

sent them out, two by two, into the country about to tell the lesson to villagers. After a time they were gathered at Swatow and received another portion of the truth and having obtained a thorough grasp of it, went forth to carry the good news of salvation.¹⁶

Fielde's writing skills made her a priceless asset to the mission, as she wrote stories to be published and consumed by mission supporters. "She had each Bible woman tell her story, which she translated and published in magazines," writes Leonard Warren. "Their heart-rending sagas proved enormously appealing to American women, who could sympathize with their suffering Chinese sisters."¹⁷ She later compiled the stories into a book, *Pagoda Shadows*. In addition to her teaching and writing, she compiled a *Dictionary of the Swatow Dialect*, which went through many publications.

In 1883 she returned to America for home leave, spending part of her time on a speaking tour and nearly two years studying at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia—the "happiest" years of her life. At the end of her furlough, she was asked to serve as president of Vassar College, but she turned down the offer, determined instead to return to her ministry in China with her faithful Bible women.

Fielde had trained her best students to train others, so when health problems developed, she was relieved that she could return home with good conscience. In 1889 she resigned the mission and spent the next two years traveling home through India, the Middle East, and Europe. Her last years were devoted to the suffragist movement, public lecturing, organizational work, humanitarian endeavors—and most notably, science. She conducted biological research on ants and published her findings in scholarly scientific journals. She was fascinated by the theories of the century's most noted scientist, Charles Darwin, and found no discrepancy between science and religion.

In many respects, Fielde was an enigma regarding religious matters. A free-thinker from childhood, she broke from her family's Baptist roots to become a Universalist, only to be baptized as a Baptist prior to her anticipated marriage. She faithfully served as a Baptist missionary for two decades and then turned to science. "After breaking with the Baptist Missionary Union, and shedding the certainties of sectarian Christianity," writes Warren, "she never again joined any religious organizations.... Yet Fielde had not the slightest hesitation in proclaiming that Christianity was the best of all possible religions."¹⁸ When she died in 1916, she left behind not only scientific research and writings on racial reconciliation but also Bible women who were training other Bible women and literature in Chinese that would be used for decades to follow.

At the time of her death, her Baptist mission society did not even publish her obituary in its official magazine. Ten years later, however, she was eulogized as the "mother of our Bible women and also the mother of our Bible schools."¹⁹

On the surface, Adele Fielde had much in common with another unmarried Baptist woman from America who arrived in China in 1873, the very same year that she did (though she had been serving in Thailand previously). In a letter to this other woman, H.A. Tupper, secretary for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, had written: "I estimate a single woman in China is worth two married men."²⁰ On the average that may have been true, but few could have argued—then or now—that Adele Fielde and Lottie Moon combined were "worth" more than four married men.

Charlotte (Lottie) Diggs Moon

Lottie Moon was one of the most prominent missionary activists of the nineteenth century. Her impact on missions—particularly Southern Baptist missions—was enormous.

Indeed, she is sometimes referred to as the “patron saint” of Baptist missions. And that remains true today. “No one—missionary, pastor, or denominational leader,” writes Alan Neely, “is as powerful a symbol in Southern Baptist circles as Lottie Moon. Her name is a mission shibboleth. Her life epitomizes foreign missions.”²¹

Charlotte (“Lottie”) Moon was born in 1840 into an old Virginia family of Albemarle County and grew up on Viewmont, a tobacco plantation near three famous presidential homes—Monticello, Montpelier, and Ashlawn. She was one of seven children and was deeply influenced by the staunch faith, ambitious drive, and independence of their mother, who was widowed in 1852. Her oldest brother became a respected physician, and her sister Orianna, also a physician (and reputedly the first female doctor south of the Mason-Dixon line), served as a missionary in Palestine until the outbreak of the Civil War and then returned home to serve as a medical doctor in the Confederate Army.

Like her brothers and sisters, Moon was well educated and cultured. During her college years she rebelled against her strict Baptist upbringing, but a campus revival changed her life: “I went to the service to scoff, and returned to my room to pray all night.” After college she went home to help run Viewmont while other family members, both male and female, “marched out to fight for the Stars and Bars,” performing “splendid service” as spies and elite guerrilla soldiers. Moon was left out of the excitement, and it was this vacuum, according to Irwin Hyatt, “that would eventually send her to China.”²²

Following the war, Moon pursued a teaching career, but she desired ministry and adventure beyond what her little school in Cartersville, Georgia, offered. Unlike so many women, she did not feel deterred by her sex. The strong women in her family who had performed as “doctors, executives, and spies,” according to Hyatt, “further demonstrated what determined females could do.” In 1872 Lottie’s sister Edmonia sailed for China, and in 1873, she followed.²³

Edmonia Moon’s tenure in China was short. She was only in her late teens when she sailed for China and was unable to cope with the pressures of missionary life. Besides physical ailments, she suffered from seizures and, according to coworkers, did “queer and unreasonable things” and was “very burdensome” to the missionary community. Even her sister was exasperated by her “good for nothing” behavior, and finally, in 1877, after four years in China, she returned home to Virginia. Although her departure freed Moon from the drudgery of being her sister’s nursemaid and allowed her to actively participate in missionary work, it also plunged her into a period of depression. To her home committee she wrote: “I especially am bored to death living alone. I don’t find my own society either agreeable or edifying.... I really think a few more winters like the one just past would put an end to me. This is no joke, but dead earnest.”²⁴

Loneliness, however, was not the only factor frustrating her ministry in China. Crawford Toy, a Confederate Army chaplain who had first “come a-wooing” while she was living at Viewmont following the war, had entered her life again. Now teaching at a Southern Baptist seminary in South Carolina, he talked of marriage and suggested they work as a missionary team in Japan. It was a tempting offer but one that Lottie reluctantly refused. While the prospect of going to Japan appealed to her, there were other factors to consider. Toy, “influenced by the new ideas of the German scholars,” also held to the Darwinian theory of evolution, a view that had already created controversy for him within the Southern Baptist Convention. Moon was aware of his position, and after studying the subject she concluded that evolution was an “untenable position.” She broke off their relationship. Years later, when asked if she had ever had a love affair, she responded, “Yes, but God had first claim on my life, and since the two conflicted, there could be no question about the result.” Toy later became a professor of Hebrew and Semitic languages at

Harvard University, and Moon, in her own words, was left to “plod along in the same old way.”²⁵

If Moon had hoped that coming to China would allow her to have a ministry comparable to that of a man, she was mistaken. The Southern Baptists had distinct roles for women, according to Catherine Allen:

Moon’s assignment in China was “women’s work.” This title denoted two philosophies that shaped her ministry and her world. First was the missionary strategy known as “woman’s mission to woman.” Second was the staunchly defended prohibition against women seeming to teach, preach, or exercise authority over men.²⁶

Moon’s work in China continued to be drudgery, and the romantic ideal of missionary work had long since faded. As a cultured “Southern belle,” she found it difficult to identify with the Chinese people, and as a teacher she found it almost impossible to penetrate their “dull” minds. Had she really given up her thriving school in Cartersville, Georgia, for this? She had come to China to “go out among the millions” as an evangelist, only to find herself chained to a school of forty “unstudious” children. Relegating women to such roles, she charged, was “the greatest folly of modern missions.” “Can we wonder,” she fumed, “at the mortal weariness and disgust, the sense of wasted powers and the conviction that her life is a failure, that comes over a woman when, instead of the ever-broadening activities she had planned, she finds herself tied down to the petty work of teaching a few girls.” “What women want who come to China,” she insisted, “is free opportunity to do the largest possible work.... What women have a right to demand is perfect equality.”²⁷

Such a view was a radical position for a female missionary—especially when published in missionary magazines. There was immediate reaction, particularly by those who found such signs of female liberation “repulsive.” One such response came from one of her colleagues, a Mrs. Arthur Smith, wife of a Congregational missionary to China, who suggested Moon was mentally unbalanced for craving such “lawless prancing all over the mission lot.” Mrs. Smith argued that the proper role of a female missionary was to attend “with a quivering lip” her own children.²⁸

With no children of her own, Moon was determined to expand her ministry to fit her own concept of fulfillment. She began traveling out into the country villages, and by 1885 she concluded that her ministry would be more effective if she were to move to Pingtu and begin a new work there on her own. Besides her desire to be involved full-time in evangelistic work, she wanted to get out from under the high-handed authority of her field director, T. P. Crawford. His philosophy of missions did not allow for mission schools, so Lottie’s teaching ministry was in jeopardy anyway, and his dictatorial methods of dealing with other missionaries had even alienated his own wife. Moreover, she feared that under his authority single women missionaries might be relegated to the place of Presbyterian women missionaries, who had no vote in their mission, and she threatened to resign over this very issue. “Simple justice,” she insisted, “demands that women should have equal rights with men in mission meetings and in the conduct of their work.” She wrote to the home board, criticizing Crawford and his new plan of operation (including the closing of schools and the “regulation of mission salaries”) and concluded with the terse comment, “If that be freedom, give me slavery!”²⁹

Moon’s critical remarks were not those of a heady adolescent. She was forty-four years old and a twelve-year veteran of China missions, and she justifiably resented the lack of choices women were allowed. But her move to Pingtu did not solve all her problems. Pioneer evangelism was extremely difficult work. The cries of “woman devil” followed her as she walked down the narrow village streets. Only slowly and after weary persistence did

she win friends among the women, and even then it was difficult to make an impact on women until she had won the confidence of the men.

Her first opportunity to reach Chinese men came in 1887, when three strangers from a nearby village appeared at her door in Pingtu. They had heard the “new doctrine” being whispered about by the women and were eager for her to tell them more. She visited their village, where she found “something I had never seen before in China. Such eagerness to learn! Such spiritual desires!” So excited was she that she canceled plans for a long-overdue furlough and summoned Martha Crawford, the wife of her field director, to come and help her. Their efforts were rewarded. She wrote home, “Surely there can be no deeper joy than that of saving souls.” Despite local opposition, she established a church, and in 1889 the first baptisms were conducted by an ordained Baptist missionary. The church grew, and within two decades, under her policy of keeping “the movement as free from foreign interference as possible,” Li Shou Ting, the Chinese pastor, baptized more than a thousand converts, and Pingtu had become the “greatest” Southern Baptist “evangelistic center ... in all China.”³⁰

Between 1890 and her death in 1912, Moon lived two separate lives in China. Part of the year was spent in villages doing evangelistic work, and the other part was spent in Tengchow, where she trained new missionaries, counseled Chinese women, and enjoyed her Western books and magazines. She continued to write articles that paved the way for her extraordinary influence among the Southern Baptists. Although she returned home on furloughs and occasionally spoke before large audiences, it was chiefly her pen that stirred the hearts of Baptist women in the South.

Most of her writing appealed for greater support of foreign missions and for more recruits, sometimes taunting the men. “It is odd,” she wrote, “that a million Baptists of the South can furnish only three men for all China. Odd that with five hundred preachers in the state of Virginia, we must rely on a Presbyterian to fill a Baptist pulpit [here]. I wonder how these things look in heaven. They certainly look very queer in China.” But if the men would not come to the rescue of foreign missionary work, women would have to. The China missionary work of the Southern Methodists had almost collapsed before it was rescued by “enlisting of the women.” And if Methodist women could save their foreign missionary program, so also could Baptist women.³¹

She called for a week of prayer and a special Christmas offering to be handled solely by women and to be directed exclusively toward missions. She also appealed for “vigorous healthy women” to come to China. The first Christmas offering in 1888, according to Hyatt, “exceeded its goal by a thousand dollars, enough to pay for three new ladies instead of two.” Moon responded with enthusiasm: “What I hope to see is a band of ardent, enthusiastic, and experienced Christian women occupying a line of stations extending from Pingtu on the north and from Chinkiang on the south, making a succession of stations uniting the two ... a mighty wave of enthusiasm for Woman’s Work for Woman must be stirred.”³²

In the years that followed, the Christmas offering increased and there were more single women to serve in China, but the early years of the twentieth century following the Boxer uprising were devastating times in China. Outbreaks of the plague and smallpox, followed by famine, and then a local uprising in 1911 brought mass starvation to the region. She organized a relief service and pleaded for funds from the United States, but the board, unable to meet other financial obligations, declined assistance. She contributed from her personal funds, but her efforts seemed trifling in the face of such tragedy.

With the last of her savings drawn from her small bank account, she lapsed into depression—no doubt due in part to the fact that her sister Edmonia had, while lying in bed, “put a gun to her head” and ended her life.³³ She quit eating, and her health declined.

A doctor was sent for, and only then was it discovered that she was starving to death. Arrangements were made for her to return home in the company of a nurse, but it was too late. She died aboard ship while at port in Kobe, Japan, on Christmas Eve 1912, one week after her seventy-second birthday.

What she could not do in life, she accomplished in death. In the years that followed, the “Lottie Moon Christmas Offering” increased, and the Lottie Moon story was repeated over and over again. By 1925 the offerings had surpassed three hundred thousand dollars, and by the last decades of the twentieth century, more than twenty million dollars was collected annually. For Southern Baptist women, she had become a symbol of true womanhood and of what women could accomplish for missions. The highest compliment the *Foreign Missions Journal* could pay her at the time of her death was to say she was “the best man among our missionaries.”³⁴

Amy Carmichael

Probably the only woman missionary whose fame exceeded that of Lottie Moon in the early twentieth century was Amy Carmichael. She served in India for fifty-five years, from 1895 to her death in 1951. During that time she founded Dohnavur Fellowship and wrote some thirty-five books, a number of which were translated into more than a dozen languages. One of them, *Gold Cord*, has had sales of more than a half-million. She founded a religious order, the Sisters of the Common Life, made up primarily of Indian women, who along with Carmichael pledged themselves to celibacy and sacrificial ministry. To many people she was a living saint. Sherwood Eddy, a missionary statesman and author, was impressed by the “beauty of her character”; and character, according to Eddy, was the key to successful world evangelism. “Here is the point where many a missionary breaks down. Every normal missionary sails with high purpose but as a very imperfect Christian.... His character is his weakest point.... [But] Amy Wilson Carmichael was the most Christlike character I ever met, and ... her life was the most fragrant, the most joyfully sacrificial, that I ever knew.”³⁵

Amy Carmichael was born in 1867 into a well-to-do North Ireland family whose little village of Millisle was dominated by the prosperous Carmichael flour mills. She lived a carefree life until her father died when she was eighteen and, as the oldest of seven children, heavy responsibility fell on her shoulders. Her father had left the family in severe financial straits, and soon afterward they moved to Belfast. Here Carmichael was introduced to city mission work and the “deeper life theology” of “victorious living.” Then came her call to missions.

In 1892 Carmichael heard the words “Go ye” as her missionary call, and one year later, at the age of twenty-four, she was in Japan. But the Japanese language seemed impossible to her, and the missionary community was not the picture of harmony she had envisioned. To her mother she wrote, “We are here just what we are at home—not one bit better—and the devil is awfully busy.... There are missionary shipwrecks of once fair vessels.” Her health was also a problem. To Sherwood Eddy she later confided that she had “broken down from nervous prostration during the very first year of ... service, suffering, as some foreigners do, from what was called Japanese head.” “The climate,” she had written her mother, “is dreadful upon the brain.”³⁶