Every true missionary must be specially trained for his work, though not all in our schools. God has His own schools. They are very various, and some of them strange and severe. Moses was trained to be the deliverer and lawgiver of Israel, in the courts and schools of Egypt, and in the mountain solitudes of Midian, for eighty years. David was trained to be king over Israel by years of spiritual experience, and by many dangers and toils. Daniel was trained for his wonderful prophetic office by his education and career in Babylon. Any training that we can give to a volunteer for missionary work will form at best but a small part of a greater and more effectual training which God himself bestows. We can do something to help, though not much. Let us see to it that what we do be done in harmony with that which is done by the great Master. Our Lord Himself carefully trained His Apostles for the great work He committed to them – the evangelization of the world. His example is full of instruction for us.

Christ gave His disciples a three-fold training – *theoretical, moral and practical*. This was one of the principal works which He accomplished in the world. He prepared the instruments, He trained the men who should afterwards evangelize it. He chose them, called them, kept them, taught them, prayed with them and for them, impressed His spirit upon them, breathed it into them: He corrected them, expanded their minds, exalted their conceptions, and purified their motives and purposes. Before He sent them forth into the world He kept them for over three years with Himself, during which He set before them His own glorious and sacred example. What a development of soul! What a training for service! "Follow Me," He said, "and I will make you to become fishers of men." "Take up your cross and follow Me." "Learn of Me." "Abide in Me".

Besides this He imparted to them priceless *instructions*. He taught them the nature of His divine kingdom, His own personal character and claims, the nature of true holiness, the simplicity, spirituality and power of prayer, the excellence of humility, the essential duty and blessed results of self-sacrifice, the sin of hypocrisy and formality, the spirituality of worship, and the supremacy of the Word of God over all human traditions. He revealed to them also the future, unfolding the prospects which lay before the church, the Jewish people, and the Gentile world. He revealed the advent and the work of the Comforter, to whom they were in future to look for guidance and help. It was by these instructions and

influences that He fitted His disciples to be the promulgators of a pure spiritual universal religion, with charity as wide as the world, with consciences sensitive about sin, yet free from superstitious scruples, with habits of obedience to the divine law, though emancipated from bondage to human customs, and with characters cured of pride and passion, impatience, selfishness, and self-will. Christ employed as His first ambassadors God-given, God-taught, and God-sent messengers, and even these He had both sifted and trained.

Hence it is evident that the development of *spiritual life* is the great thing to be aimed at in missionary training. Woe to the Church if she neglects *this*, or gives it a secondary place! Her messengers will be of little use, for unspiritual agents can never accomplish spiritual work. Are we not building up a spiritual temple? Must not each stone of it be a living stone, seeing the house is to be the habitation of God through the Spirit? If, then, the end in view be spiritual, so must the means and methods be – we must follow the example of Christ.

The *effect* of this training was to transform the men who received it. They became a wonder in the world. Men marvelled at these Galilean fishermen – ignorant and unlearned as they were in earthly things – that they should possess such spiritual light and love, such wisdom and boldness as they evinced. Men took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.

Yes, they had *been with Jesus*. That was the secret of their power; that was the method of their training. The society of Christ was the school of their Apostleship, the college in which they graduated. They had been with Jesus, and as the Father had sent Him so He sent them into the world, promising Himself to be with them, and with their faithful successors even to the end of the age.

The calling, qualifying, and directing of the labourers thus commenced by our Lord was afterwards continued by the Holy Ghost through the Church. He sent forth missionaries unto the Gentiles. The Apostolic Church acted directly under the Spirit's guidance. "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them". Then the Church fasted, prayed, laid their hands on those men and sent them away. That is *they* set apart and sent out those whom *God* had qualified and called. The Lord was with these missionaries and wrought glorious things through their instrumentality.

We cannot improve on this example of the primitive Church. The Acts of the Apostles form the best guide-book for missionary societies and missionaries. The impulse and the energy must always come from heaven. Successful missionaries are God-appointed men. We must pray for such; watch and wait for them; welcome them and utilize them as they are given.

Yes, for the thousands of workers still needed in the mission-field we must first of all *pray* – and pray as Elijah prayed for the rain, fervently, effectually, incessantly till the prayer is answered; pray as the Church prayed for the promised Spirit before Pentecost.

Such prayer would bring another Pentecost, and we need such a season to-day. We want the world to be evangelized, but we must remember that He who redeemed it and commanded His Apostles to evangelize it, forbade them to leave Jerusalem on their glorious mission *till* they were endued with power from on high. They obeyed Him; the power came; and thousands were converted *by* it. But there never was and never will be any *substitute* for this spiritual power, this holy anointing. Without it evangelistic or missionary work must be in the deepest sense a failure.

With these sacred examples before us we cannot but ask the question whether our mode of *testing* missionary candidates is sufficiently careful and thorough, and whether our plan of *training* them aims, as it should do, *at the development of the moral and spiritual nature* even more than at the invigoration of the mental powers, and the impartation of mere knowledge. Do we *seek and select* in the first place and *cultivate* in the second, *the type of character* which Christ cultivated? Are we guided in our selection mainly by the *spiritual* stature of the candidate – by his humility, patience, prayerfulness, and faith – by his possession of the Spirit of Christ? In our training, again, is our aim the right one? We *educate* abundantly, and education is undoubtedly a good thing, but it is a poor substitute for *grace exercised* and *spiritual gifts strengthened by use*, for habits of practical devotion and self-denying labour *formed* and *established*. Collegiate study and examinations are not enough. Degrees are no criterion. Men of high scholastic attainments have been sent out in our own day to convert the heathen, who have been converted by the heathen, or rather perverted by them from the truth. As Gideon tested his three hundred, so do we need to test and sift our missionary volunteers, and *the testing should include the Cross*. “Master”, said one of old, “I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest”; - “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests”, was the answer, “but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head”. That is, Christ intimated to the would-be disciple that to follow Him, he must *be prepared to share His lot*. No training that misses this element is worth much.

The reality of the missionary’s devotedness is best proved and developed by hard and humble work among the ignorant, the prejudiced, the poor, the degraded at home. If a man objects to, or slurs labour among *them*, as beneath his dignity or disagreeable to his tastes, it is useless to send him forth as a missionary. Selfishness may make a good student, natural ability an acceptable speaker, but only distasteful service puts to the proof a man’s *grace*, his sense of duty and strength of principle. Fifteen years experience in the training of young men, and personal dealing with more than three thousand volunteers for missionary service, leads me to urge the importance of this test.

Next, perhaps, in value to spirituality may be ranked *evangelistic gift and ability*. How is this to be developed? In the same way that skill in any other line is imparted – by instruction and practice. The preparation for all ordinary work consists in the actual doing of it, not merely in gaining a theoretical knowledge of how it ought to be done. No one would employ a mechanic who had never worked at his trade, nor an architect who had never erected a building. No one would employ a doctor who had not treated the sick, nor should we ever send out missionaries – preachers and teachers for the heathen – who have not *done* teaching and preaching work, and been blessed to the conversion of souls

at home. If a man is not a successful soul-winner in his native land, he is not likely to become such in China or Africa. It is surely unwise in a high degree to commit to unproved men one of the most difficult of tasks. Unless a man has succeeded in turning others to righteousness in these lands where it is comparatively easy, what reason have we to conclude that he will do so in heathendom where it is so much more difficult? There are home heathen enough in our crowded cities to afford practical training for missionary students. Just as medical students walk the hospitals, so should our missionary students learn their future work in our courts and alleys – in the centres where sin-sick and perishing souls needing the Gospel remedy congregate. East London, for instance, with its vast and varied population, is an admirable training ground for missionary students. It was this fact which led us, many years ago, to plant there our *Institute for Home and Foreign Missions*, from which, during the last fifteen years many hundreds of missionaries have gone forth. We have more than a million of the working classes in this quarter. We have infidels, Romanists, English and foreign Jews, French, Germans and Italians, Africans and Asiatics, including Chinese, Hindoos, and other nationalities. We have drunkards and paupers, and multitudes who are heathen in their habits, if not in their creed. Among these the evangelist can prove his gifts; he can either deal singly with individuals, or preach to companies gathered in rooms, mission halls, lodging houses, or on board ships; and above all, he can address crowds in the *open air*.

The value of *open-air preaching* as a preparation for missionary work is exceedingly great. It cultivates aggressiveness, boldness, simplicity, directness, and earnestness of style, an extemporaneous delivery, and an interesting and striking manner of presenting Divine truths. The open-air preacher must first gather his congregation, and then hold it in spite of surrounding distractions, with nothing but the simple power of his words. He must suit his style to the roughest and shrewdest of his auditors. He must promptly meet objections, answer questions, and quiet disturbances, as he seeks to win an entrance to unwelcome truths in the hearts and minds of neglectors and rejectors of the Word of God. He has to face opposition, and endure at times contempt and shame for the Master's sake. It is not easy work, and there is nothing in it to foster conceit or gratify self-esteem. It is really hard, self-denying service, more analogous to that which would be required of a missionary in the streets of India or China, than almost any other form of Gospel labour.

To preach from a pulpit to orderly congregations, prepared to listen respectfully and sympathetically, is no preparation for labour among the heathen! There is no trouble in gathering the people under such circumstances. Everything in their surroundings *helps* religious impression, and *intelligent* attention is bestowed on the preacher. But there is nothing of this sort in heathendom! One who is only up to work of this conventional type might almost as well stay at home. The *missionary* has to press his message on men who have no notion of its importance, no disposition even to listen to it, no substratum of religious knowledge on which to work, no enlightened conscience to which to appeal, no habits of reverence or decorum, no sympathy with the preacher's mode of thought, and but an imperfect comprehension of his language. Like the open-air preacher, the missionary must not expect either to be sought, appreciated, or thanked for his service, nor to find in it any other gratification than that of serving Christ and saving men. In this, and in other similar efforts to raise and transform *degraded and sunken populations at*

home, the missionary candidate is not only best *trained for* his future work, but best tested, best *proved fit* for it.

In addition to such experiences a missionary needs of course *knowledge of various kinds*. Education of the mind *has its place* – though it be not the first place. The higher the mental qualifications of a man or woman (other things being equal) the better. But here it should be clearly stated that the nature of the case indicates that only a certain proportion of missionary workers require what we call a thorough education. Do we not limit too narrowly the class of men from which we select missionary agents? Do we sufficiently remember that the first missionaries were mostly poor and uninfluential in worldly position, ignorant and unlearned as regards mental attainments, not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble were called. For one learned Paul of Tarsus there were eleven plain men of no special erudition, fishermen and men of that class whose principal education was that which they received from Christ Himself. The army requires more privates than officers; and one architect can *plan* a building which will need many hands to erect. *Some* highly-cultured men are of course needed in a mission, and are essential to its highest prosperity; they are needed to do literary work, reduce unwritten tongues, and translate the Scriptures; to train and teach native evangelists, to lead and organize, to direct and to originate. But are they the only men needed? Did any army consisting of officers *only* ever march to victory? Are not rank and file required as well? And does not the mission army need hundreds and thousands of privates? Is it essential that all, or even the great majority of missionaries should be scholarly gentlemen who have studied from boyhood to maturity at heavy expense of time and money? Do the ninety per cent of the population of China who cannot even read, or the savages of Central Africa or the New Hebrides, demand teachers of a higher stamp than do the working classes in these countries? Should we not esteem it a great waste of resources to insist that all home and city missionaries should be classical scholars?

And are not *workers of all classes* required among the heathen as much as at home? May not many men without either the leisure, or the means, or perhaps even the inclination for a long and elaborate course of study – intelligent artisans, young clerks in banks, in offices, assistants in shops, the sons of farmers, mates of vessels and skilled mechanics, tradesmen, teachers and others – be well suited to serve Christ among the heathen, to preach the simple Gospel to the masses of the people?

On the other hand, to send out ignorant and untrained men to undertake missionary work were clearly folly. “Let such first be proved”, is a dictate of common sense as well as a precept of Scripture. Paul said to Timothy as regards the truths of the Gospel which he had taught him, “the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also”. Of all men a missionary should be a man of general intelligence and fertile resources. Without a measure of cultivation it is impossible that he should be this. Knowledge is power, and missionaries as a class should know something of everything. A missionary has to travel, and should understand *geography*. He *may* perhaps have to build his *house*, to make his own *furniture*, to till or direct the tillage of his *garden*, the cooking of his *food*, to work the printing *press*, *etc etc*. Knowledge even on such matters will therefore be valuable to him. He may be situated far from any skilled *physician*, and ought therefore to have at least some elementary knowledge of anatomy and physiology

and of the use of simple surgical and medical aids. The more *grammatical* knowledge he has the better, for he will have to learn and use a foreign tongue, and possibly to translate into it the Word of God. He ought to know enough of *nature* to appreciate the works of God, and enough of *history* to perceive the background of Bible facts. As he has to teach Christianity, he should know something of the history of its planting, its early sufferings and triumphs, the origin and progress of existing apostasies, and the story of the Reformation. He should also be acquainted to some extent with the history of modern missions, including the lives of eminent missionaries. But above all, he ought to be well acquainted with the Bible. That book will have to be the companion of his loneliness, the guide of his perplexity, the support of his life, the instrument of his labours. It should be the chief subject of his study. His mind should be familiarized with the sacred text, with the evidences of its inspiration, and with the varied doctrinal and practical truths which it reveals. He needs to be rooted and built up in Christ, and established in the faith, and the aim should be to give him a firm grasp of the teachings of Scripture, and instruction as far as possible, in the whole counsel of God.

It is a serious question whether in our training of missionaries we give the Word of God the place which it deserves. Is not Bible study in our colleges apt to be too cramped, and too merely critical? We teach our students to dissect the Scriptures, but are they taught to dissect their own hearts, to understand themselves? We teach them the letter of Scripture, but do we lay due stress upon the possession of its spirit? We teach them to judge the Book, but they should be taught to let it judge them, and by its light to judge of all things. Is not God's Word a fire, and a hammer? Woe to us if by our processes we strip it of its sacredness and strength. Let us give the Word of God its proper place, and own its supreme authority, pre-eminence, and power.

It is the desire of this Conference that those who take part should contribute to the general stock the results of their experience, suggesting for the consideration of their brethren the chief practical conclusions to which they have been led. I may mention, then that guided by the principles indicated in this paper, we founded, fifteen years ago, in East London, an Institution for training and helping into the foreign field young men who desired to be missionaries. We subsequently added a country branch of the Institute, and later on a training Home for Deaconesses. During these fifteen years we have dealt with more than three thousand volunteers for missionary work, have received on probation between eight and nine hundred, have trained and sent out five hundred missionaries, and have now about a hundred students in the Institute. Our plan is to give the students, where they require it, preliminary secular instruction in the country branch, and then practical training in East London, including missionary evangelistic, linguistic and medical departments. All our students receive from a qualified medical man the training of the ambulance corps, the results being tested by a public examination. The deaconesses, in certain instances, are sent for three months to live in hospitals, where maternity cases are treated. Students going to Africa receive instruction in the treatment of tropical fevers, and where there has been special fitness we have given students the advantage of a four years medical course in the London Hospital. In almost every case these have become qualified medical men, and are now in the mission field. The time spent by students in the Institute has varied according to their age and needs. Our system has been an elastic one.

We have tried to give each the help he or she was capable of receiving, and to introduce each to the sphere in which we saw they could best do good Gospel service.

The results have not disappointed us. We have received men of all nationalities and all classes, as well as of all evangelical denominations. We have trained them for all countries, and former students are now working in connection with between twenty and thirty societies and organizations, while many of them have founded new and independent missions. As a rule they have done well, and given much satisfaction in the missions they have joined. There are exceptions. Every rule has such, but we thank God on remembrance of the great majority of them. They have gone into every country in Europe. They have gone to the roughest and most westerly parts of North America, to the negroes in Jamaica and to the Roman Catholics and English settlers in South America. They have evangelized in Morocco, Algiers, Tunis and Egypt, in North Africa; have established missions in Cape Colony, Natal and Kaffir-land; and have penetrated the heart of Equatorial Africa, founding fresh stations, reducing the languages of the people to writing, translating the Scriptures, and turning hundreds from heathenism to the knowledge of God. They have suffered, literally, thousands of attacks of fevers, and many of them have laid down their lives in the service of Christ and for the Gospel. They have founded medical missions in Constantinople, Syria, and Armenia; have evangelized in the wildest parts of the Hauran, have preached in the crowded cities and mountain wilds of India, and opened many mission-stations in the most distant provinces in China. They have scattered the Word of God in every province in that vast Empire, and have traversed in their missionary labours almost every country in the world. Our experience has shown us that there are thousands of devoted young men and women suited for missionary work, and desirous to give themselves to it, that they are capable of rapid improvement under Christian training, and willing to go anywhere for the sake of the Gospel, that there are open doors in all lands, and fields waiting for reapers, white to the harvest, and that the Christian Church may increase with appropriate effort the number of its missionary labourers to an almost indefinite extent.

Allow me, in conclusion, to summarize what I have said, and to emphasize certain points.

First we agree most thoroughly with our highly esteemed and respected friend, Dr. Pierson, in his published opinion that “if we would largely increase the missionary force we must in some way lessen the time and cost of preparing the average workman..... A most formidable barrier to the work of evangelization is that even where both men and money may be obtained it takes too long a time and too costly a culture to train the average workman; and this one obstacle often overtops all others, and is practically insurmountable.

..... There ought to be a change in our ecclesiastical tactics; our system of training for the mission-field must be more flexible and more economical of time and money, or we cannot send workmen into the great world field in adequate numbers”.

Without any rigidly uniform system of training we must encourage every willing soul to do the work for which he or she is best fitted, and endeavour further to fit each for their proposed sphere of labour, and we must shorten and simplify the course of training.

Secondly, no candidates whatever should be accepted for training save spiritually-minded men and women, possessed of good health, good common sense, devotedness to God's service, and a divinely indicated call to the work.

Thirdly, such persons should be thoroughly tested, and carefully trained. Their training should be adapted to develop the unworldly spiritual character which missionary work requires. It should always be adapted to the individual case. All missionary students should be trained in laborious and self-denying habits, and exercised in evangelistic work among our own lapsed masses, especially open-air preaching.

Lastly, every Missionary student should be furnished with the practical instructions of the ambulance corps, as to how to deal with accident cases; while those who are preparing for labour in Central Africa and other parts of the world, where no qualified medical aid is to be had, should receive, in addition to other teaching, special medical instruction of an elementary and practical nature, and in those instances where there is marked aptitude and desire for it, the Missionary student should have the advantage of a full medical course.