



## SCIENCE AND RELIGION IN THE BAPTIST WORLD

A Science for Seminaries project at the Centre for Baptist Studies

### Science and Baptist History Case study 3

#### Ellen Farrer

1891 graduated from the London School of Medicine for Women and the Royal Free Hospital. Sailed for India supported by BMS.

Bhiwani (106 miles west of Delhi)

‘Unchristianised and largely untouched by Imperial infiltration’ (Anderson, 168)

Career lasted until 1931

Honoured twice by the Indian imperial government for distinguished public service.

Died in 1959.



Medicine or evangelism? Tension

‘medical work offered a way “to usefully and happily serve He who sent His followers out to preach the Kingdom of God *and* to heal the sick.’

Arrived with no language but immediately studied Urdu. Later able to translate two textbooks into Urdu.

‘Medical work a representation of Christian charity in action’ (Anderson, 181)

Her conviction of the superiority of western science and medicine was unshakeable (Anderson, 241). Her remarks on native civilisation are markedly patronising, although her intentions were entirely humane and compassionate’ (Anderson, 292)

Farrer was ‘glimpse of the human face of colonialism’ (Anderson, 289)

In 1934, Farrer gave an address responding to *Re-Thinking Missions* 1932 (Hocking Report)

Charter for Medical Mission is Christ’s command

Essential part of the Christian witness

Healing and preaching must go together

Believes it is possible to evangelise patients in hospital but no coercion

‘those of us keen on the *professional* side of our work’

‘we cannot work miracles as our Master did, but by using in His Service the resources of modern medicine and surgery cures can be accomplished which seem to ignorant village folk little short of miraculous

Hospitals provide more time to share the gospel and demonstrate divine love than district visiting.

Provide opportunity as training institutions for Indian Christians as nurses, midwives . . . supports ‘the uplift and development of the indigenous Indian Church, of such training not only leads to an honourable means of livelihood in the service of the sick and suffering, but also supplies an excellent discipline for the formation of character and affords opportunities for evangelistic efforts among their own people.’

## **References**

Imogen Siobhan Anderson, *A Mission For Medicine: Dr Ellen Farrer and India 1891-1933*. Unpublished PhD, Durham, 1997.

*Fifty Years for Bhiwani Hospital: The Farrer Jubilee* (1941)