

SERAMPORE:
TELOS OF THE REFORMATION

by

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ABSTRACT
Serampore: the Telos of the Reformation

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While many biographies of missionary William Carey have been written over the last two centuries, with the exception of John Clark Marshman's "The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward: Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission", published in the mid-nineteenth century, no major work has explored the history of the Serampore Mission founded by Carey and his colleagues. This thesis examines the roots of the Serampore Mission in Reformation theology. Key themes are traced through John Calvin, the Puritans, Jonathan Edwards, and Baptist theologian Andrew Fuller. In later chapters the thesis examines the ways in which these theological themes were worked out in a missiology that was both practical and visionary. The Serampore missionaries' use of organizational structures and technology is explored, and their priority of preaching the gospel is set against the backdrop of their efforts in education, translation, and social reform. A sense is given of the monumental scale of the work which has scarcely equaled down to this day.

For Carita:
Faithful wife
Fellow Pilgrim

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Hooghly River still flows 160 miles from the Ganges to Calcutta and the Bay of Bengal. Small boats negotiate the tidal bore, but the broad river no longer fills with Danish and British sails. On the right bank at Serampore, upriver from Calcutta, the Greek portico of Serampore College looks out over the river towards Barackpore much as it did in the 19th century; but the Serampore mission, once the most renowned Christian endeavor in the world, ceased to exist as an independent organization in 1836. Much of its property was long ago sold to a jute mill to meet the financial needs of the surviving college. Still, every weekday before breakfast, ministerial students walk out the iron gates of the college, turn left along the bank of the Hooghly and stroll past the jute mill to the chapel¹ which 200 years ago echoed with the voices of Joshua Marshman, William Ward, and William Carey. This daily stroll takes them past the spot along the river where the first Baptist convert, Krishna Pal was baptized. While this is of interest to Baptist historians, its significance is broader. Serampore has rightly been called the “cradle of modern missions.”² As such it takes its place alongside Luther’s Wittenberg and Calvin’s Geneva. It is the place where the Protestant Reformation broke out into the wider world.

¹ The current chapel was the original mission house.

² George Howells, *The Story of Serampore and Its College* (Serampore: Orissa Mission Press, 1927), 3.

The Father of Modern Missions

William Carey has been called the “father of modern missions.” The title appears in the first major history of Serampore published in 1859³ by John Clark Marshman who, as the son of Joshua and Hannah Marshman, grew up at the mission. To describe William Carey’s funeral procession he wrote, “He was followed to the grave by all the native Christians, and by many of his Christian brethren of various denominations, anxious to pay the last token of reverence to the father of modern missions.”⁴

This designation is sometimes disputed on the grounds that he was not the *first* missionary of the modern period. For example, Stephen Neill writes, “Books written in English have frequently spoken of William Carey (1761- 1834) as ‘the father of modern missions,’ and of the work he brought into being as the first Protestant mission of modern times. . . [T]his is a misunderstanding; Carey stood, and was conscious of standing, in a noble succession, as the heir of many pioneers in the past.”⁵

Carey certainly was aware of his many predecessors. In the second section of his seminal work *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*,⁶ under the heading “Containing a short Review of former Undertakings for the Conversion of the Heathen,” he mentions the New England Puritans, John Eliot and David Brainerd; “Mr. Ziegenbalg” of the Danish mission to “Tranquebar, on the Coromandel coast in the East Indies . . . ,” the Moravian Brethren who “none of the moderns have equaled . . . in this good work”; and “the late Mr. Wesley” who “lately made an effort in the West Indies.”

³ John Clark Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward*, (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts, 1859), 2:477.

⁴Marshman, 477.

⁵Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 2d ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 222.

⁶Carey, *An Enquiry Into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, 1961), 62-63.

Carey's early biographers were also aware of Serampore's predecessors. John Clark Marshman documents the efforts of both the Danes and the Moravians in India prior to Carey's arrival, and the fervent, if unsuccessful, efforts of David Brown and Charles Grant to stir the Church of England to action. Since Marshman was aware of Carey's predecessors it should be safe to assume that when he referred to Carey as the "father of modern missions" he believed the designation was accurate in some sense beyond simple chronology. Carey's ministry represents a turning-point, a significant hinge in history.

While Stephen Neill rejects the designation "father of modern missions," he agrees that Carey's work represents a turning-point of some sort; he describes it in ethnographic terms: "it marks the entry of the English-speaking world on a large scale into the missionary enterprise—and it has been the English-speaking world which has provided four-fifths of the non-Roman missionaries from the days of Carey until the present time."⁷ This focus on the role of English-speaking missions, while narrowly accurate, is problematic for at least two reasons. If the key is that Carey was an English speaker, the turning point might just as well be represented by John Eliot, or David Brainerd, John Wesley, or even John Thomas who preceded Carey to India. Second, it fails to take into account the way in which Serampore, by the diversity of its activities, the innovation of its structures and methods, and the sheer audacity of its vision provided the pattern for all future Protestant missionary endeavors. It also ignores the explosive growth in Protestant missions from many denominational sources which followed the establishment of *The Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Amongst the Heathen*⁸ which sponsored the Serampore Mission.

The Indian scholar S.D.L. Alagodi captures the epochal importance of Carey when he writes, "In the modern history of Christianity two great men of God, Martin Luther and William Carey, have played a very significant role in ushering in two different eras in the

⁷Neil, 222.

⁸Later named the Baptist Missionary Society.

history of the Christian Church.”⁹ Martin Luther ushered in the Reformation and Carey the modern missionary movement. The latter is the product of the former.

The comparison to Luther is helpful. Luther had important predecessors (Hus, Wycliffe), but there is little doubt that his endeavors mark the dawn of the Reformation. In similar fashion, it is true that Serampore did not spring fully formed from an historical vacuum. Rather, it marks a critical turning point that connects previous developments to future innovations.

Both periods, the dawn of the Reformation and the birth of the modern missionary movement, were marked by extraordinary providential circumstances which amplified the influence of Luther and Carey. Both periods, for example, were marked by an explosion of knowledge about the geography and populations of the world. Columbus was the representative figure of Luther’s times and Captain James Cook that of Carey’s. Both periods were marked by geopolitical developments which aided the spread of Protestant ideas. In Luther’s time the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V was distracted by political difficulties with other European rulers and by the threat of a Turkish invasion which reached the gates of Vienna. These circumstances provided the necessary political space for Protestantism to gain a strong base in northern Europe. In Carey’s day, the *Pax Britannica* provided on a global stage what the *Pax Romana* had provided in apostolic times. Britain’s control of the sea lanes provided communication routes like the system of Roman roads, and their military strength provided security even if, as in apostolic times, the empire’s policies were often anti-missionary. Both Luther’s and Carey’s periods were marked by advances in communications technology. Luther took advantage of Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press. Serampore introduced printing to India and made heavy use of a newer development, periodical literature such as newspapers and journals. Both periods were marked by

⁹S. D. L. Alagodi, "Carey's Experiment in Communal Living at Serampore." *Carey's Obligation and India's Renaissance*. Edited by J. T. K. Daniel and R. E. Hedlund. (Serampore: Serampore College, 1993), 18 Alagodi also quotes J. Herbert Kane, "What Luther was to the Protestant Reformation, Carey was to the Christian Missionary Movement."

important intellectual trends that led to complex interactions between Protestantism and the culture at large; the Renaissance in Luther's time and the Enlightenment in Carey's. Finally, both periods were shaped by new ecclesiastical structures. Luther's period saw the universal pretension of the papacy lose ground before the rise of national churches while Carey's achievement might be interpreted as the vindication of the congregational view of the church.

The accomplishments of the Serampore Trio (Carey, Marshman and Ward) represent the first full flowering of the Protestant Reformation in non-western soil. Their efforts gave rise to the great age of modern missions with results that must have exceeded the wildest dreams of the first generation of the Reformation.

Reformation Principles

Historical discussion often involves debate about the relative importance of continuities and discontinuities. Serampore marks a new stage in the larger process of the Protestant Reformation. Not only is it inconceivable apart from the Reformation, it represents the natural end of that process. Sidney Rooy has written, "The modern missionary movement is rooted in the various branches of Reformation theology. It is based upon a genuine concern for the conversion of souls, the expansion of the church, and the establishment of the kingdom of God."¹⁰ The Serampore Mission was specifically rooted in that line of theology that descends from Calvin through the English Puritans, Jonathan Edwards and English Particular Baptists such as Andrew Fuller. That this line produced Serampore was not just an historical accident. It was the very vitality of Evangelical Calvinism that bore fruit on the banks of the Hooghly.

Of course, there are important connections to previous endeavors which grew out of continental pietism; in particular the Moravian Brethren. The Moravian's radical

¹⁰Sidney H. Rooy, *The Theology of Missions in the Puritan Tradition: A Study of Representative Puritans: Richard Sibbes, Richard Baxter, John Eliot, Cotton Mather & Jonathan Edwards* (Laurel: Audubon Press, 2006), 11.

commitment was inspiring to Carey and he used their example to prod his fellow Baptist ministers to action. In addition, the Moravians communal lifestyle provided a model for the living arrangements of the Serampore mission. This arrangement proved to be flawed and did not outlive the first generation of missionaries, but the Moravian's commitment still speaks to us today. While the influence of the Moravians is beyond dispute, a close look shows that primary *theological* influence on Carey comes from the Evangelical Calvinism of Edwards and Fuller.

Historical Grids

Serampore is the product of Reformation principles. This influence could be traced in different ways. The five *solas* of the Reformation would provide a useful grid. Each can be found to have influenced the development of Serampore in some way. Another grid is provided by historian David Bebbington, who in 1989 published *Evangelicals in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* which has gained critical acceptance as an important standard for understanding the development of Evangelicalism. He held that Evangelicals can be defined by four common characteristics: biblicism, conversionism, crucicentrism, and activism.¹¹ Some of Bebbington's ideas have been contested, especially the proposal that Evangelicalism should be dated from the 1730's, but even where contested they have been the source of fruitful discussion. All four of these characteristics were evident at Serampore and with certain caveats, will be useful to us in examining the development of the Protestant principles that led to the modern missionary movement.

While Bebbington sees a greater discontinuity between Evangelicalism and earlier movements than some scholars feel is warranted,¹² the links between his four characteristics

¹¹For an example of constructive interaction see *The Advent of Evangelicalism* (ed. Haykin and Stewart). Points that come under criticism include the idea that a new view of assurance taught by Jonathan Edwards freed Protestants from excessive introspection to become activists. Another point of concern is the tendency in Bebbington to downplay continuities with the Puritans and the first generations of Reformers and to make too much of connections between 18th century Evangelicalism and the Enlightenment.

¹²It is true that the Revivals in Britain and America led by Whitefield and Edwards involved methodological innovations. The question is whether they represent a significant *theological* innovation that

and the five *solas* of the Reformation are fairly obvious. The 16th century emphasis on *sola scriptura* – the unique and sufficient authority of Scripture – leads to the 18th century views Bebbington calls biblicism. The Reformation insistence on *sola fides*, *solus Christus*, and *sola gratia* in salvation lead to the 18th century’s emphasis on personal conversion and the centrality of the cross of Christ.¹³

The four characteristics are often referred to as the Bebbington quadrilateral. This label reflects the fact that Bebbington, for the most part, does not assign any particular order or precedence to the characteristics. D.A. Carson writes, “Bebbington’s discussion of these categories has much to commend it, however much the labels themselves leave something to be desired. What is missing, I think, is the way evangelicals themselves have often seen an organic wholeness to their beliefs and practices, and that at the center is a profound passion for submitting everything to the Bible. In that sense, what Bebbington calls “biblicism” (an ugly way of putting it) might properly come first.”¹⁴ By insisting on the centrality of biblicism, Carson provides a further link to the five *solas* where *sola scriptura* was seen as the formal principle of the Reformation. It also allows us to see that the four categories can be placed in an order that reflects the inexorable logic of their theological content: the authority of scripture leads to biblical views on salvation; hence crucicentrism and conversionism. The fourth characteristic, activism, grows out of the interplay between the first three characteristics

Activism doesn’t actually have a parallel in the five *solas* but it can be seen as their logical consequence. The unmodified term is unfortunately vague. It might be replaced by *evangelism* or even *missions*. Bebbington presumably chose *activism* to reflect the broad

sets them apart from the Puritans and Calvin. Bebbington argues that the roots of Evangelicalism are to be found in Edwards’s innovative development of the doctrine of assurance. Perhaps it might be better to argue that revivalism grew out of theological tendencies already present among the Puritans and is to be attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit and providential developments such as the growth civil liberties after the Glorious Revolution. The innovation is to be found not so much in theology as in the chosen use of means.

¹³The emphasis on conversion and the cross are, of course, found in Luther and Calvin as well.

¹⁴D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 449-450.

range of activities in which Evangelicals became involved. However, his section on this characteristic makes it clear that evangelism was *the* distinguishing priority of Evangelical activity.¹⁵

Bebbington himself sees a sequential relationship between conversionism and activism. He quotes Jonathan Edwards from *A Narrative of Surprising Conversions*, “Persons, after their own conversion, have commonly expressed an exceeding great desire for the conversion of others. Some have thought they should be willing to die for the conversion of any soul. . . .”¹⁶ Bebbington makes reference to numerous examples of evangelistic zeal in the 18th century and asserts that the spirit of activism led to the modern missionary movement: “. . . the quest for souls generally drove Evangelicals out from the centres of learning to the parishes and to the foreign mission field. The missionary movement of the nineteenth and twentieth century centuries was the fruit of the Evangelical Revival. . . . [A] direct result of the revival was the creation of new missionary societies, beginning with that of the Baptists in 1792, that did so much to make the Christian faith a worldwide religion.”¹⁷

Bebbington argues that Jonathan Edward’s teaching provided Evangelicals with a new basis for assurance. This assurance freed them from the habits of introspection typical of an earlier period and redirected their energies towards greater activism. Whether this thesis is an adequate explanation is beyond the scope of this introduction. Perhaps a more easily defended premise would be that missionary activism grew out of the order of categories we have already suggested. An emphasis on the scriptures led to a biblical understanding of individual conversion through the message of the cross. The experience of conversion naturally led to the desire for the conversion of others. This desire would become an imperative in the light of a “biblicist” interpretation of texts such as Matthew 28:18-20.

¹⁵D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (Great Britain: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 10-12.

¹⁶Bebbington, 10.

¹⁷Ibid., 12.

Serampore and a Positive Calvinism

The influence of each of the five *solas* of the Reformation can be detected at Serampore. The most obvious is *sola scriptura* which was immediately evident in efforts to translate, print, and distribute the Bible. Not as obvious in the popular literature, but equally important is the emphasis on *solus Christus* which was the focus of their evangelistic preaching. *Sola gratia* also played a key role in the thinking of the Serampore Trio. In fact, it is precisely at this point where their example is of critical importance to contemporary missionaries. It speaks to the debate about the role of human methodology in missions and church planting. The five *solas* help place Serampore in the broad flow of the Reformation.

Bebbington's thesis helps further locate Serampore in the somewhat more narrow flow of Evangelical history. However, Carey, Marshman, and Ward were not just Evangelicals—they were Evangelical *Calvinists*—and their Calvinism provided a critical theological safeguard against many of the excesses which developed later in the Evangelical movement. An earlier generation of Particular Baptists had allowed an overly rationalistic approach to theology rob them of evangelistic initiative. With the help of Jonathan Edwards, Particular Baptist leaders from Carey's generation recovered a biblical view of evangelism. It was left to Carey to follow this theological development to its logical conclusion—if the gospel was to be freely offered to Englishmen, it should be offered to the world.

Carey found in the doctrine of God's sovereignty a positive principle. Because God is sovereign his commands must be obeyed. Because God is sovereign obedience will bear fruit. "Expect great things from God! Attempt great things for God!"

This emphasis on active obedience logically leads to one of Carey's great insights: the fulfillment of the Great Commission requires the use of means. The use of means implies the grasping of temporal cultural tools for the building of God's eternal kingdom. Carey and the Serampore team used means which they brought from England, printing for example. At the same time they were sensitive to Indian culture, adopting those forms which they considered compatible with the gospel. Carey, for example, took profound delight in the

beauties of the languages of the Indian sub-continent. The Serampore missionaries were certainly not cultural chauvinists. While they were strongly opposed to the Indian custom of widow burning and intolerant of the caste system, they were equally opposed to the class prejudice which was typical of the English in India. Because their judgments were informed by biblical principle, their policies did not fall neatly on either side of the Indian-English cultural divide.

Abraham Kuyper defined the study of missions as, “The investigation of the most profitable God-ordained method leading to the conversion of those outside of Christ.”¹⁸ The description *God-ordained* implies that the Word of God is not only the content of the cross-cultural message, but it is also the standard in questions of methodology—a cultural regulative principle. Specifically, their strong view of sovereign grace in salvation (*sola gratia*) kept their emphasis on the use of means from descending into a reliance on human efforts and it prevented their emphasis on the conversion of the heathen from descending into mere “decisionism”. Serampore provides a valuable if imperfect model of a mission consciously shaped by a commitment to the principle of *sola scriptura*.

The process of acculturation was not without difficulties. The movement from theology to application is often fraught with difficulties. It is impossible to carry out a concrete missionary project without digging one’s hands into the soil of culture—an inherently messy experience. To begin with, on one level, theology itself is a cultural product.¹⁹ Evangelicals hold to the authority and inerrancy of scripture. God’s Word is unchangeable. But theology itself is a product of man’s interaction with God’s unchangeable Word, and as such, it is both cultural artifact and artificer. What is more, because culture is never static, ministry even in a mono-cultural environment presents significant challenges. These challenges multiply in a cross-cultural environment.

¹⁸J. H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions* (Phillipsburg, NJ: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1960), xix.

¹⁹B. B. Warfield’s development of the doctrine of inerrancy provides a paradigm for thinking about the relationship of the eternal and the temporal which is useful for missiology. This can be contrasted with the Muslim or Mormon views.

This does not require surrender to relativism. At the heart of missionary theology lies the incarnation. The Word by its very nature is meant to be spoken into the world. As Calvin said, “God . . . lisps with us as nurses are wont to do with little children. . . .”²⁰ The Word stoops to be understood—but the Word is still sovereign. In humility, the Word speaks in our fragmented languages without suffering degradation. The Word remains and the world is changed.

The history of the Serampore mission provides ample evidence that theological principles emerging from the Reformation were the driving force behind all its endeavors. The five *solas* and Bebbington’s quadrilateral are traceable at every stage. Moreover, by their insistence on the use of means and engagement with culture, the Serampore Trio helped extend the logic of the Reformation in ways which would allow it to break out to the broader world. .

The *Telos* of the Reformation

Whether or not we choose to call William Carey the father of modern missions, Serampore set the pattern for the global expansion of Evangelical Christianity. More than just the birthplace of modern missions, Serampore represents the *telos* of the Protestant Reformation. The development of the powerful theological ideas unleashed by Luther can be traced in a line that descends from Calvin through the English Puritans, Jonathan Edwards and English Particular Baptists, such as Andrew Fuller, to the Serampore Trio. Carey, Marshman and Ward were not theologians, but they were the very model of theologically-driven practitioners. Their efforts produced the first full flowering of the Reformation on non-western soil. These same efforts helped shape modern India and gave birth to a global Protestant Christianity.

²⁰John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (New Haven: Hezekiah Howe, 1816), 1.1.13.

CHAPTER 2

REFORMATION ROOTS

The Paulerspury Horticultural Society hosts its annual flower show in August. The drive up from Heathrow takes about an hour and twenty minutes following the M1. If August is not convenient there is a Jumble Sale in March or the Summer Fete in June complete with tug-of-war competitions. Proceeds benefit the village church named for St. James the Great.

Except for a red phone booth in the middle of the village, it is possible to imagine that Paulerspury hasn't changed since William Carey studied at the village school in the 1760's. Paulerspury is now a bedroom community; rail connections allow residents to commute to London during the week and still raise their families in the village that shaped Carey's early years. The same fields that attracted Carey as a boy start just beyond the thatched houses.

William Carey was actually born in Pury's End (August 17, 1761), a half mile walk across a fence-lined dale. The cottage where he was born was pulled down in the 1960's, but the lane is still lined with cottages almost identical to the place of his birth. The square tower of St. James the Great, visible from Pury's End, must have served as a navigation marker for William's wanderings. He showed an early fascination with the natural world as he explored the countryside. His sister Mary wrote:

Of birds and all manner of insects he had numbers. When he was from home, the birds were committed to my care. . . . Being more than five years younger, I was indulged by him in all his enjoyments. Though I often killed them by kindness, yet when he saw my grief, he always permitted me the pleasure of serving them again; and often took me over the dirtiest roads to get at a plant or insect. He never walked out, when quite a boy, without making observation on the hedges as he passed; and when he took up a plant of any kind he always examined it with care.¹

¹Samuel Pearce Carey, *William Carey* (London: The Wakeman Trust), 18.

The church provided more than a geographical center for William Carey's life. It had been the focus of his family's life since his grandfather Peter had settled in Paulerspury and married Ann Flecknoe in 1722. As a tannery weaver, Peter Carey was surely poor, but probably well educated since he was chosen as the school teacher and parish clerk. Peter and Ann had three sons, Peter, Edmund and William, two of whom became school teachers as well. William, a promising teacher, died when he was twenty and left behind a grieving father who followed him to the grave in only two weeks. Peter junior joined the army and participated in the siege of Quebec with General Wolfe. Edmund, the father of "the father of modern missions," eventually filled the role of teacher and town clerk. Locals still point to the spot in the second pew where young William is said to have sat under his father's watchful eyes as he spoke from the pulpit.

Paulerspury might seem an isolated place for the future "father of modern missions" to spend his formative years, but the village was not entirely cut off from the currents of history. Watling Street, an ancient road from the Roman period, ran by just a few hundred yards from the village. Some locals believe that the Battle of Watling Street, Queen Boudicca's last stand against the Roman legions took place in the vicinity. In Elizabethan times Sir Walter Raleigh may have visited the town. His wife, Bess Throckmorton, was a lady-in-waiting to Queen Elizabeth. Bess's father, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, had acquired the manor at Paulerspury. Bess's marriage to Raleigh was performed without the queen's consent and resulted in his imprisonment in the tower of London. Nonetheless, local legend has it that Elizabeth visited them at the Paulerspury manor.²

² Paulerspury Parish Council, *Paulerspury Parish Website*; available at <http://paulerspury.org/content/view/18/49/>; Internet; accessed December, 2010.

By William Carey's time the most exotic visitor to Paulerspury might have been his uncle Peter returning from battling the French in what is now Canada. However, news of the larger world reached Paulerspury and the other villages of Northamptonshire through newspapers from Leicester and Northampton. For example, in 1766 a naval veteran, James Cook, who, like Peter Carey, had served under General Wolfe began to make news. Cook was commissioned by the Royal Society to sail to the Pacific to observe the solar transit of Venus. By the time William was eighteen, Captain Cook had made three voyages of exploration that changed European perceptions of the larger world. The publication of Cook's journals astounded an eager public with accounts of the South Sea Islands.

While Carey wandered the lanes and fields around Paulerspury, his mind reached out to the wider world. His interest was not limited to botany; he showed an early fascination with languages and geography. He was so fascinated by the voyages of Columbus that his playmates called him by the name of the great discoverer.³ When at fourteen years of age Carey left Paulerspury to serve as apprentice to Clarke Nichols, a shoemaker in nearby Piddington, he could not have imagined that his journey would eventually take him beyond his High Church roots and to places as distant as those explored by Captain Cook.

Religious Trends

The church at Paulerspury reflects the history of English Christianity. The Domesday Book mentions the presence of a priest at Paulerspury in the late 11th century. The church of Saint James the Great dates from the 12th century. The Lord of Paulerspury Manor had the

³S. P. Carey, 18.

right to appoint a priest to a church benefice as early as 1229.⁴ Carey's family connection with the church would have given them a certain respectability in spite of their poverty. He might have followed his father as a schoolmaster and parish clerk, but currents in the spiritual life of England and in the geopolitics of the world were to converge and sweep him from the relative isolation of the midlands to the leadership of a movement as great as that of the Reformation itself.

At the dawn of the Reformation, Paulerspury must have seemed far removed from the great events which were changing the face of Europe. Before the Chunnel and Ryan Air, news of Erasmus's New Testament, of Luther's thesis nailed to the Wittenberg door, of Ulrich Zwingli's death in battle, of Turkish armies at the gates of Vienna must have seemed like distant rumors. But England was connected to the continent by the institutions of the Catholic Church, the interrelationships of Europe's royal families, and by the revolution in communications produced by the invention of the printing press. Changes in the shape of the institutional church, the decay of the feudal model of society, and the rise of commercialism might have been slow in arriving in Paulerspury, but they did arrive.

Of course, changes that began on the European continent took on uniquely English forms when they crossed the channel. The English Reformation, launched to facilitate the serial marriages of Henry VIII, began with murder and proceeded through waves and counter-waves of persecution and bloodshed until the reign of Elizabeth. While Henry's motives may have been suspect it became clear that great issues of the gospel itself and the shape of the church and its relationship to the state were at stake.

The peoples of Scotland, Wales and Ireland were taken up in the convulsions. Covenanters and Puritans struggled not just against the Catholicism but against spiritual

⁴ Paulerspury Parish Council.

apathy in the ranks of the Reformed. The Puritan vision of a pious church and society gave birth to the Commonwealth of Oliver Cromwell and the colonies of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay. The collapse of these social experiments opened the way for new models pioneered by Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Baptist dissenters.

In England, by William Carey's time, the established church still retained considerable sway, but the trends were against its domination. A series of spiritual awakenings had swept across English-speaking lands. George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards had shaken the world with their preaching and, "For thirty of Carey's English years John Wesley rode everywhere for his many daily preachings, 'paying more turnpikes than any other in the land'. Carey, as a lad of twelve, may have seen him at seventy in Towcester; or more likely a few years later in Northampton and Leicester."⁵ Great events on the stage of world history conspired to make Britain the leading power on the world stage at the same time that the English Reformation was succeeding in freeing its soteriology from its erastian ecclesiology. Perhaps it is true that church history is best studied as a branch of systematic theology under the heading of divine providence.

Early Protestant Limitations

While the Protestant Reformation did not begin as a missionary movement it produced the greatest global expansion of Christianity in history. This expansion, however, was late in coming. Significant missionary endeavors did not arise from Protestant sources until the New England Puritans began working with the Indian nations in the middle of the 17th century, more than one hundred years after Luther nailed his theses on the Wittenberg

⁵S. P. Carey, 8.

door. This delay can be explained by numerous circumstances. During the early years of the Reformation, Catholic national powers were in the ascendant and dominated the trade routes of the world. In this same period, the Reformation required an intense focus by the reformers to consolidate the theology of the movement and to begin to establish new institutional forms. This was done in an atmosphere complicated by political upheaval and constant war. At times, the very survival of the Reformation was in question. It is difficult to think of expansion in the midst of an existential struggle.

Protestant missionary efforts were initially hampered because they did not possess obvious replacements for the Catholic institutions that had been instrumental in the expansion of the church in its first one and one half millennia.⁶ The monastic orders had been the driving force behind the earlier endeavors. Patrick in the fifth century and Francis Xavier in the sixteenth enjoyed the backing of organizations that had the support of papal authority and resources to drive the project forward.

Even today Protestants question from where missionary authority and backing are to be derived. Catholics had a ready answer: from the apostolic church. The papacy had universalist pretensions: all of Christendom united under the authority of one bishop. But from where does authority and backing derive after the universal church has fragmented into national churches and national churches dissolved into denominations and then independent local congregations?

Catholic apologists were not shy about pointing out the weakness. Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621) wrote:

Heretics are never said to have converted either pagans or Jews to the faith, but only to have perverted Christians. But in this one century the Catholics have converted

⁶Kenneth Scott Latourette, *History of the Expansion of Christianity* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1944), 3:25–30.

many thousands of heathens in the new world. Every year a certain number of Jews are converted and baptized at Rome by Catholics who adhere in loyalty to the Bishop of Rome; and there are also some Turks who are converted by the Catholics both at Rome and elsewhere. The Lutherans compare themselves to the apostles and evangelists; yet though they have among them a very large number of Jews, and in Poland and Hungary have the Turks as their neighbors, they have hardly converted so much as a handful.⁷

This criticism was largely true. That the Catholic position was undermined by the fact that the ‘many thousands of converts in the new world’ were converted at the tip of the sword offered no consolation at all.

Given the obstacles, it is not surprising that some Protestants developed an anti-missions theology. Johann Gerhard (d.1637), for example, held that the Great Commission was only incumbent upon the original apostles. “In their day the offer of salvation had been made to all nations; there’s no need for the offer to be made a second time to those who had already refused it.”⁸ This view was still prevalent in many quarters in the late 18th century when William Carey began his ministry. In fact, Carey specifically rebutted this view in his great missionary pamphlet, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*.

In spite of this slow start, missions as known today, grew out of the Protestant Reformation:

[By] what seemed a strange anomaly, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed a fresh surge of life in the Christianity of Western Europe. Through it Christianity permeated the life of that region more effectively and brought it nearer the ideals set forth in the New Testament than in any earlier time. From that surge issued a missionary movement of unprecedented dimensions. The faith was planted among more peoples than had ever known it. By the middle of the eighteenth century no other religion had had as wide a geographic expansion as Christianity. Moreover, earnest Christians fought the evils attendant upon the chronic wars between rival dynasties and sought to check the exploitation of peoples by European conquerors,

⁷Stephen Neil, *A History of Christian Missions*, 2d ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 188-189.

⁸Neil, 189.

explorers, merchants, and settlers and make the contacts with Europeans accrue to the benefit of non-Europeans.⁹

Before these results could be achieved, Protestants had to develop a missionary theology and cultural vehicles to carry it.

The Power of Theology

The Reformation had a transformative impact on church and society. It was motivated in part by deep concerns about corruption in both of these areas. But it should be understood that the Reformation was first about ideas—specifically theological ideas, biblical ideas. One historian writes of the period, “Ideas mattered profoundly; they had independent power of their own, and they could be corrosive and destructive. The most corrosive ideas of all were to be found in the Bible, an explosive unpredictable force in every age.”¹⁰ These Biblical ideas corroded social and ecclesiastical forms which emerged from the middle ages, but these same ideas brought new order out of the ensuing chaos.

The theological ideas of the Reformation are often summarized as the five *solas*; *sola scriptura*, *sola fides*, *sola gratia*, *solus Christus* and *solus Deo gloria*. Reformed thinking produced a rich and profound theology and helped shape the modern world through many additional ideas such as the priesthood of all believers, the church as an assembly of believers, and the sanctity of all vocations. But most of these ideas can be traced back to the five *solas* in some fashion.

⁹Latourette, 166.

¹⁰Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation* (New York: Viking, 2003), xxi.

Each of the five *solas* can be seen as a correction of Catholic error. For example, *sola scriptura* affirmed that the Bible alone was authoritative in matters of faith and practice. This represented a rejection of papal and conciliar authority. *Sola fides* proclaimed that salvation was by faith alone. This countered the Catholic assertion that salvation was the result of faith plus works as defined by the church. *Sola gratia* asserted that salvation is of God's grace alone. It denied the value of any human merit in salvation, and as Luther and Calvin taught, this principle denies that the salvation of individuals is synergistic. In other words, God acts alone based on his sovereign will and power apart from all human cooperation.

A simple summary highlights critical theological shifts on three important axes. First, authority was now seen to be vested in the scriptures and not the church. Second, salvation was by grace through faith and not by works as defined by the church. Third, inevitably, given the first two shifts, the nature of the church itself was reinterpreted in numerous ways. What was perhaps not seen initially with perfect clarity was how the force of these ideas would eventually drive Protestantism outward as missionary religion.

Sola Scriptura: Back to Biblical Authority

The five *solas* do not exhaust the theological innovation of the Reformation. In some ways, it is best to see the upheaval not as theological innovation so much as a return to the original teachings of scripture. This biblical renaissance was facilitated by two cultural developments which eventually had repercussions in Serampore and beyond. The first was the rise of humanistic scholarship. Scholars such as Erasmus of Rotterdam were leading a movement that insisted on the value of ancient literature. Humanism originally was not a

philosophy to be contrasted with Christianity. It was more a literary movement which declared “*ad fontes*”: a return to original sources. Originally, its purpose was the refinement of rhetoric along classical lines. Petrarch and Boccaccio promoted Cicero as the very model of eloquence and in the process gave birth to Renaissance literature.

Erasmus led the way in applying humanistic techniques to the study of scripture. A new seriousness in the study of the original languages led to Erasmus’ edition of the Greek New Testament that would serve as the basis of Luther’s groundbreaking translation of the Bible into the German vernacular. What began as a movement among the intellectual elite who had the means and leisure to polish their classical languages and refine their Ciceronian rhetoric, in the end had the effect of making the scriptures available in the language of German peasants.

This transformation in scholarly circles was abetted by the technological advance of printing. The introduction of movable type around 1439 by Johannes Gutenberg made possible the mass production of books. This produced an intellectual revolution that made itself felt in the fields of religion, science, and the arts. The effects of this revolution are ongoing and can be seen in our current transition to what some call an information society.

The effects on theology were profound. Gutenberg’s first major production was the 42-line Bible commonly called the Gutenberg Bible. This masterpiece was not only the first book ever printed, it is also still one of the most beautiful. Bibles suddenly became accessible to people beyond the confines of monastery walls. This technological innovation, combined with the emphasis on translating scripture into the common languages of Europe made the Scriptures a powerful force in a European culture dissatisfied with the Catholic Church and its corruptions.

It was against this back drop that the Reformation asserted the doctrine of *sola scriptura*. This doctrine involved the denial of the authority of the church over scripture. The Catholic Church had claimed that the scriptures were a product of the church as an institution. Protestantism asserted the opposite, that the church was a product of scripture. The Protestant theology of scripture declared its sufficiency in matters of salvation and sanctification. And it asserted the perspicuity of scripture. That is to say, the reformers held that while there are certainly things difficult to understand in the Bible, in matters that are essential the Scriptures are clear and able to be understood by all. While intellectual developments such as the recovery of the original languages and an insistence on a hermeneutic dependent on the normal canons of reason were critical, Calvin insisted that ultimately the Scriptures are made clear by the Spirit himself.

This change of understanding would drive the Reformation. As the scriptures became the possession of common people entire societies were transformed. The same principle would be the driving force behind modern missions. Carey's translations of the Bible into the languages of the Indian sub-continent would herald a new era in biblical scholarship, and foreshadow ongoing efforts which have produced translations in every major language on earth.

A Theology of Conversion

This revolution in the theology of the scriptures was accompanied by changes in soteriology – the doctrine of salvation. *Sola scriptura* is often called the formal principle of the Reformation since it is the basis for what is known as the material principle, *sola fides*. Actually, *sola fides*, *sola gratia* and *solus Christus* are primarily soteriological principles.

Men are saved by God's active and sovereign *grace*, through *faith* apart from works which takes as its object Christ who atoned for sins through his cross.

Both Luther and Calvin had experienced a radical personal conversion. Salvation was no longer mediated by the church, but by Christ himself. In the middle ages, the church had become something of a spiritual mafia. It controlled the access to salvation by controlling access to the merits of the saints, and rites such as the mass. Now the spiritual equation was modified. Under the Catholic Church justification was the product of combining faith and good works; good works as defined by the church. Sanctification produced salvation. The Reformation inverted the process. Faith was seen to result in justification and good works. Sanctification flowed from salvation.

This reformation of doctrine produced a reformation of practice in the church life. The accretion of hundreds of years was stripped away by the solvent of scripture. The mass was removed from the center of church life and replaced by the public exposition of the Bible. The reformation in Zurich began in 1519 when Huldrych Zwingli began a series of sermons in which he taught through the gospel of Matthew in systematic fashion. Expository preaching was soon common among the other reformers. Calvin, in Geneva, developed the habit of speaking without notes directly from the biblical text after a period of study of the passage in question. He favored a plain unadorned style that eschewed shows of erudition in favor of a simple clarification of the text. The primary focus of these expositions was pastoral. The reformers were concerned for the conversion and the growth in grace of their hearers.

It is a small step from evangelistic preaching to missions. The five *solas* push irresistibly in that direction. William Carey understood the Reformation in this way,

“Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, Bucer, Martyr, and many others, stood up against all the rest of the world; they preached, and prayed, and wrote; and nations agreed one after another to cast off the yoke of popery, and to embrace the doctrine of the gospel.”¹¹ This comes from the chapter in his *Enquiry* titled “*Containing a short Review of Former Undertakings for the Conversion of the Heathen*” where Carey interprets the entire Reformation as missions!

A Theological Road Block

Both Luther and Calvin stressed the sovereignty of God in salvation. Not only were they convinced that the scriptures clearly taught that salvation was monergistic, they saw that given a biblical view of human depravity, man’s only hope was to be found in God’s sovereign grace. However, abstracted from its rich biblical context, the principle of God’s sovereignty in salvation would be seen in the future by some as implying a prohibition, not just of missions, but of evangelistic preaching itself. Hyper-Calvinism would maintain that if only the elect can come to Christ it was wrong to make a clear offer of the gospel to sinners. The stultifying effects of this view would kill evangelistic preaching and missions. But this was not Calvin’s position and it is not legitimately derived from his theology or his practice.

A key to the matter is found in Calvin’s teaching on divine providence. Paul Helm writes, “Providence is God's ceaseless, meticulous care for and control of not only the forces and powers of the natural order but also of the various orders of his creatures, and especially of mankind, 'the noblest work of God', and, within the human race, especially of his

¹¹William Carey, *An Enquiry Into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, 1961), 61.

church.”¹² God’s providence works through secondary causes. God is the first cause, but he uses elements of his creation—secondary causes—to bring about his will. Calvin refers to these secondary causes as means. God is not limited to secondary causes. In other words, he can work miraculously. But we should not fail to see that what God achieves through secondary causes, the ordinary use of means, is just as much the work of God as direct miraculous intervention.

Calvin argues that God’s sovereignty does not relieve us of responsibility or the need to exercise “due prudence.” His is not the determinism of the Stoics. He argues against those who take the doctrine of providence as an argument against the effectiveness of believers’ prayers, and he rejects the position of those who would, “. . . cancel all those plans which have to do with the future, as militating against God’s providence, which, without their being consulted, has decreed what he would have happen. Then whatever does happen now, they so impute to God’s providence that they close their eyes to the man who clearly has done it.”¹³

We must understand, as Helm writes, that:

God works by means. What will happen is not fated to happen but happens as the result of the use of means. If I am destined to post the letter, then I am destined to use the appropriate means to post it. This has for Calvin, a consequence that may seem surprising. He says: ‘wherefore, with reference to the time future, since the events of things are as yet, hidden and unknown, everyone ought to be as intent upon the performance of his duty as if nothing whatever had been decreed concerning the issue in each particular case.’¹⁴

This understanding has important implications for preaching and missions. Belief in God’s sovereignty should lead not to vain speculation, but to willing obedience of his

¹²Paul Helm, *The Providence of God* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 104.

¹³John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (New Haven: Hezekiah Howe, 1816), 1.17.215.

¹⁴Helm, 104-105.

commands. It has pleased God to save men by the foolishness of preaching. And he has called his church to preach the gospel:

Calvin did not limit the preaching of the gospel to those considered to be elect. He explains his views more fully in his treatise on predestination: Since we do not know who belongs to the number of the predestined and who does not, it befits us so to feel as to wish that all be saved. So it will come about that, whoever we come across, we shall study to make him a sharer of peace . . . even severe rebuke will be administered like medicine, lest they should perish or cause others to perish. But it will be for God to make it effective in those whom He foreknew and predestined.¹⁵

These principles would need to be rediscovered by Baptist leaders of Carey's generation, but it is important to recognize that the principles of the Reformation when properly understood move in the direction of Great Commission obedience.

Calvin, Evangelism and Missions

Calvin preached and defended the gospel. Against all stereotypes, he also called believers to active evangelism based on compassion for fellow human beings. A definitive citation is found in Calvin's commentary on the book of Acts:

Therefore, in keeping with the teaching Luke gives here, let us learn that we constitute a true church of God when we try our best to increase the number of believers. And then each one of us, where we are, will apply all our effort to instructing our neighbors and leading them to the knowledge of God, as much by our words as by our showing them good examples and good behavior. That is also why holy Scripture exhorts us so often to win to God those who remain alienated from His church, for we see unbelievers as poor lost sheep. Our Lord has not given us insight into His truth for our advantage alone, but for sharing it with others. Because we see them as madmen casting themselves into hell, we must, to the extent we can, prevent them from doing so and procure their salvation. That, I tell you, is the zeal all Christians must have if they are not to limit themselves just to the public worship of

¹⁵Ray Van Neste, *John Calvin on Evangelism and Missions*, quoted from John Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, trans. J. K. S. Reid (London: James Clarke and Co., 1961), 138; available from <http://wwwFOUNDERS.org/journal/fj33/article2.html>; Internet; accessed December 2010.

God. They are to seek to encourage everyone to come willingly and affiliate with our Lord Jesus Christ so that there will be only one God, one doctrine and one gospel. Let us be so closely conjoined that we will all be able to speak with one voice as we call upon God our Father. Unless we do that, we give a clear indication that we have scarcely learned anything in the school of our Savior Jesus Christ. Each of us must extend our hand to our neighbor and encourage one another to grow more and more in the knowledge of God's truth, which He has been pleased to reveal to us" (Sermons on the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 1-7. p. 335).¹⁶

Paul Helms provides a series of quotations from Calvin which demonstrates his commitment to evangelism and missions and foreshadow in some ways the missionary theology of the Particular Baptists. For example, Carey's later emphasis on God's providential guidance in missions is anticipated by Calvin:

[The meaning of this metaphor] is, that an opportunity of promoting the gospel had presented itself. For as an opportunity of entering is furnished when the door is opened, so the servants of the Lord make advances when an opportunity is presented. The door is shut, when no prospect of usefulness is held out. Now as, on the door being shut it becomes us to enter upon a new course rather than by farther efforts to weary ourselves to no purpose by useless labour. So where an opportunity presents itself of edifying, let us consider that by the hand of God a door is opened to us for introducing Christ there, and let us not withhold compliance with so kind an indication from God.¹⁷

Calvin also anticipates Carey's emphasis on duty as a motivation to missionary endeavor:

Isaiah shows that it is our duty to proclaim the goodness of God to every nation. While we exhort and encourage others, we must not at the same time sit down in indolence, but it is proper that we set an example before others; for nothing can be more absurd than to see lazy and slothful men who are exciting other men to praise God.¹⁸

This is the very heartbeat of missionary activism. The following passage from Calvin almost might be taken as a description of William Carey's character:

¹⁶John Calvin, *Sermons on the Acts of the Apostles: Chapters 1-7*, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2008), 335-336. This quotation was suggested to me by James E. Adams who uses it in his *Decisional Regeneration Vs. Divine Regeneration*.

¹⁷Quotes by Paul Helm in this section are all from his chapter on Calvin, *A. M. Toplady and the Bebbington Thesis*, in Michael A. G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart, ed., *The Advent of Evangelicalism*, (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2008), 205. This quote is from Calvin's Commentary on 2 Corinthians 2:12.

¹⁸Helm in *Advent of Evangelicalism*, 206, quoting Calvin's Commentary on Isaiah 12:5.

So at this day, God seems to enjoin a thing impossible to be done, when he requires his gospel to be preached everywhere in the whole world, for the purpose of restoring it from death to life. For we see how great is the obstinacy of nearly all men, and what numerous and powerful methods of resistance Satan employs; so that, in short, all the ways of access to these principles are obstructed. Yet it behooves individuals to do their duty, and not yield to impediments; and, finally, our endeavours and our labours shall by no means fail of that success, which is not yet apparent.¹⁹

This passage and prayer anticipates Carey's call in the *Enquiry* to have compassion for the lost:

[T]he godly will be filled with such an ardent desire to spread the doctrines of religion, that every one not satisfied with his own calling and his personal knowledge will desire to draw others along with him. And indeed nothing could be more inconsistent with the nature of faith than that deadness which would lead a man to disregard his brother, and keep the light of knowledge choked up within his own breast.

Since you desire all men to acknowledge you as Saviour of the world, through the redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ, may those who do not know him, being in darkness and captive to ignorance and error—may they by the light of your Holy Spirit and the preaching of your gospel, be led into the way of salvation, which is to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.²⁰

It is true that Calvin taught that the Great Commission itself was only incumbent on the first generation of Apostles. In his *Enquiry*, Carey demolishes this point of view. But before Calvin is too quickly censured on this point, it should be understood that the two were writing in different historical contexts. Calvin was intent on undermining, not world evangelism, but the apostolic pretensions of the papacy. In spite of his statements on the Great Commission, Calvin's writings reveal a missionary theology which foreshadows Carey's in many ways.

¹⁹Helm in *Advent of Evangelicalism*, 206, quoting Calvin's Commentary on Genesis 17:23.

²⁰Helm in *Advent of Evangelicalism*, 207, quoting Calvin's Commentary on Isaiah 2:3.

From Theology to Mission Endeavor

Not only does Calvin's missionary theology foreshadow Carey, but also his dissatisfaction with mere theoretical exposition; his theology drove him to seek avenues for practical obedience. Under Calvin's leadership, Geneva became "the hub of a vast missionary enterprise" and "a dynamic center or nucleus from which the vital missionary energy it generated radiated out into the world beyond." Protestant refugees from all over Europe fled to Geneva; they came not merely for safety, but also to learn from Calvin the doctrines of the Reformation so they could return home to spread the true gospel.²¹

Calvin often met with the other pastors in Geneva. A partial record of those meetings is found in the *Register of the Company of Pastors* which, in April of 1555, mentions for the first time men sent out "to evangelize Foreign Parts." The register records the names of 88 men sent out but this is not a complete accounting. In 1562, religious wars broke out that made it dangerous to continue recording the names of those sent. "In one year, 1561, though the *Register* mentions only twelve missionaries, other sources indicate that at least 142 missionaries were sent!" Missionaries were sent to Italy, Germany, Scotland, England, and France. Many were martyred. On August 25, 1556, The *Register* records that M. Pierre Richier and M. Guillaume were sent as ministers to Brazil. This mission met with failure, but it succeeds in disproving that Calvin's theology or practice was anti-missions.²² To what degree Carey was directly influenced by Calvin is not easy to determine. Whatever the case may be, it is clear that in Calvin's period, while the birth of the modern missionary movement was many years in the future, the weight of Reformation theology inclined towards evangelism and missions.

²¹Van Neste.

²²Quotations and information in this paragraph drawn from Van Neste.

CHAPTER 3

PURITAN EVANGELISM

In 1794, tigers carried off more than twenty men in the Sundarbans in the vicinity of the salt works at Debhatta.¹ In Carey's day, this mangrove forest covered more than 6000 square miles along the Bay of Bengal in what is now west Bengal India and southern Bangladesh. Once filled with villages and hamlets, the region had been depopulated by the Mugs:² raiders from the Burmese province of Aracan who took advantage of the power vacuum created by the decline of the Mughal rulers in the 18th century. To repopulate the region, the government offered rent-free land to those who would cultivate it.

That William Carey felt compelled to bring his family not long after their arrival in India to this desolate forest to the south and east of Calcutta is a clear indication of the dire financial situation they faced. Carey had travelled to India with his family and a colleague, Dr. John Thomas, who promptly wasted the fund which was to have been for their support. Failing to find any support among the expatriate community in Calcutta, and having no quick way to communicate with his supporters in England, his situation was desperate. "I am in a

¹Terry G. Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey* (Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2000), 25-26.

²John Clark Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts, 1859), 1:66.

strange land, alone, with no Christian friend, a large family, with nothing to supply their wants.”³

Carey’s only option was to take advantage of the government offer of rent-free land in the Sundarbans. Carey set out with his family in a boat to make the forty mile journey. After several days on the waterways, just as their meager provisions were exhausted, they spied a European man on the bank. While not a Christian, Mr. Short offered them shelter in his bungalow while Carey built huts for the family.

This period in Carey’s life represents one of the great epics of missionary endurance. Before the family would find a permanent home in Serampore in 1799, they would endure extreme poverty, the death of their son Peter, and the descent of Carey’s wife Dorothy into violent insanity. In his isolation and distress, Carey found strength and encouragement from what might seem an unlikely source. From a half a world away, the writings and ministry of the New England pastor, Jonathan Edwards, consoled and guided him.

The Last Puritan

Carey was an avid reader and his journal gives an indication of his predilections. While there is little evidence of firsthand knowledge of Calvin’s *Institutes*, it is clear that he read widely from Puritans such as Bunyan, Witherspoon, and Flavel. He showed his high estimation of the Puritans by including John Eliot and John Sergeant in his list of missionary predecessors in his *Enquiry*.⁴ But Carey was especially drawn to David Brainerd and Jonathan Edwards who both served as missionaries to the Indians on the Massachusetts

³Marshman, 64.

⁴William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, 1961), 36.

frontier. Edwards, perhaps more than anyone else outside of Carey's immediate circle, was responsible for the birth of modern missions.

Jonathan Edwards has been called the last Puritan. His theology, which was innovative in many ways, can also be seen as the capstone of Puritan thinking. It was this theology that lay behind the Great Awakening and it was instrumental in the revival of Baptist life in England that led to the launch of the mission to India. But Carey's letters and journal make it clear that he ministered to Carey in a very personal way during those critical early years in India.

The first way Edwards influenced Carey was by publishing David Brainerd's journal. Though he died at the early age of 29 of tuberculosis, Brainerd's zeal for the salvation of the Indians became a touchstone for Carey and those who followed in his steps. Brainerd had been a close friend of Edwards and he spent the last period of his illness in Edwards' home.

In his own journal, Carey wrote of his struggles during the first years in India. On April 19, 1794, he enumerates his frustrations from the time he sailed from England. The entry gives insight into his life in India - and his admiration for Brainerd:

Since that I have had hurrying up and down; a five months imprisonment with carnal Men on board the Ship, five more learning the Language; my Munshi not understanding English sufficiently to interpret my preaching—[My Family my accusers, and hinderers,] My Colleague separated from me, Long delays, and few opportunities for Social Worship—no Woods to retire to like Brainerd for fear of Tygers . . .—no Earthly thing to depend upon, or Earthly Comfort; except Food and Raiment; Well I have God, and his word is sure; and the Superstitions of the Heathen were a Million times more deeply rooted—and the Examples of the Europeans, a Million times Worse than they are; if I were deserted by all, and persecuted by all. Yet my hope, fixed on the sure word will rise superior to all obstructions, and Triumph over all trials; God's Cause will triumph, and I shall come out of all trials as Gold purified by fire—Was much humbled today by reading Brainerd—O What a Disparity betwixt me and him; he always constant, I unconstant as the wind . . .⁵

⁵Carter, 25-26.

Brainerd's example may have influenced Carey's strategy. Like Brainerd, Carey was concerned to acquire fluency in the languages of the people he sought to win and to provide the scriptures and evangelical literature for his converts. He also showed concern for the material well-being of the Indians by attempting to introduce agricultural techniques. But beyond all else, it was Brainerd's self-sacrifice that provided an example to Carey. The snowy forests of New England must have seemed like another world to Carey as he suffered in the sweltering jungle; but Brainerd's persistence, his luminous testimony which grew brighter as his physical strength faded, filled Carey with resolve.

Jonathan Edward's influence on Carey went beyond that provided by Brainerd's journal. Edward's writings, especially his published sermons, provided spiritual sustenance during those first difficult years in India. Isolated from European company, Carey missed the opportunity to join in "publick worship". While Edwards was not his only reading, journal entries from the first few years of Carey's mission show that in a sense, through his sermons, Edwards pastored Carey in these difficult years. For example, while still at sea, Carey wrote this entry for June 28, 1793:

A very heavy swell so that the Ship rolled much and some of us were Sick again – for this week past have seen Shearwaters & mother Carey's Chickens—and the 16th vast numbers of Porpoises were seen and a Calm succeeded on the 24th saw a number of flying fish—have begun to write Bengali—and read Edward's Sermons—Perlegs Cowper's Poems—mind tranquil and serene—I have of late found my mind more impressed than ordinary with the importance of the work upon which I am going—God grant that I may feel it more & more.⁶

⁶Carter, 4.

On January 26th, 1794, Carey wrote, “Lord’s Day—all the morning I had a most unpleasant time, but at last found some pleasure in reading Edwards *on the Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners*, Then went to visit our congregation of Natives again . . .”⁷

At times, Carey’s language seems to show the influence of Jonathan Edwards and his aesthetic theology. In the quote above it is notable that he speaks of *pleasure* in reading the sermon. While the point should not be overemphasized, other words such as *edification* or *blessing* were available to him. Another example can be found in the Journal entry from July 7th 1793 while still aboard ship, “Lord’s Day—a pleasant and I hope profitable one; our Congregation increased by one—had much sweetness and enjoyment of God.”⁸ On March 5th, 1794 he writes, “I want Wisdom to know how to direct all my concerns, and fortitude, and affectionate concern for the glory of God, and Faith and holiness in all its branches . . .”⁹ The themes of God’s glory and the impact of religion on the affections may not have been unique to Edwards, but it is difficult, given Carey’s many mentions of his writings, to not perceive his influence on Carey’s vocabulary.

Edwards’ sermons seemed to have filled the need for spiritual encouragement once met by meeting with his friends. The days of meeting with fellow pastors such as Fuller, Sutcliff, and Ryland for prayer, fasting, and reading of the scriptures were now a distant memory. Carey’s loneliness was expressed in his journal. On March 8th 1794 he wrote:

Felt much remains of Dullness and indisposition to the things of God. I see now of the Value of Christian Society. —When I had that advantage I often felt that visiting a friend was like throwing Oil upon the fire, or like as Iron sharpeneth Iron, so have the

⁷Ibid., 12.

⁸Ibid., 5.

⁹Ibid., 17.

Countenances of my friends stirred me up to an holy activity and diligence in the things of God.¹⁰

On the next day he found encouragement in Edwards:

This has been one of the most pleasant Sabbaths I have ever enjoyed since I have been in this Country. Spent most of the day in Family Exercises, particularly had much enjoyment in reading Edward's Sermon upon, "The manner in which the salvation of the soul is to be sought"—through the Whole Day enjoyed pleasure & and Profit—¹¹

The first days of April of 1794 found Carey struggling with numerous difficulties and depression. "These three Days have not all been favourable to the Growth of Grace. The Company of four of the first Gentlemen in the Settlement tho Civil, Genteel, and kind is yet unfriendly to the Work of God within . . ." ¹² On the 4th he wrote, "This Day very much dejected, my own Barrenness and the providential Delays which I meet with, are a weight which depresses My soul, I make so little progress in the Bengali Language, and I am so unsettled and so Barren. . . ." ¹³ On the 5th he writes:

How Wicked is the Heart of Man, and what a Curse it be to be wholly under its wicked Dominion . . . This awful Spirit so prevails in me that I can scarcely tell whether I have the Grace of God or not . . . but be it as it may, I am resolved to spend & and be spent in the Work of my Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁴

However, on the 6th of April the darkness lifted:

Had some sweetness to day; especially in reading Edward's Sermon, "the Most High a Prayer Hearing God" —What a spirit of genuine piety flows thro all that great Man's Works—I hope I have caught a little fresh fire to Day—but how desirable, and important it is that God would constantly fan the heavenly Flame . . . ¹⁵

¹⁰Carter, 18.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., 22.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

Carey's esteem for Edward's is made clear in his exclamation, "What a spirit of genuine piety flows thro all that great Man's Works." But something of Carey's own spiritual inclination can also be discovered in this entry. Edward's Sermon deals with, as the title makes clear, the fact that God is a God who hears prayers. To the question of, "Why is God so ready to hear the prayers of men?" Edwards answered, "*First*, because he is a God of infinite grace and mercy."¹⁶ Edwards went on to say:

It cannot be from any need that God stands in of us, for our goodness extends not to him. Neither can it be from anything in us to incline the heart of God to us. It cannot be from any worthiness in our prayers, which are in themselves polluted things. But it is because God delights in mercy and condescension. He is herein infinitely distinguished from all other Gods. He is the great fountain of all good, from whom goodness flows as light from the sun.¹⁷

Surrounded by the paganism of India, Edward's assertion that God is, "herein infinitely distinguished from all other Gods" must have been especially encouraging. A careful reading allows us to see Carey apply Edwards' teaching to his own situation. The New England divine described God as "the great fountain of all good, from whom goodness flows as light from the sun." Carey took the imagery of the fountain and reflected on the how this divine abundance is made available to the believer; a truth which was particularly relevant to him in his trying circumstances as a missionary:

I need abundance of Grace in order to communicate divine things to others, but to my Comfort God has said "He that believeth on me, out of his Belly shall flow rivers of living Waters", no doubt meaning that Faith is a Communicative principle, & that true believers will as naturally speak of things of God, as a Fountain cast forth streams of Water, I wish I could speak so as to be understood, I can say a little, but not sufficient to answer the Objectives against the Gospel¹⁸

¹⁶Jonathan Edwards, "The Most High a Prayer-Hearing God," *Bible Bulletin Board's Jonathan Edwards Collection* (Columbus, NJ: Bible Bulletin Board, 1986) available from <http://www.biblebb.com/files/edwards/prayer.htm>; accessed Fall 2010.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Carter, 22.

While William Carey was not a theologian of the same order as Edwards, he had a particular genius for applying theological truth through rigorous practical obedience. That is not to say that there was anything superficial about Carey's theology. He was drawing from a deep well. He drew from Andrew Fuller whose theology produced a revival in Baptist life; from Edwards and the Puritans; from Calvin and the deepest fountains of the Reformation. Of course, their common source was the eternal spring of scripture itself

Lights of the World

The clear links between Carey, "the father of modern missions," and Edwards, "the last Puritan," hint at the extent to which the modern missionary movement is a product of previous trends. Edwards was a thinker of great originality, but he was working within the parameters established by the Reformed tradition. Both his theology and his mission activity were the logical outworking of principles which came down to him through the Puritans and the earlier reformers.

David Bebbington recognizes the theological links between the Puritans and Evangelicals in the period following Edwards. In the Puritans, he finds three of his key characteristics, biblicism, conversionism and crucicentrism, but not activism. Sidney Rooy's thorough study of representative Puritans allows us to go a step further and affirm that Puritan theology not only conforms to Bebbington's pattern, but is also distinctively missionary.¹⁹ While it must be conceded that Puritan missionary endeavors were not carried out on a scale to match the explosion of efforts after Carey, neither were they negligible.

¹⁹Sidney H. Rooy, *The Theology of Missions in the Puritan Tradition: A Study of Representative Puritans: Richard Sibbes, Richard Baxter, John Eliot, Cotton Mather & Jonathan Edwards* (Laurel: Audubon Press, 2006).

The name of Puritan has not always been a mark of respect. In its original context it was a term of abuse and it continues to be so in contemporary popular culture.

Conservatives, however, have rightly seen the Puritans as defenders and propagators of Reformed theology and as models of self-sacrifice and passionate advocates of a faith that combined rigorous theology and passionate devotion.

It is possible that conservative admirers of the Puritans have tended to ignore the degree of diversity which existed among them.²⁰ They were not monolithic in theology or practice. And in areas of great importance there is considerable development to be observed. For example, and perhaps most significantly, under the weight of both evolving understanding of biblical teaching as well as historical circumstance there is evolution in Puritan views of the relation of church and state, “excluded from the Established Church, they started to rethink their traditional belief in religious uniformity, and reinvent themselves as voluntary gathered churches.”²¹ Warfield famously said that the Reformation was the triumph of Augustine's soteriology over Augustine's ecclesiology. If so, the developments in ecclesiology in the Puritan period can be seen as the continuing aftershocks of that tectonic shift. To extend Warfield's phrase, the Puritan period down to Edwards is in part the history of the changes required to bring Puritan ecclesiology into line with their Augustinian soteriology.

Given the evolution in church polity it is difficult to see ecclesiology as the characteristic that ties the Puritans together as a distinctive group. There was a continued

²⁰Michael A. G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart, *The Advent of Evangelicalism* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2008), 262-263.

²¹Haykin, 261.

concern for the purity of the church, but the pursuit of biblical purity forced the evolution in their views of church structure.

What tied Puritans together was an Augustinian or Calvinistic soteriology and the passionate piety that resulted; and it was this that led to their concern with preaching, evangelism and eventually world mission. “The Puritan position was that only God, by his Spirit, through his word, can bring sinners to faith, and that he does this, not to our order, but according to his own free purpose.”²² This same soteriology provides the critical link to previous generations of the Reformation and to future progenitors of the modern missionary movement which grew out of it.

David Bebbington would drive a wedge between the Puritans and later Evangelicals, Coffey writes, “Bebbington concedes that the Puritans were biblicist, crucicentric and conversionist, but doubts their activism.”²³ Coffey’s defense of the Puritan’s at this point is to highlight their ceaseless rounds of prayer, fasting, Bible reading, family worship, conferences and sermons.”²⁴ However, if Bebbington’s concept of activism is primarily missionary, the emphasis might best be placed on the Puritan’s views of preaching and evangelism.

This thesis maintains that Serampore and the modern missionary movement is the *telos* of the Reformation. The core of the thesis is the idea that Reformation soteriology leads to world mission. To prove this thesis it is not necessary to show that every generation prior to Serampore excelled in world mission. But it is helpful to show that they understood the connection between a biblical view of soteriology *and a biblical view of evangelism*.

²²J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990), 163.

²³Haykin, 266.

²⁴Ibid.

William Carey never drew a sharp distinction between home and foreign missions. While the distinction has a certain practical usefulness, it is not clear that it has any biblical warrant. By that token, it would be unfair to say that the Puritan's were devoid of missionary spirit. They had inherited a country which was nominally Protestant, but in which the majority of their countrymen were unconverted. Their passionate appeal to the lost prefigures in many ways the Great Awakening and the preaching at Serampore:

Puritan preaching was *Christ-centred in its orientation*. 'Young man said veteran Richard Sibbes to fledgling Thomas Goodwin, 'if ever you would do good, you must preach the gospel of the free grace of God in Christ Jesus.' Puritan preaching revolved around 'Christ, and him crucified'—for this is the hub of the Bible. The preachers' commission is to declare the whole counsel of God; but the cross is the centre of that counsel, and the Puritans knew that the traveller through the Bible landscape misses his way as soon as he loses sight of the hill called Calvary.²⁵

In their concern to reach their countrymen with the gospel, the Puritans grasped a variety of means to increase their effectiveness. In this they foreshadow the modern missionary movement. Three areas are worth noting. First, they were ardent promoters of the printing and distribution of Evangelical literature. Second, they fostered the creation of an Atlantic network of correspondents that supported evangelical causes. Third, they created extra-ecclesiastical structures such as the *Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge* to promote the spread of biblical truth. That this is true would seem to contradict Bebbington's contention that the Puritans showed little evidence of his fourth characteristic of Evangelical Christianity which is activism. Each of these foreshadow the modern missionary movement.

Like the first generation of reformers, the Puritans were often constrained by political circumstance in reaching out on a broader basis. Many spent years in jail. They were also hobbled by the lack of institutions to move the missionary enterprise forward. But it was

²⁵Packer, 286.

their struggle to be effective preachers that began to reveal the contours of a Protestant missionary methodology. And it was their passion for the gospel that planted the seeds that produced the Great Awakenings and eventually the modern missionary movement.

Evangelical Literature

The Puritans were concerned for the conversion of the lost and were willing to use all legitimate means to reach them; this is demonstrated by their aggressive publication of evangelical literature. One of the most popular books of the period was a work by Joseph Alleine titled *An Alarm to Unconverted Sinners*. Alleine (1634-1668), who studied at Oxford and became an influential non-conformist minister, died young, worn out from his labors and the effect of persecution and periods spent in prison. His book, which was published posthumously, went through numerous editions. His biographer Charles Stanford wrote in 1861:

In 1671, his “Alarm to the Unconverted” first saw the light. It appears to be the substance of sermons preached on conversion. Of this book Dr. Calamy, writing in 1702, remarks, “Multitudes will have cause for ever to be thankful for it. No book in the English tongue (the Bible only excepted) can equal it for the number that hath been dispersed: there have been twenty thousand sold under the title of the ‘Call,’ or ‘Alarm,’ and fifty thousand of the same under the title of the ‘Sure Guide to Heaven,’ thirty thousand of which were at one impression.” “It is a wonderful amount of good” says another writer, “which has been accomplished by the solemn and pathetic appeals contained in the ‘Alarm to the Unconverted.’”²⁶

Since the book was based on Alleine’s sermons, it provides evidence of a gospel-centered ministry. That it proved so popular reflects the existence of an Evangelical community eager to use the book as a gospel tract as they sought the conversion of the lost.

²⁶Charles Stanford, *Joseph Alleine: His Companions & Times* (London: Jackson, Walford, and Hodder, 1861), 377.

In 1658, another great Puritan, Richard Baxter (1615-1691)²⁷ published a small book titled *A Call to the Unconverted to Turn and Live*. He provided a considerable amount of practical advice that reveals his pastoral concern for the spiritual struggles of people, “Deliver up yourselves to the Lord Jesus, as the physician of your souls, that he may pardon you by his blood, and sanctify you by his Spirit, by his word and ministers, the instruments of the Spirit. He is the way, the truth, and the life; there is no coming to the Father but by him.”²⁸

Baxter’s view of scripture was significant. First, he saw Scripture as the ordinary means of conversion. Behind this view lie almost 150 years of Protestant thinking and action. He saw the power of the Scripture mediated through the reading of scripture itself and through public preaching and the reading of “holy writings”. His own book provided a perfect example of the literary productions—the “holy Writings”—which multiplied after Gutenberg’s innovations.

This paragraph also reveals Baxter’s conception of the ministry. He was known for his concern for his flock. His books, *The Reformed Pastor* and *The Christian Directory* can be seen as the fountainhead of protestant views of pastoral ministry and Christian counseling. This call demonstrates that Baxter saw evangelism as an integral part of pastoral ministry. Matthew 5:14 is applied directly to ministers whom he calls “the lights of the world.”²⁹ By referencing Acts 26:17, he takes as his own Paul’s commission, “To open their eyes, *and to*

²⁷ One edition of Alleine’s book contained an “Epistle to the Unconverted Reader” (Alleine 51) written by Richard Baxter which began with a plea that demonstrates the passion with which the Puritans called men to the Lord; “To all the ignorant, carnal, and godly, who are lovers of pleasure more than God, and seek this world more than the life everlasting, and live after the flesh and not after the Spirit, these calls and counsels are directed, in hope of their conversion to God, and of their salvation, ‘ He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear.’”

²⁸Richard Baxter, *A Call to the Unconverted, to Turn and Live* (Boston: Lincoln and Edmands, 1831), 173.

²⁹Baxter, 172.

turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”

The motivation for evangelism is found first in divine compassion for the sinner. “In compassion to your sinful miserable souls, the Lord that better knows your case than you can know it, hath made it our duty to speak to you in his name, 2 Cor. 5:11, and to tell you plainly of your sin and misery what will be your end, and how sad a change you will shortly see, if yet you go on a little longer.” He goes on to say that God “sees and pities you, while you are drowned in worldly cares and pleasures, eagerly following childish toys, and wasting that short and precious time for a thing of naught, in which you should make ready for an everlasting life . . .”³⁰

The minister is also motivated by obedience to the divine command. “The Lord hath made it our duty to speak to you in his name. Here again, Baxter appropriates as his own Paul’s sense of mission by citing 2 Corinthians 5:11, “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.” Baxter continues, “and therefore he hath commanded us to call after you and tell you how you lose your labor and are about to lose your souls, and tell you what greater and better things you might certainly have if you would hearken to his call.”³¹

Baxter was not perfect. J.I. Packer describes Baxter as “a big man, big enough to have large faults and make large errors.”³² He was “the most outstanding pastor, evangelist

³⁰ Ibid., 8.

³¹ Ibid.

and writer on practical and devotional themes that the Puritans produced.”³³ However, he taught a version of the doctrines of grace which left much to be desired. In attempting to find a middle ground between competing views of Christ’s death, he produced a neonomianism that set the stage for the emergence of Unitarianism in England.³⁴

One of Baxter’s most determined opponents was Benjamin Keach (1640-1704), a Particular Baptist pastor who had signed the Second London Confession and was a fruitful church planter. He took Baxter to task for doctrinal positions that tended to undermine the absolutely gracious nature of justification. At the same time, like Baxter, Keach was a passionate evangelist.

He wrote a book titled *Gospel Mysteries Unveiled* in which he maintained that “regeneration was entirely an act of God that preceded conversion. Regeneration was passive, ‘the act of God's Spirit, by which he infuseth a vital principle.’ But, conversion is active, ‘whereby through the power of that grace, the sinner being quickened, is capacitated to believe and return to God.’”³⁵ With this balanced emphasis Keach was able to maintain the doctrine of limited atonement and total human depravity and still preach evangelistically.

Keach addressed sinners with great passion, “Your present Work and Business is to believe in Jesus Christ, to look to him, who can only renew his sacred Image in your souls, and make you New Creatures, which must be done, or you perish. O cry that he would help your Unbelief: Come venture your souls on Christ’s righteousness: Christ is able to save you

³²Packer, 302.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., 303.

³⁵William H. Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2004),

though you are never so great sinners.”³⁶ Spurgeon had a great admiration for Keach and he has been seen as a forerunner of the Evangelistic Calvinist Baptists Andrew Fuller and Robert Hall who were influential in William Carey’s ministry.³⁷

The Puritan Hope

The Puritans were motivated by the simple commands of Christ. Their view of the Christian ministry included the imperative of preaching the gospel to the unconverted. They found encouragement, as they obeyed the command to preach, in what we might call a positive Calvinism. This positive Calvinism was fed by what Ian Murray has called The Puritan Hope. While there was considerable variation in the precise details of eschatological schemes, they agreed that God was active in history:

Their whole Calvinistic theology of the gospel, with its emphasis on the power given to Christ as Mediator for the sure in-gathering of the vast number of his elect, and on the Holy Spirit as the One by whom the dead are quickened, dovetails in here. They rejected altogether a naturalistic view of the inevitable progress of history—so common in the nineteenth century—but asserted that the sovereign purpose of God in the gospel, as indicated by the promises of Scripture yet unfulfilled, points to the sure hope of great outpourings of the Spirit in the future.³⁸

That there was considerable variation in regards to eschatological details should not distract us from the deeper point. Their eschatology was not ultimately rooted in a particular scheme of interpretation for specific prophetic passages. Rather it was a working out of their Trinitarian theology, in the same way as their soteriology and missiology. By the same token, their missiology did not flow from a specific eschatology. Rather, their soteriology,

³⁶Austin R. Walker, “Benjamin Keach and the ‘Baxterian’ Controversy of the 1690s,” *Reformed Baptist Theological Review* RBTR 03:1 (Spring 2006), 22.

³⁷Brackney, 117.

³⁸Iain H. Murray, *The Puritan Hope: Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1998), 51.

missiology and eschatology all flowed in parallel from the common source of a theology which emphasized God's sovereignty. The details of prophecy might be murky, but it was clear from their theology that God was Lord of history and his purposes would be worked out. The Trinitarian God is active in history and the divine purpose cannot be thwarted.

Puritan Missions to the New England Indians

An edition of Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted* published in the 19th century contains a preface described as "an account of this book given by Mr. Baxter himself, which was found in his study after his death, in his own words." In this account, Baxter rejoices in the widespread dissemination of his work. He speaks of, "whole households converted by this small book"³⁹ in England, Scotland and Ireland. The book was translated and used in France and Germany and the message went to "many beyond the seas; for when Mr. Eliot had printed all the Bible in the Indian language, he next translated this my *Call to the Unconverted*, as he wrote to us here."⁴⁰ While Baxter may have not drawn a sharp distinction between evangelism and missions it says something about his vision that he was especially pleased that his book had been fruitful among the Indians of North America.

John Eliot, who was mentioned in the preface of Baxter's work, is recognized in Carey's *Enquiry* as one of the missionary forerunners who inspired his own action, "In 1632, Mr. Eliot, of New England, a very pious and zealous minister, began to preach to the Indians, among whom he had great success; several churches of Indians were planted, and some

³⁹Baxter, 6.

⁴⁰Ibid.

preachers and schoolmasters raised up amongst them; since which time others have labored amongst them with some good encouragement.”⁴¹

Two points can be made about Eliot. First, Eliot was a Puritan and his ministry to the Native Americans of New England is the logical progression from the Puritans emphasis on a Bible-centered gospel ministry. Eliot held that it is “part of our Ministerial Charge to preach to the World in the Name of Jesus, and from amongst them to gather Subjects to his holy Kingdom.”⁴²

Second, Eliot’s ministry foreshadows Serampore in remarkable ways. Eliot translated the Old and New Testaments, as well as a catechism, into the language of the Indians. Like the Serampore Trio years later, Eliot saw that a holistic approach was required. He evangelized, planted churches, ordained ministers, established schools and set up Praying Towns where his converts were gathered. The Bible was seen as the basis of community life, “The Bible, and the Catechism drawn out of the Bible, are general helps to all parts and places about us, and are the groundwork of Community amongst all our *Indian-Churches* and Christians.”⁴³ Eliot saw that for the Word of God to take hold his converts would need a thorough education. He was impressed with their capacity and stated that, “while I live, my purpose is, (by the Grace of Christ assisting) to make it one of my chief cares and labours to teach them some of the Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the way how to analyze, and lay out into particulars both the Works and Word of God: and how to communicate knowledge to others methodically and skillfully, and especially the method of Divinity.”⁴⁴

⁴¹Carey, 62.

⁴²John Eliot, *A Brief Narrative of the Progress of the Gospel Among the Indians of New England* (Boston: John K. Wiggin & Wm. Parsons Lunt, 1868), 23.

⁴³Eliot, 24.

Puritans made significant efforts which foreshadow the modern missionary movement. “Three major Protestant missionary organizations—the Company for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England (the NEC, founded 1649), the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG, founded 1701), and the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK, founded 1709)—all played significant roles in Christianizing and civilizing the inhabitants of British North America.”⁴⁵ This would tend to undermine the view that the Puritan period was lacking in missionary endeavor.

It is true that these societies were not the equivalent of the later Baptist Missionary Society, the London Missionary Society or the Church Missionary Society. They were not dependent on grass roots support, but on the British Crown. Also, their primary purpose was to promote the spiritual welfare of subjects of the Crown. However, it should not be forgotten the extent to which Britain itself was a mission field at the beginning of the Puritan period. Without the gospel efforts of the Puritans, and the eventual revivals lead by Edwards and Whitefield, Britain would not have provided the basis of support for the missionary endeavors which were launched at the end of the eighteenth century.

The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) began as a voluntary society in 1698, though it received a royal charter in 1701 which somewhat limited its range of action:⁴⁶

But their charter being limited to *Foreign Parts*, and the Business of that Corporation being hitherto confined to the *British Plantations in America*, most of the original Members of our *Voluntary Society* still continued to carry on, in that capacity, their more extensive Design for advancing the Honour of God, and the Good of Mankind,

⁴⁴Ibid., 23.

⁴⁵ Frederick V. Mills, Sr. “The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge in British North America, 1730-1775” *Church History* (1994): 63:15-30.

⁴⁶Broughton, Thomas, *An Account of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge*, Society Minutes (London: J. and W. Oliver, 1774), 4.

by promoting Christian Knowledge, both at Home and in other Parts of the world, by the best Methods that should offer.⁴⁷

It is worth pointing out the global breadth of the original vision and the emphasis on using “the best Method that should offer” which anticipates Carey’s theology.

Of the different corporations formed, “*The New England Company* had the longest history and is the oldest Protestant missionary organization. *The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts* sent no fewer than three hundred missionaries to America between 1701 and 1783.”⁴⁸ The *SPCK* continues its labors even today,⁴⁹ but the golden age of Puritan missions might be said to begin with Eliot and to end with Brainerd and Edwards.⁵⁰

The contours of missions methodology were still taking shape. The relationship of the church to sending agencies was still in flux. This issue could not be resolved until the issue of church polity was sorted out. But Puritans had already made the logical jump from a responsibility to preach to ones parish to the responsibility to preach to the world. We can recall Baxter’s view of the Christian ministry, “The Lord hath made it our duty to speak to you in his name.”⁵¹

This same sense of calling, and the same motivations are reflected in a sermon preached by Ebenezer Pemberton, pastor of the Presbyterian church in the city of New York, on the occasion of David Brainerd’s ordination. Pemberton took his text from Luke 14:23;

⁴⁷Broughton, 5.

⁴⁸Mills, 15-30.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰R. Pierce Beaver, *Pioneers in Mission: The Early Missionary Ordination Sermons* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), 13.

⁵¹Baxter .

“And the Lord said unto the servant, Go into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”⁵² From this text Pemberton asked his hearers to consider three points: first, the melancholy state of the Gentile world; second, the compassionate care of the redeemer; third, the duty of the ministers of the gospel to “compel them to come in”⁵³ Pemberton’s approach to the exegesis of this text reveals an aggressive missionary theology similar to that of William Carey, “Having finished his work upon earth, before he ascended to his heavenly Father, he commissioned the ministers of his kingdom to ‘preach the gospel to every creature.’” He sent them forth to make the most extensive offers of salvation to rebellious sinners, and by all the methods of holy violence to “compel them to come in,” and accept the invitations of his grace.⁵⁴

This sermon prefigures William Carey’s views in three ways. First, the theological basis for missions is actually quite simple; we go because God demands it. Second, compassion for the lost is an appropriate motivation for missions. It is not inconsistent with a high view of God’s glory, for God himself is compassionate. Third, obedience requires the grasping of those tools placed providentially within reach. Pemberton deploys a remarkable phrase, “by all the methods of Holy violence,” a phrase which is consistent with Calvin’s understanding that God ordains the means.

⁵²Beaver, 111.

⁵³Ibid., 112-113.

⁵⁴Ibid., 112.

The Grandfather of Modern Missions

According to David Bebbington's influential thesis, Jonathan Edwards' theology marks the beginning of the Evangelical movement. While this thesis might be criticized for neglecting the continuity between Edwards and those that came before him, it is certainly hard to overemphasize Edwards' importance. His personal influence on Carey has been established. In the next chapter we will see the extent of his influence on the Particular Baptists that established the Baptist Missionary Society. He is a key transitional figure. As the 'Last Puritan' he drew on the deep resources of Calvinism and Puritanism before him to articulate a glorious theological vision. As a theologian, evangelist, and missionary he helped lay the groundwork for the future modern missionary movement. If William Carey merits the title 'father of modern missions,' Edwards deserves to be called the 'grandfather of modern missions.'⁵⁵

The arc of Edwards's career—from pastor theologian, to Great Awakening evangelist, to Stockbridge missionary—recapitulates the larger developmental arc of Evangelical Calvinism. He began as a pastor-theologian ministering to the church in Northampton, Massachusetts. He became a key figure by his writing and preaching in the Great Awakening. Ironically, his pastorate in Northampton was cut short by conflict that developed when he acted on his growing conviction that the Half-Way Covenant was unsustainable. His belief that the church should consist of those who could give clear testimony of their conversion brought him much closer to the views held by Particular Baptists. His stand represents the end of the Puritan dream of a Christian society in the new

⁵⁵Ronald E. Davies, "Jonathan Edwards: Missionary Biographer, Theologian, Strategist, Administrator, Advocate—and Missionary," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 21.2, (1997): 60. Quoted by Baines Ronald S. Baines, "*Thy Kingdom Come: The Missionary Theology and Practice of Jonathan Edwards*," (Charlotte: Reformed Theological Seminary, 2006), 4; available from Academic Search Premier <http://search.epnet.com>; accessed 18 July 2006.

world, but it also represents a final shaking off of erastianism. The ground was now clear for the construction of the institutions which would support the expansion of Protestantism as a world religion.

Ronald Baines argues that the significance of Edwards' years as a missionary in Stockbridge has not been fully appreciated.⁵⁶ While Edwards took advantage of his years in Stockbridge to complete some of his most important theological productions, his sojourn in western Massachusetts was much more than a sabbatical forced on him by circumstances in his Northampton pastorate. Baines writes that Edwards', "deepest longings for the expansion of the work of Christ on earth culminated in a robust missionary spirit and . . . his move to Stockbridge was the fruit of years of sober reflection and the practical outworking of his pursuit of Christ's kingdom through missions."⁵⁷ The logical outworking of Edwards' theology was found in missionary endeavor which included educating, civilizing, and evangelizing⁵⁸ New England's Indians.

In 1747, while David Brainerd was slowly wasting away in his home, Jonathan Edwards finished a short work with a long title, *An Humble Attempt to Promote an Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People thro' the World, in Extraordinary Prayer, for the Revival of Religion, and the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom on Earth, Pursuant to Scripture Promise and Prophecies Concerning the Last Time*. The work was written in support of an idea proposed by Scottish ministers in 1744 to institute a "Concert of Prayer." This would consist of special seasons of prayer in churches and prayer societies for the

⁵⁶Ronald S. Baines, *Thy Kingdom Come: The Missionary Theology and Practice of Jonathan Edwards* (Charlotte: Reformed Theological Seminary, 2006), 5.

⁵⁷Baines, 5.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 6.

“extraordinary applications to the God of all grace” for the revival of “true religion in all parts of Christendom, and to deliver all nations from their great and manifold spiritual calamities and miseries, and bless them with the unspeakable benefits of the kingdom of our glorious Redeemer, and fill the whole earth with his glory. . . .”⁵⁹

Early in his ministry Edwards had been one of the most important leaders of the Great Awakening. His own preaching had been used in an extraordinary way by God and remarkable fruit was seen not only in his own Northampton Massachusetts congregation, but throughout the entire Connecticut River Valley. While his own ministry was more conventional, he embraced the ministry of George Whitefield, the English preacher who pioneered open air preaching in the fields. Edwards’ pen provided a defense of the revival while also helping to steer it away from some of its excesses.

Upon his departure from Northampton, Edwards had a variety of opportunities available to him. He was offered pastorates in Scotland, Virginia and even the leadership of a new congregation in Northampton.⁶⁰ Doubtless, family considerations played a role in his final decision, but he chose instead the leadership of an English congregation on the frontier in Stockbridge where he could also minister to the Indians. It was a place which had been marked by the missionary ministry of his friend, David Brainerd.

Edwards’ ministry at Stockbridge echoed many of the themes of Brainerd’s ministry and that of Eliot long before. He insisted on justice for the Indians in the face of colonial exploitation and he believed in the spiritual and intellectual equality of the Indians. He emphasized their education and sought their conversion. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that these years were so rich in literary production. It was during his missionary period that he

⁵⁹Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 2:282.

⁶⁰Marsden, George, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University, 2004), 362-365.

produced *The Freedom of the Will*, a work which, as we shall see, would be one of the keys to launching the modern missionary movement towards the end of the eighteenth century.

In his *Humble Attempt*, Edwards had reported on recent awakenings around the world. He mentioned revival in Germany, the British Islands, New England, and “and about two years ago, a very great awakening and reformation of many of the Indians, in the Jerseys, and Pennsylvania, even among such as never embraced Christianity before . . .”⁶¹ By moving to Stockbridge he followed in the footsteps of David Brainerd. And he proved by active obedience the sincerity of his prayers that God would “deliver all nations from their great and manifold spiritual calamities and miseries, and bless them with the unspeakable benefits of the kingdom of our glorious Redeemer, and fill the whole earth with his glory.”

More than a generation after his death, a group of Baptist pastors in the midlands of England would take up his call to prayer. The result would be breakout of the Reformation into the wider world: the modern missionary movement. As Jonathan Edwards had travelled west to carry the gospel to the Mohicans, William Carey would travel east to take the gospel to the Indians of Bengal.

⁶¹Edwards, 282.

CHAPTER 4

BAPTIST REVIVAL

Almost forty years after Jonathan Edwards published his *Humble Attempt*, it was republished by a Baptist Pastor, John Sutcliff, from the English Midlands. In 1784, Concerts of Prayer began among English Baptists. Slowly, events began to unfold which led to the modern missionary movement. Andrew Fuller published a groundbreaking work, *The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation*. In 1786, William Carey was ordained. He also wrote *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*. John Ryland described a meeting from this time in his journal:

Brethren Fuller, Sutcliff, Carey, and I, kept this day as a private fast, in my study: read the Epistles to Timothy and Titus . . . and each prayed twice—Carey with singular enlargement and pungency. Our chief design was to implore a revival of godliness in our own souls, in our churches, and in the church at large.¹

It was not until 1792 that Carey's *Enquiry* was published and the Baptist Missionary Society founded. In January of the following year, Carey was approved as the first BMS missionary. He sailed for India in June of 1793. By that time, nearly 50 years had passed since the original call to prayer had been issued by the ministers in Scotland.

William Carey left home when he was fourteen in 1775. He had been apprenticed to Clarke Nichols of Piddington, a shoemaker. Edmund Carey, William's father had the foresight to see that with the rise of industrial production his own trade of weaving did not

¹Michael A. G. Haykin, *One heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, His Friends and His Times* (England: Evangelical Press, 1994), 169.

offer a stable future. Piddington was about 8 miles from Paulerspury. He had no way of knowing that his departure marked the beginning of a spiritual journey that would eventually lead him to India.

Clarke Nichols already had an apprentice named John Warr who was a dissenter. In spite of the fact that at this stage of his life, William, according to his sister Mary, “was at enmity with God, and in many things ridiculed his people . . . ,”² he was still proud of his roots in the established church. Warr attended the non-conformist meeting house in nearby Hackleton. In Nichol’s workshop, the conversation often took a theological turn. The master was not a particularly godly man but he was loyal to the established church. Carey often argued with Warr, “I had, moreover, pride sufficient for a thousand times my knowledge. So I always scorned to have the worst in discussion, and the last word was assuredly mine.”³ Although he generally won the argument, Warr’s steady testimony and godly life began to shake Carey’s confidence in his own position.

During this time, Carey nearly lost his position as apprentice after being caught in a dishonest transaction. He later attributed his eventual conversion in part to the mortification he experienced at being found out. At the age of 17 he threw himself on the mercy of Christ the Savior.⁴ Not long after he visited the meeting at Hackleton with John Warr. A lay preacher spoke from Hebrews 13:13 “Let us go forth therefore to him without the camp, bearing his reproach.” Carey felt the weight of this passage as he applied it to his rejection of the non-conformist congregation. While the application he made might be considered

²Samuel Pearce Carey, *William Carey* (London: The Wakeman Trust, 1923), 22.

³S. P. Carey, 25.

⁴*Ibid.*, 26.

unwarranted by the text, his decision to join the dissenters provides early evidence of Carey's direct approach to the matter of scriptural obedience. And it foreshadows his reaction to the prejudices of the English in India and to the Hindu caste system.

Carey's Spiritual and Theological Formation

Over the next few years William Carey would marry his wife Dorothy, the sister of Thomas Old who became his master when Clarke Nichols died. He would grow in his faith and begin to preach. At this early stage, two keys to Carey's character become evident: biblicism and an activist spirituality.

For a time, he was attracted to the disciples of mystic William Law, but he eventually rejected Law's teachings feeling they lacked scriptural substance. "One judgment which he soon reached was that human speculations were too unreliable for trust. This was his growing quarrel with the mystics. He wanted rock under foot. So he resolved to search the Scriptures to discover as exactly as possible the message of God. He 'pressed God's lamp to his breast.'"⁵ In this he was following a pattern that characterized Evangelicalism as a whole:

The history of English spirituality in the eighteenth century can be seen in one way as a movement from inner to outer life, from the narrow confines of dwindling independent churches and student Holy Clubs outward boldly into the turbulence of society and the needy world, but also from a necessary deep inwardness of personal spirituality to the pressures or active commitment to missionary enterprise at home and abroad.⁶

After a period of flirtation with Law's mysticism, Carey drew closer to the Baptist congregation at Hackleton. However, the hyper-Calvinistic preaching of the elder John

⁵S. P. Carey, 29.

⁶Henry Bartsch, "The Spirituality and Theology of William Law (1686-1781), *Biblical Spirituality*, 12 May 2010; available from <http://biblicalspirituality.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/the-spirituality-and-theology-of-william-law-1686-1761.pdf> p1; Internet; accessed December 2010.

Luck⁷ did not alleviate his spiritual struggles, and so he began visiting congregations in neighboring towns in search of edifying preaching.

In retrospect, Carey's placement in the vicinity of Northampton can be seen as providential. While it was far from the capital of London, it was blessed with godly men who were instrumental in shaping an evangelical Calvinism. For example, John Newton, the former slave-trader and author of *Amazing Grace* was the Anglican curate at Olney. Newton developed a close relationship with John Sutcliff, the Baptist pastor in Olney who would play a role in the future Baptist Missionary Society. The poet William Cowper was one of Newton's parishioners. Together they would produce a collection of hymns that influences English worship to this day.

Northampton had been blessed by the ministry of Philip Doddridge (1702-1751), the author of *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* which became an Evangelical classic and was later cited by Carey and Spurgeon. Doddridge was a hymn writer to be compared with Isaac Watts and the head of a school for dissenters that attracted students from all over the British Isles.⁸ In 1741, Doddridge proposed a plan for the evangelization of the world at a ministers meeting in Kettering which was fifty years ahead of its time.⁹

In Carey's day, Thomas Scott was curate at Buckinghamshire and Ravenstone and was later to replace Newton at Olney when Newton moved to London. Scott had come to an evangelical faith under the influence of Newton. Like Carey he was self-taught. He referred to the shoe-makers' workshop at Hackelton as "Carey's College." Carey often sought him out for advice. Scott was to become famous for his commentary on the Bible and other works including a history of the Council of Dordt. In 1821, after Carey had been in India many years, he sent greetings to Scott through Baptist pastor John Ryland:

⁷S. P. Carey, 29.

⁸Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 42.

⁹S. P. Carey, 81.

What led me to write now was a letter I received from Dr. Carey yesterday, in which he says, ‘Pray give my thanks to dear Mr. Scott for his History of the Synod of Dort. I would write to him if I could command time. If there be any thing of the work of God in my soul, I owe much of it to his preaching, when I first set out in the ways of the Lord.’¹⁰

Scott responded to Ryland’s letter:

I am surprised as well as gratified at your message from Dr. Carey. He heard me preach only a few times, and that as far as I know, in my rather irregular excursions: though I often conversed and prayed in his presence, and endeavoured to answer his sensible and pertinent inquiries, when at Hackleton. But to have suggested even a single useful hint to such a mind as his, may be considered as a high privilege, and matter of gratitude. Send my kindest remembrance to him when you write.¹¹

With the help of Newton, Scott went on to help found the Church Missionary Society, one of many missionary organizations which were begun in response to the founding of the BMS. He became its first secretary. Carey’s early associations with independents and Anglicans bore fruit well beyond the limits of the Baptist denomination which became his home. The mutual influence of Carey, Scott and Newton illustrates how the core of the missionary vision came down from the Calvinist soteriology inherited from the Puritans as opposed to an ecclesiology that was still developing. Eventually, those groups that leaned in the direction of congregational polity proved to be the most flexible in responding to the challenge of missions.

Baptist church polity, of course, was strongly congregational. But before the flexibility of their congregational polity could provide a missionary advantage, they had to bring their soteriology into line with Evangelical Calvinism. While Carey found the hyper-Calvinism of the Hackleton meeting to be stultifying, he had providentially come to faith within in the geographic area of the Northamptonshire Baptist Association. Baptist leaders

¹⁰John Scott, *The Life of the Rev. Thomas Scott, D. D.* (Philadelphia: W. W. Woodward, 1823), 172.

¹¹Ibid.

linked to this association were bringing about a revival in Baptist life. Before this time the situation had become dire. Andrew Fuller, a Baptist pastor in Kettering, described the condition of Baptist churches in strong terms “the Christian profession had sunk into contempt amongst us; inasmuch, that had matters gone on but a few years longer the Baptists would have become a perfect dunghill in society.”¹² Fuller would play a key role in bringing Evangelical reform to Baptist circles.

The source of the problem was, in part, an overly rationalistic theology. It was a rejection of rigid theoretical formulations in favor of a simpler biblicism that allowed them to break out into missionary effectiveness. Andrew Fuller would provide a useful taxonomy of the differing systems.¹³ He described his own views as Strict Calvinism which he differentiated from High Calvinism or hyper-Calvinism on one end, and moderate Calvinism on the other. Fuller’s Strict Calvinism is essentially the same as Evangelical Calvinism, the position of Jonathan Edwards. Moderate Calvinism was hardly Calvinism at all—Fuller associated it with the errors of Richard Baxter—while hyper-Calvinism earned the additional title of false Calvinism¹⁴ which Fuller maintained was more Calvinistic than Calvin.¹⁵

Too much can be made of Fuller’s statement “I do not believe every thing Calvin taught, nor any thing because he taught it.”¹⁶ Like Edwards before him, and Spurgeon after, Fuller was determined to derive his theology from scripture. The substantial agreement was

¹²Haykin, 15.

¹³Michael Haykin, *The Armies of the Lamb: The Spirituality of Andrew Fuller* (Dundas: Joshua Press, 2001), 41.

¹⁴Haykin, 59.

¹⁵Ibid., 27.

¹⁶D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (Great Britain: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 63.

the result of drawing on a common source and not due to slavish dependence on the Genevan Reformer.

Fuller and his fellow pastors of the Northamptonshire Association were committed to the doctrines of grace. There was no wavering on the five points of Calvinism. Based on biblical evidence and personal experience of his own heart, Fuller was convinced of the doctrine of total depravity and saw that if this first point was true the only hope for man was that the rest be true as well.¹⁷ Men are incapable of any meritorious works before God. The absolutely hopeless condition of man requires the rest of the doctrines of grace. If man is absolutely depraved he will not, and cannot choose God. So, God must choose man if he is to be saved. And, since man is depraved, God's choice must be unconditional. In addition, God's choice is particular. He chooses some men as opposed to others. To maintain otherwise is to support universalism, a doctrine which finds no scriptural support. These doctrines require a limited atonement. If man is totally depraved, the atonement must be active and effective. It must do more than make men savable, it must actually save them. But if it is not to be universal it must be limited in some fashion. That it is potentially sufficient for all is not denied, but the doctrine of limited atonement denies it is effective for any other than the elect. These doctrines imply the last two, effectual calling and the perseverance of the saints.

This brief outline summarizes the doctrines of grace. It was these doctrines which were given definitive expression at the Synod of Dordt which was convened to respond to the teachings of Arminius. Carey's appreciation for Scott's history of Dordt is a strong indication that he never wavered on the soteriological core of Calvinism. This is supported by the fact

¹⁷Andrew Fuller, *The Complete Works of Rev. Andrew Fuller* (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1845), preface by Tom Nettles, 1.

that in 1808 William Ward, one of Carey's Serampore partners, began to "translate the Baptist Confession into Bengalee for our native brethren."¹⁸ Ward also records that in 1799 upon arrival with Marshman and the other missionaries at Serampore "we presented to the Governor a Confession of Faith and Rippon's Hymns."¹⁹ In 1805, the Serampore Trio published *The Form of Agreement* which was an expression of their missiological principles. Their balanced Evangelical Calvinism is evident:

We are firmly persuaded that Paul might plant and Apollos water, in vain, in any part of the world, did not God give the increase. We are sure that only those who are ordained to eternal life will believe, and that God alone can add to the church such as shall be saved. Nevertheless we cannot but observe with admiration that Paul, the great champion for the glorious doctrines of free and sovereign grace, was the most conspicuous for his personal zeal in the work of persuading men to be reconciled to God. In this respect he is a noble example for our imitation.²⁰

While these doctrines have often been cast in a negative light, they were seen by Evangelical Calvinists as a positive expression of God's grace. The emphasis was on a gracious and sovereign God who through his Son and by his Spirit seeks out fallen men. These doctrines were explained in the standard confessions like the Westminster Confession and the Baptist London Confession of 1689 where they were supported with ample scriptural evidence.

Hyper-Calvinism, however, went beyond the confessions and beyond the scriptures. Scripture provided sufficient evidence to make the statement that God's electing purpose was determined in the councils of eternity. However, hyper-Calvinism made the eternal council the lynchpin of its theological approach, and from this derived two principles that did not

¹⁸William Ward, *William Ward's Missionary Journal 1799-1811* (Compiled by E. Daniel Potts, 1799-1811), 665.

¹⁹Ward, 56a.

²⁰ A. H. Oussoren, *William Carey Especially His Missionary Principles* (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff's Uitgeversmaatschappij N.V., 1945), 274.

have scriptural support. The first was that the non-elect were not responsible to heed the gospel. The second was that ministers of the gospel should not make a free offer of salvation.

These positions were essentially a denial of the use of means. Through the teaching of John Brine, and to an extent which is debated by scholars, John Gill, these teaching came to dominate Baptist life. The results were predictable. Their closed ecclesiology and hyper-Calvinist soteriology made them suspicious of the ministries of not only Wesley, but Whitefield as well; as a result, their congregations did not receive many of the benefits of the revivals that swept Britain and the American colonies. By the time Fuller came on the scene the churches were dying and Baptists were well on the way to society's dunghill.

Andrew Fuller represented a new generation of Baptist pastors associated with the Northamptonshire Association who were willing to challenge the restrictions of hyper-Calvinism. These included John Sutcliff, John Ryland, Jr., and Samuel Pearce who, with Fuller, became key figures in the future development of the BMS. They were joined by a pastor of a generation before, Robert Hall senior who was the father of Robert Hall, Jr.

This group of younger pastors worked tirelessly to revitalize Baptist life. Their friendship around the cause of the Gospel was described by Fuller:

In them, [Ryland, Sutcliff] I found familiar and faithful brethren; and who, partly by reflection and partly by the reading of Edwards, Bellamy, Brainerd, etc. had begun to doubt the system of False Calvinism, to which they had been inclined when they first entered on the ministry, or, rather to be decided against it.²¹

It was into this circle of friends that Carey came as a young pastor. While the missionary enterprise which Carey envisioned was certainly revolutionary, in retrospect it can be seen as

²¹Haykin, 139.

natural to move from advocating the free offer of the Gospel to Englishmen to advocating the free offer of the Gospel to men of other lands.

Through Edwards' influence, the influence of the Great Awakening was finally felt among Particular Baptists, "More than any other eighteenth-century author, Edwards showed Sutcliff, and fellow Baptists like Fawcett and Evans, how to combine a commitment to Calvinism with a passion for revival, fervent evangelism and experiential religion."²²

Dismantling Hyper-Calvinism

As already noted, hyper-Calvinism had introduced two damaging propositions. First, that the unconverted non-elect were not responsible to heed the gospel. Second, that the preacher should make no offer of the gospel. John Ryland explained the situation in this way:

From the moral impotence which the oracles of truth ascribe to man in his fallen state, a certain class of divines were induced to divide moral and religious duties into two classes, natural and spiritual; comprehending under the latter, those which require spiritual or supernatural assistance to their performance; and under the former, those which demand no such assistance. Agreeable to this distinction, they conceived it to be the duty of all men to abstain from the outward acts of sin, to read the Scriptures, to frequent the worship of God, and to attend with serious assiduity to the means of grace; but they supposed that repentance, faith in Christ, and the exercise of genuine internal devotion, were obligatory only on the regenerate. Hence their ministry consisted almost entirely of an exhibition of the peculiar mysteries of the gospel, with few or no addresses to the unconverted. They conceived themselves not warranted to urge them to repent and believe the gospel, those being spiritual duties, from whose obligation they were released by the inability contracted by the fall.²³

²²Haykin, 55.

²³Robert Hall, *Help to Zion's Travellers: Being an Attempt to Remove Various Stumbling Blocks Out of the Way, Relating to Doctrinal, Experimental and Practical Religion* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1851), 17.

Both of these propositions were highly detrimental to the growth of the churches. Robert Hall, Sr. would play a key role in demolishing the first proposition. Andrew Fuller would demolish the second.

In 1779, Robert Hall Sr. preached a message to the Northamptonshire Association which would later be published under the title *Help to Zion's Travellers*.²⁴ The subtitle of the work describes Hall's purpose, *Being an Attempt to Remove Various Stumbling Blocks Out of the Way, Relating to Doctrinal, experimental, and Practical Religion*. Hall especially concentrated on the issue of the subjective experience of the unconverted in coming to Christ. The result of hyper-Calvinism was to cause the unconverted to seek subjective evidence of God's work of grace in his life. This was termed seeking a "warrant" to believe. Andrew Fuller's personal struggles before his conversion can be taken as typical. He describes how he felt himself to be a "poor sinner" but did not feel he was "qualified to come to Christ" since he could not identify the subjective "warrant of faith" which would confirm his election.²⁵

It was this type of stumbling block that Robert Hall wanted to remove. He wrote, "It is frequently asserted, that a true faith in Christ is inseparably connected with the knowledge of an interest in him . . ." ²⁶ The result of this was to place conversion on unstable ground. What was required was not just faith in Christ, but faith in one's faith in Christ. Hall answered, "But there is no doctrine contained in the gospel, nor even any threatening in the

²⁴Peter J. Morden, *Offering Christ to the World: Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) and the Revival of Eighteenth Century Particular Baptist Life* (Great Britain: Paternoster by Nottingham Alphagraphics, 2003), 44.

²⁵Michael Haykin, *At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word: Andrew Fuller as an Apologist* (Great Britain: Paternoster by Nottingham Alphagraphics, 2004), 6.

²⁶Hall, 124.

law of God, which is a bar to an undone sinner's coming to Christ for salvation."²⁷ He went on to say, "If any one should ask, Have I a right to apply to Jesus the Saviour, simply as a poor, undone, perishing sinner, in whom there appears no good thing? I answer, Yes; the gospel proclamation is, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely."²⁸

William Carey later reported that when Hall's book came to his hands that while it seemed like "rank poison" to some, to him it seemed "the sweetest wine."²⁹ Robert Hall Sr. eventually came to be numbered among those who served as a mentor to Carey in the early years of formation, "it was one of my chief privileges, to be favoured with the kind advice and kinder criticism of men of the greatest eminence, and their friendship was a jewel I could not too highly prize." Samuel Pearce Carey writes that Hall offered constructive criticism of William Carey's sermons, "as too matter of fact. They lacked windows. 'There are not enough *likes* in them, whereas the Master was always saying, 'The kingdom is *like* seed or treasure or leaven."³⁰

Robert Hall also played a small role in helping Andrew Fuller as Fuller struggled with the issues of hyper-Calvinism. Hall served on Fuller's ordination committee in 1775. In conversation, he recommended that Fuller read "Edwards on the Will". It is clear that at the time Fuller was not yet familiar with Jonathan Edwards since he acquired a book called *Veritas Redux* by an Anglican clergyman, John Edwards. He appreciated *Veritas Redux* but was puzzled that it seemed to not have any bearing on the issues he had been discussing with

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., 125.

²⁹S. P. Carey, 29.

³⁰Ibid., 58.

Robert Hall. It wasn't until two years later he realized his mistake and acquired Jonathan Edwards's *Freedom of the Will*.³¹

In 1785, Fuller wrote *The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation* in which he defended the practice of offering the gospel to the unconverted and stressed the duty of men to believe it. His reasoning turned on the distinction between physical and moral inability. Michael Haykin has written that, "Fuller's appropriation of this distinction derived from a direct reading of Edwards."³² Morden explains the distinction, "Put simply, a person could not come because they would not come."³³ C. S. Lewis makes a similar point when he affirms that the doors of hell are locked on the inside.³⁴ Edward's saw that men's inability to respond to the gospel was not a physical or natural inability; it lies much deeper in a corrupted will. Men are free to choose between things of moral indifference such as tea or coffee, but they are not free to violate their very nature, and men by their very nature are haters of God. Natural man is no more free to love God than God is free to do that which is unholy.

This was a critical distinction for the question of preaching. It was one thing if men could not respond to the gospel because they were not able. It was another if they did not because they would not. If the inability was 'moral' men were not relieved of responsibility to heed the gospel and preachers of the gospel were required to preach the gospel to the unconverted. In our day, unaccustomed as we are to following close theological argumentation, the discussion might seem quaint to some. But it was this theological discussion that led to birth to the modern missionary movement.

³¹Haykin, 138.

³²Ibid., 140

³³Ibid., 11.

³⁴Not that Lewis is an Evangelical Calvinist, C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York, HarperCollins, 2001), 130.

Fuller's work, and that of Hall, made four vital corrections. First, it corrected misconceptions about the nature of saving faith. This can be seen in the discussion of the nature of unbelief, the opposite of Faith, which Fuller held with another minister, "It was common to speak of unbelief as a calling in question the truth of our own personal religion; whereas, he remarked, 'it was a calling into question the truth of what God had said.' The remark appeared to carry its own evidence."³⁵ Both faith and unbelief had as their object something external to the individual. Hope was not to be found in ascertaining the quality of one's own subjective belief, but in the truth of God. Fuller stumbled on this in his own conversion. He struggled to find internal evidence of election and the resulting saving faith and failed to do so. In desperation, "He . . . came to this resolve, 'I must, I will—yes, I will—trust my soul, my sinful lost soul, in his hands; if I perish, I perish.' As he looked away from self, and fixed his eyes on a crucified Saviour, his guilt and fears began to dissolve . . . and he found how true were the words of Christ, 'come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give thee rest.'³⁶ Hope was not to be found in a subjective state but in the objective cross-work of Christ.

The second correction was to turn from speculative theology towards the objective revelation of God. Fuller stated, "God's Word, and not his secret purpose, is the rule of our conduct."³⁷ Solid ground was to be found in the scriptures, not in the subjective experience of the individual, nor in the impenetrable inner life of the Trinity. This change of method is evident in Fuller's treatment of the free offer of the gospel. He is swayed more by the

³⁵Andrew Fuller, *The Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (Philadelphia: W. Collier, 1820) Preface, 1:3, 10.

³⁶Haykin, 6.

³⁷William H. Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought*. (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2004), 123.

accumulation of examples of apostolic preaching from the New Testament than by theological arguments. He stated that to neglect “exhortations, calls and Warnings . . . was not the practice of Christ and his apostles.”³⁸ He makes a great effort to bring his own theology in line with the plain statements of Scripture. Fuller made a personal covenant with the Lord, “to take no principle at second-hand; but to search for every thing at the pure fountain of thy word. . . .”³⁹

Third, he demolished the notion that there was no duty of ministers to call sinners to repentance or for sinners to believe and repent. When Fuller was considering taking the pastorate of the church at Kettering he wrote the congregation to clarify his position:

I believe it is the duty of every minister of Christ plainly and faithfully to preach the gospel to all who will hear it; and as I believe the inability of men to spiritual things to be wholly of the moral, and therefore of the criminal kind, —and that it is their duty to love the Lord Jesus Christ, and trust him for salvation, though they do not; I therefore believe free and solemn addresses, invitations, calls, and warnings to them, to be not only consistent, but directly adapted as means, in the hand of the Spirit of God, to bring them to Christ. I consider it as part of my duty that I could not omit without being guilty of the blood of souls.⁴⁰

This statement echoes the views of many of the earlier Puritans, but Fuller expresses it with a passionate vigor that carried all before it.

The fourth correction Fuller brought to Baptist thinking had to do with the use of means. In his *Enquiry*, Carey argued strongly for the use of means for the conversion of the heathen. This point is the natural consequence of the theological development that precedes it. As we shall see in a later chapter, Fuller played a key role in articulating a theology of means. If Carey is the father of the modern missionary movement, Fuller is its theologian.

³⁸Joseph Belcher, *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*. (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1845), 2.386.

³⁹Haykin, xix.

⁴⁰Haykin, 13.

He not only cleared away the choking brambles of hyper-Calvinism, but he replaced it with an Evangelical and missionary Calvinism with sufficient vitality to spread around the globe.

Carey and the Northamptonshire Association Baptists

The Northamptonshire Association provided the cradle in which the modern missionary movement was born. Though distant from the center of influence in London, and consisting of mostly small and impoverished congregations, it would take steps of faith that would lead greatest expansion of biblical Christianity in history. Fuller was not the only remarkable figure, even if the most prominent. It was amongst this group of men, students of Jonathan Edwards and more importantly of the Scriptures, that Carey came of age as a pastor.

Carey was ordained at the Baptist Church in Olney where John Sutcliffe pastored. His first congregation was in the village of Moulton. At Moulton, he worked at his old trade repairing shoes and also taught school, but he was unable to make ends meet. Nevertheless, it was a productive period. He studied biblical and modern languages while he labored at his cobbler's bench. He made a leather map on which he wrote the information he was collecting about the spiritual condition of the peoples of the world. And he preached, not just in Moulton, but increasingly in neighboring villages.

During this time he attended Northamptonshire Association meetings, at times walking great distances without food for lack of funds. In Andrew Fuller, Carey was to find a lifelong friend and ministry partner. Their first encounter came after a message delivered by Carey:

Carey had preached and there came pushing his way to him a man of thirty-three, robust and broad-shouldered, with the lines of thought cut sharply in his face, but

with an almost feminine tenderness trembling in the eyes, under the shadow of the dark eyebrows. Seizing the hand of the preacher, who had given utterance to sentiments, which had for some time been struggling for room in his own heart, Fuller said to Carey what became true—‘We must know more of each other.’⁴¹

Under the influence of Fuller and likeminded pastors, the Northamptonshire Association grew, as did the individual congregations of the association. Carey experienced a period of trials in the Moulton congregation, but was able to eliminate a divisive spirit and the congregation saw spiritual growth. He led the church in adopting a church covenant that emphasized the unity that should prevail in a church. This covenant committed the church to a Calvinistic understanding of salvation emphasizing the depravity of human nature and man’s “total moral inability; and yet absolute inexcusableness.”⁴² The remedy was salvation which, “from its first cause to its final consummation is a display of sovereign Goodness. . . .”⁴³

Carey’s covenant not only emphasized theological matters, but committed the church to a New Testament code of conduct emphasizing loving respect for the pastor, concern for maintaining a proper testimony before the world, and unity based on love among the members. The result was growth that required the expansion of the church facilities, a project for which Carey raised funds through subscriptions.

He eventually took a pastorate in Leicester at the Harvey Lane Church. Here he had a similar experience of bringing order and unity to a fractious congregation. He took the radical step of disbanding the church and reorganizing with those who would accept the

⁴¹S. P. Carey, 47.

⁴² From a copy of Carey’s covenant provided by Margaret Williams, current member of the Carey Baptist Church of Moulton. 2009.

⁴³ Ibid.

membership covenant. A letter from the church the year after Carey had left for India gives an indication of the relationship which had developed and the fruitfulness of his ministry:

Dear Brethren,

Last year we observed that the Lord smiled upon us, and Healed our Divisions, and Blessed us. Then we had some Increase. But this year He has shewed himself to Be a God who answers Prayers (Perhaps more than at Former times) to us. We have this year Received 19 members by Baptism and we have Reason to hope that more are under Concern of soul, our Present Number of Members is 80ty. But in the midst of our Expectations, and our growing Union, we where visited with a Blow which we feel the weight, perhaps moore that You can suppose. Our Dear and Beloved pastor was Called From us, to go and Preach the Gospel to Heathens. The Shock was great—great indeed to think of Parting with a minister we so dearly Loved—with faithfulness and with eflection which he was posest of, Indeared Him to us moore and more. But what can we do? His Heart had been Long set upon it, we had been Long Praying For the Gospel to Be sent, and Now providence opened a way, and we were called to make this Painefull Sacrifice, in answer to Prayers. We know that the Head of the Church can Supply our Wants, and hope we shall Be remembered for good By our sister Churches.⁴⁴

The sacrifice of the church at Leicester would pay unimagined dividends. Carey's affectionate gospel ministry that had restored the unity of the church in Leicester would be the means of calling many Indians to Christ.

⁴⁴S. P. Carey, 102.

CHAPTER 5

THE ENQUIRY

The end of the eighteenth century was the age of manifestoes. In a letter to Tomas Paine, Jefferson wrote, “Go on then in doing with your pen what in other times was done with the sword: shew that reformation is more practicable by operating on the mind than on the body of man, and be assured that it has not a more sincere votary nor you a more ardent well-wisher than Yrs. &c.”¹ It was a period that confirms the truth that ideas have consequences.

The Enlightenment and the Power of Ideas

By this time, doctrines of the Reformation had long since morphed into unrecognizable forms. The priesthood of every believer had through a series of permutations become the inalienable rights of the sovereign individual. The standard of scripture had given way to that of man’s own reason. While many of the ideas of the Enlightenment find their roots in the Reformation, by the end of the eighteenth century they had come unmoored.

Radical ideas were expressed in the writings of Voltaire and Rousseau on the continent and by Anglo-Americans such as Thomas Paine. The American Revolution fed on these ideas to a degree. The writings of John Locke were certainly a key to the thinking of America’s Founding Fathers. But it is also true that the American Revolution was a conservative revolution. It was founded on a belief that in the king’s treatment of the colonies ancient rights were violated. In the end, it was not a throwing off of every precedent or a turning from the law

¹ “The Letters of Thomas Jefferson 1743-1826: To Thomas Paine Philadelphia, June 19, 1792,” *American History from Revolution to Reconstruction and Beyond*; available from <http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/P/tj3/writings/brf/jefl99.htm>; Internet; accessed December 2010.

Of course, the Enlightenment was not a homogenous intellectual movement. In the American colonies the ideas of Jefferson were balanced by those of Adams. Not everyone in the Anglo-American sphere were sanguine about the direction Enlightenment ideas were leading France. It might be possible to argue that the enlightenment in France took more radical forms because France had never experienced the Reformation. Whatever the case, there is no doubt that French radicalism had an impact on the world that is felt down to this very day. Its effects can be seen far beyond the immediate political and geopolitical events of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

The after effects of the revolution which lead to the tyranny of Napoleon also served to loosen Spain's grip on its new world possessions. And Britannia, with the battles of the Nile and Trafalgar finished consolidating its control of the sea lanes of the world. After the devastating loss of its American colonies, Britain turned its face to the east and an empire that was growing on the Indian subcontinent. All of these developments laid the groundwork for the expansion of the gospel. We must be careful not to lazily accept a stereotypical view of the protestant missionary as a tool of rapacious colonial expansion. The relationship between the colonial powers and missions was never simple. Britain and its agents often resisted the arrival of missionaries for fear that their presence would complicate their search for profits, but it is also true that the expansion of the colonial system opened doors for the gospel.

The developments that led to the spread of Enlightenment ideas were the same that produced the explosion of Christian missions. The power of the press had had a role since the dawn of the Reformation. Books and pamphlets were printed and distributed by the thousands. Periodicals began to play a role in shaping public opinion. These publications were circulated amongst a network of intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic who shared a common language and culture and were able to communicate ever more fluidly because of advances in communications brought about by the technological advances in sailing and navigation.

The Enlightenment and Evangelical Calvinism

David Bebbington has shown that there are significant links between the Enlightenment and the rise of Evangelicalism. The question is what is the nature of that relationship? Is Evangelicalism essentially a product of the Enlightenment? In this thesis we have endeavored to show that Evangelicalism, especially that branch which can be called Evangelical Calvinism, is descended directly from the Reformation, and that the modern missionary movement as represented by Serampore is an organic development from Evangelical Calvinism. There are no doubt connections between Enlightenment thinkers and leaders of Evangelical Calvinism. Bebbington, for example, recognizes the influence of Locke on Edwards although he feels this link has been overemphasized.² The question is which movement gave birth to the other. Or is there another way of looking at the relationship?

Perhaps it is best to see Evangelicalism and the Enlightenment as parallel movements that emerge from the same milieu. Neither movement was monolithic, and it is possible to hear in the words of some Enlightenment thinkers³ echoes of Scriptural truth. John Locke in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* writes that, “For though the comprehension of our understanding comes exceeding short of the vast extent of things; yet we shall have cause enough to magnify the bountiful Author of our being, for that portion and degree of knowledge he has bestowed on us so far above all the rest of the Inhabitants of this our mansion. Men have reason to be well satisfied with what God hath thought fit for them . . .”⁴ He goes on to quote the Apostle Peter. The point is not that Locke was orthodox in all of his opinions, but to show that Evangelicalism shared with the Enlightenment a common vocabulary shaped by the Scriptures. Enlightenment usage of the Scriptures may have been highly selective, like Jefferson with his customized New Testament, but the Bible had not been jettisoned entirely. While there is

²D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (Great Britain: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 48.

³ Perhaps in some sense all Enlightenment thinkers were influenced by scriptural ideas.

⁴John Wynne, *An Abridgment of Mr. Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: F. Nicholson, 1831), 7.

significant cross-fertilization it is difficult to see Evangelicalism, and more specifically Evangelical Calvinism and the modern missionary movement, as the product of the Enlightenment.⁵

While William Carey was certainly influenced by trends in science and political theory associated with the Enlightenment, he might have been surprised if told his missionary drive was rooted in John Locke's theory of knowledge.⁶ Whatever Carey's opinion might have been of Locke, he had little use for the increasingly heretical drift of Enlightenment ideas as shown by an entry from his journal while onboard ship bound for India, "All this Week nothing of moment occurred. We meet every morning and Evening for family prayer, and meet with innumerable civilities from every body on board. but have most awful proof of the [Awful] effects of human depravity when heightened by bad principle—the Old Deist (Barnard) is one of the most daring presumptuous wretches that ever I heard—Calm the last five days."⁷

Carey and Enlightenment Influences

While Carey would have rejected much of Enlightenment philosophy, he had an enthusiastic interest in scientific and social progress that modern historians perhaps too quickly attribute to the Enlightenment. As parallel products of the Reformation, Evangelicalism and the Enlightenment shared a common social space, and the cross-fertilization was extensive. Ernest Payne illustrates the way in the two movements rubbed shoulders in his preface to Carey's *Enquiry*. In 1791, Thomas Paine released his work *The Age of Reason*. Its sequel, *The Rights of*

⁵Michael A. G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart, *The Advent of Evangelicalism* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2008), 54.

⁶Bebbington's argument is that Evangelical activism was released by a new confidence gained when Locke's theory of knowledge was applied by Jonathan Edwards to spiritual matters. The new sense of assurance provided by this innovation allowed Evangelicals to turn from introspection to outward endeavor. Whatever the merits of this argument, and it is questioned by some, it is a less adequate explanation for the modern missionary movement than that it was the natural outgrowth of Reformation theology and missionary endeavor as we have traced in previous chapters.

⁷Terry G. Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2000), 4.

Man, was released in 1792. The same year William Carey's *Enquiry* was published in Leicester.

Ernest Payne describes an intriguing possibility:

A week or so before the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society on 2 October, 1792, a famous incident occurred in Johnson's hospitable bachelor establishment at No. 72 St. Paul's Churchyard. Tom Paine and William Blake had been dining there. The former's *Rights of Man* had just appeared. Moved as it seemed by some intuition Blake said to Paine; 'You must not go home, or you are a dead man,' and persuaded him to start at once for Dover and Paris. As it transpired, Paine got away only just in time, for the government had decided to prosecute him. As he slipped out of Johnson's shop, did his eye light, perchance, on Carey's *Enquiry*?⁸

Paine would proceed to Paris where he became an honorary citizen and was elected to the National Convention even though he spoke no French. As the revolution unraveled he was arrested and only narrowly escaped the guillotine. There is no evidence that Thomas Paine was ever aware of William Carey or his *Enquiry*, but he had some contact with Nonconformists. Johnson the shop owner of the incident described by Payne was Joseph Johnson, "the son of a north of England Baptist farmer" who had become an important printer and publisher. His production included the first volume of Cowper's poems.

Radical politics and evangelical missions are not exactly binary opposites, but they do represent two differing visions of how to improve the world. It should not surprise us that many of the leaders of the modern missionary movement were at one time attracted to radical political movements. Carey himself was reputed to have had republican sentiments,⁹ and he was also a lifelong pacifist. While pastor at Leicester he was made the secretary of the Nonconformist committee and found himself engaged in the struggle to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts which placed social limits on Catholics and Nonconformists.¹⁰

At Leicester Carey came into contact with others who were advocates of scientific progress. Richard Philipps, for example founded the Philosophical Institute which was full of

⁸William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, 1961), 15.

⁹Samuel Pearce Carey, *William Carey* (London: The Wakeman Trust, 1923), 60.

¹⁰S. P. Carey, 59.

“telescope, planetaria, and electrical apparatus. . . ,’ and he had set up a lightning-conductor—to the people a thing as impious as dangerous!”¹¹ Joseph Priestley, who was the scientist who discovered oxygen and a theologian and dissenting clergyman, was an invited guest at the Leicester Philosophical Institute. Carey showed a lifelong interest in science and eventually made serious contributions in the field of botany. Both Priestley and Carey are evidence that at this stage there could no clear distinctions between many ideas which are now viewed as the province of the Enlightenment. As yet there was no rivalry between science and theology.

On the social and political front demarcations were also unclear. Carey was a vocal and lifelong opponent of slavery. He suggested that to raise funds for missions, people might forgo the use of sugar, an action that had the effect of undermining an industry dependent on slave labor. In India, as we shall see, he campaigned against widow-burning and infanticide; causes which were joined by others whose motivation owed more to the Enlightenment than Evangelicalism. But Carey’s primary focus was the preaching of the gospel. He was willing to make use of the latest in technology, science and education to benefit bodies and minds, but above all else he sought the salvation of souls.

The Advocate

Carey’s pastorates in Moulton and at Harvey Lane in Leicester provided him opportunity for growth in ministerial skills. But his eyes were constantly raised to further fields. The constant flow of information as the edges of the map were pushed back by the explorations of Cook and others, in addition to the reports of the heroic missionary efforts of the Moravians, worked like fire in his heart and mind.

In the Baptist pastors of the Northamptonshire Association, Carey found kindred spirits. While it would take some time to convince them that a world missionary project was feasible, the popular view that they were adamantly against the idea is largely apocryphal. There was a

¹¹Ibid., 60.

natural reluctance that grew from the sheer boldness of the vision, but who could blame them? Fuller said of Carey's proposals, "If the Lord should make windows in Heaven, could such a thing be?"¹²

The Northamptonshire Association was the fertile soil required. The theology of Hall and Fuller, with the help of Edwards, had already prepared the ground. They had gladly joined in Sutton's efforts to promote prayer by publishing Edwards work *An Humble Attempt . . . to Promote Extraordinary Prayer*. Much has been made of an incident that occurred at an association meeting. When the request was made that topics for discussion be suggested, Carey advanced a precisely worded proposal, "whether the command given to the apostles to teach all nations was not binding on all succeeding ministers to the end of the world, seeing that the accompanying promise was of equal extent."¹³ John Ryland's response is well known, "Young man, sit down. When God pleases to convert the heathen, He will do it without your aid or mine."¹⁴

John Ryland Jr. later denied that his father had said this, but given Ryland's tendency to express ideas forcefully it would not have been out of character. What is most certainly an error is the characterization of the entire Northamptonshire Association as opponents of world missions. Their slow response to Carey's proposals is best seen as a natural reluctance on the part of an impoverished group, far from the centers of influence, to a proposal of world-historical importance.

Carey hoped that others, Sutcliff or perhaps Fuller, might lead the way in the missionary enterprise he envisioned. He had no confidence in his own ability, but sought to influence the others in one on one meeting.¹⁵ In 1787, while raising funds for the construction project at the

¹²S. P. Carey, 49.

¹³Ibid., 47.

¹⁴John Clark Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward: Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission*. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1859), 1:10.

¹⁵S. P. Carey, 49.

church in Moulton, Carey visited Thomas Potts, a wealthy Baptist deacon in Birmingham. Carey shared his views on missions with Potts who said that while the public was not yet ready for such an idea, he would underwrite the publication of a treatise if Carey would put his ideas on paper.¹⁶

The *Enquiry*

More than 200 years later Carey's *Enquiry* still has power to motivate. Its power does not spring from its artfulness; Carey relied on a spare argument which derives strength from its simple directness. His argument is summarized in the full title of the work: *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*. To the implied question, Carey's answer is an unequivocal yes. In an age of manifestoes by the likes of Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson, it is ironic that this work composed in Carey's workshop has transformed the world the most. It is no exaggeration to state that, "it deserves a place alongside Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses in its influence on subsequent church history."¹⁷

The work is divided into five sections with equally self-explanatory titles. The weight of his argument is carried in the first, fourth and fifth sections. In the first, he argues that the Great Commission of Matthew 28 is still incumbent on Christians in every age. The second and third sections provide supporting information. Section two reviews the history of missionary endeavors down to his day. Section three provides information on the state of the world at the time of the *Enquiry's* publication. The detailed tables in this section provide early evidence of the scientific curiosity and taxonomical thoroughness which would later merit Carey's membership in the Linnaean Society. In the fourth section, he discusses in general terms the practicability of a missionary enterprise. In the last section he makes the necessary case for the use of practical means to fulfill the command.

¹⁶Marshman, 10.

¹⁷J. Herbert Kane, *Concise History of the Christian World Mission: A Panoramic View of Missions from Pentecost to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1978), 85.

The *Enquiry* marks not just the beginning of the modern missionary movement, but of modern missiology as an intellectual discipline. Samuel Pearce Carey states that his review of previous efforts, “was the first modern attempt at a roll of world missionaries. The facts were not readily to hand, for no one else was then studying this aspect of history, yet almost all the names which modern missionary research discloses are here enshrined.”¹⁸ Carey brings a variety of disciplines to bear on the subject; biblical exegesis, theology, church history, geography, and ethnography. And he does not shrink from offering a concrete plan.

A Binding Commission

Section 1 of Carey’s work is titled, *An Enquiry whether the Commission given by our Lord to his Disciples be not still binding on us*. Again the title is a clear anticipation of the direction his argument will take. Remarkably he deals concisely only with direct objections to the view that Christians are responsible to carry the Gospel to the heathen. In spite of the importance of the arguments over the free offer of the gospel which had occupied his denomination during previous years, he simply proceeds to argue for carrying the Gospel to foreign lands. However, that he presupposes these theological discussions is hinted at by an allusion to Fuller’s point that we are guided by scripture and not God’s secret purpose.¹⁹

Carey argues that the apostolic commission, “to Go, and teach all nations; or as another evangelist expresses it, go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” must be applied in the most extended sense, both chronologically and geographically. The Commission requires preaching to every creature in every place, and it does not expire until the advent.

To those who would limit the commission geographically, who would say that there was much to be done at home first, he replied that while this is true there is a difference between

¹⁸S. P. Carey, 57.

¹⁹Carey, 40.

those places where churches exist in every town and the Bible is to be found in the local tongue and those regions of the world where opposite conditions prevail.

Carey anticipates the argument of the last chapter, which calls for practical steps to be taken, by objecting to the point of view that “if God intends the salvation of the heathen, he will some way or other bring them to the gospel, or the gospel to them.” God’s sovereignty should not be used as an excuse to disobey God’s command. This is an echo of the opposition supposedly expressed by John Ryland Sr. While they do not serve as confirmation that Ryland actually made the statement it does tend to confirm that such sentiments were still prevalent among some Baptists even after the great theological progress made through the writings of Fuller, Hall and others.

To those who would limit the commission chronologically, Carey also argues that the commission should be applied in the most ample extent in terms of chronology. He specifically attacks the view that the Great Commission expired with the passing of the apostles. “There seems also to be the opinion existing in the minds of some, that because the apostles were extraordinary officers and have no proper successors, and because many things which were right for them to do would be utterly unwarrantable for us, therefore it may not be immediately binding on us to execute the commission. . . .”²⁰ This had been John Gills position. In Gill’s commentary on Matthew 28:18 he had written, “And Jesus came and spake unto them . . . To the eleven disciples and apostles: for though there might be so large a number as before observed, yet the *following* words were only spoken to the apostles. . . .”²¹ Carey’s answer is that if the commission be limited to the apostles then so must the command to baptize, and so must be the promise of His presence to the end of the world. Carey went on to argue that the Commission could only be superseded by further revelation which, of course, did not exist.

²⁰Carey, 36.

²¹Gill, John, John Gill, and John Gill. *An exposition of the Old and New Testaments* (Paris, Ark: Baptist Standard Bearer, 1989), 375.

In the absence of a counter-revelation, the only thing that could render the commission Non-binding would be the physical impossibility of “putting it in execution.” He writes, “It was not the duty of Paul to preach Christ to the inhabitants of Otaheite,²² because no such place was then discovered, nor had any means of coming at them.”²³ This statement takes us to the heart of Carey’s thinking on the matter. His missiology turned on the interaction between three concepts; duty, providence and practicability.

The Call of Duty

As we have seen, Carey argues that the Great Commission is still incumbent upon the church. He offers duty as the primary motivation for missions. There are traces of other motivating factors in the *Enquiry*, but in keeping with his direct style he only develops that of duty. Some theologians have offered the desire for the increase of God’s glory as the primary motivation for missions.²⁴ This is implied in Carey’s introduction where he states that the missionary endeavor is the proper response to the Lord’s command that his disciples, “pray that his kingdom may come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. . . .”²⁵ Years later he would make an explicit statement. In a letter to John Williams he describes the resistance to the Gospel among the Brahmins:

Public disputes with them also in the streets, and any place where we meet with them and always in the hearing or the common people have in some measure excited them to reflect, but at present it has been of no use except to make them try to avoid disputes with us and to excite a laugh against them among others who are not permitted to read for themselves. I have no doubt but in the end the God of all grace will exert His almighty power and vindicate His authority and establish the glory of His own name in this wretched country; our labors may be only like those of pioneers to prepare the way, but

²² Tahiti.

²³Carey, 37.

²⁴Piper, John. *Let the Nations Be Glad!: The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993).

²⁵Carey, 31.

truth will assuredly prevail and this among the other kingdoms or the earth shall assuredly see the salvation of our God.²⁶

In 1821 he would write to his son Jabez, who was serving as a missionary in Ajimere:

[I] know the difficulties of the first engaging in this work are great and feel much for your standing alone in that vast held but I am sure the Lord can give you strength according to your day and that he will sustain all who with a single eye to his glory engage in his glorious work. It is equally the same with him to help with many or with few and to effect his great designs by weak instruments as by those which are, apparently the strongest for in truth, all are weakness itself. The greatness of the power is in him and must always appear so to be. It is therefore not unlikely that he may give as great and even greater blessing to your labours who are working alone as to the combined effort or those who appear to have every advantage. He is a Almighty God.²⁷

These letters are a product of Carey's latter years and may reflect a more mature missiological vision, but given the fact that he does allude to this motivation, if somewhat obliquely, in the *Enquiry*, it may be that Carey hoped to simplify the argument in the *Enquiry*.

Carey also sees compassion as a motivating factor. In the introduction he appeals to "feelings of humanity."²⁸ In section four he maintains motivation should be derived from consideration of the destitute and uncivilized state of most of mankind.²⁹ Accounts of mankind's, "ignorance, or cruelty, should call forth our pity, and excite us to concur with providence in seeking their eternal good."³⁰

In the end, the most direct theological argument for missionary endeavor is the call of duty. God's glory is a legitimate motivating factor, as is compassion for the souls of lost men,

²⁶Leighton and Mornay Williams, ed., *Serampore Letters 1800-1816* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1892), 62.

²⁷Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, *William Carey and Serampore* 3d ed. (Serampore: Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, 2008), 35-36.

²⁸Carey, 31.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 95.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 94.

but words of praise for God or expressions of concern for the lost are empty unless accompanied by active obedience to the Great Commission.

The *Enquiry* and Eschatology

In the *Enquiry*, Carey makes only passing references to eschatological views. In section one he refers to the opinions of “some learned divines” that the heathen would not yet be converted because “first the witnesses must be slain” and other prophecies must be fulfilled. Carey expresses his doubts that this is an impediment for, among other reasons, “the success of the gospel has been very considerable in many places already.”³¹ Here he is not concerned with finding a motivation for missions but with removing certain eschatological views as impediments.

In the fourth section of the *Enquiry* Carey appeals to prophecy in support of the use of means. He quotes Isaiah 9:9, “Surely the Isles shall wait for me; the ships of Tarshish, first to bring my sons from far. . . .” He explains, “This seems to imply that in the time of the glorious increase of the church, in the latter days, commerce shall subserve the spread of the gospel.” While this indicates something about Carey’s eschatological viewpoint it should be noted that his primary focus here is to argue for the use of means. This is not to say that he was not motivated by what Ian Murray has called The Puritan Hope, but simply that his argument in the *Enquiry* touches on eschatology only tangentially. His primary line of reasoning follows elsewhere.

Of the New England Puritans it has been said that they were:

Men living in a relatively small community on the edge of an unexplored continent, remote from the great population centers, having some contact with remote lands by sea trade but closely related to only the British homeland, having converted only a few hundred Indians, proclaim their certainty that the whole wide world belongs to Christ and is being brought to him! It is the universalism of the prophets that sustains this view. . . .³²

³¹Carey, 39-40.

³²Iain H. Murray, *The Puritan Hope: Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1998), 95.

Geographical details excepted, the same could be said of the Northamptonshire Baptists. Once on the field Carey would write during a time of discouragement, “I know there are only two real obstacles in any part of the earth, viz. a want of the Bible and the depravity of the Human Heart. The first of them God has begun to remove; and I trust the last will be removed soon; and when the Spirit is poured down from on high, all superstitions will give way.”³³

While the Northamptonshire Baptists had taken Jonathan Edwards’ call to prayer in *An Humble Attempt* to heart they reserved the right to disagree on eschatological details. When Sutcliff reprinted Edwards work he stated “an author and editor are very distinct characters . . .”³⁴ and he specifically pointed out that details of Edwards’s eschatology might be questioned. However, while there was room for difference in eschatological detail there is no doubt the Northamptonshire Baptists shared with Edwards and the Puritans the feeling that they lived on “the very edge of time”³⁵ and they were anticipating the growth of God’s activity in the world.

In the end, Carey’s argument is that duty is the primary motivation for missions. He speaks of “obligation” and “obedience” and argues that “it becomes us,” it ‘behoves us,” and “it is incumbent upon us.”³⁶ The weight of this duty is augmented by the glory of the one who gave the commission and the urgency is increased by the dire needs of the lost: but Carey’s argument concentrates on the focus of duty and obedience. In this sense we see that Carey attempts to keep his rationale very close to the actual logic of Biblical revelation.

An Urgent Call to Action

Like the other great manifestoes of this period, *The Declaration of Independence* and *The Rights of Man*, *The Enquiry* was more than a statement of principles; it was a call to action. The

³³Carter., 64.

³⁴Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Worcester, PA: Christian History Institute, 1998), 51.

³⁵George, 52.

³⁶A. H. Oussoren, *William Carey Especially His Missionary Principles* (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff's Uitgeversmaatschappij N.V., 1945) 129-130.

first two documents appealed to supposedly self-evident principles of human nature to argue for an agenda of political reform. *The Enquiry* argued from Biblical principles for obedience to the Great Commission. Carey occupies a place analogous to that of Jefferson who translated the principles of Locke and Montague into a document which set the agenda for a program of concrete action. Behind Carey we find Calvin's principle of secondary causes and the use of means, the Puritan's sense of the duty of ministers to preach the gospel, and Edwards' and Fuller's views on the nature of the human freedom and the duty to make free offers of the gospel. Carey took the next step. While it is in line with those that came before, it represents a giant step forward. At the same time, it is quite simple. The Great Commission is still binding and must be obeyed.

The *Enquiry* is a call to missionary activism. Bebbington locates the source of Evangelical activism³⁷ in Jonathan Edwards' doctrine of assurance. As we have seen, whether this is an adequate explanation for Evangelicalism in general is debated. Whatever the case, there is little in the *Enquiry* itself to support the view. Both Carey and Fuller struggled at times over the years with doubts about their own spiritual condition. It is best to see the *Enquiry* as the result of a simple impulse to be obedient to the Lord's commands.

William Carey was impelled by an increasing sense of urgency. He was not entirely confident of his own capacity to lead the endeavor, but found himself thrust into the forefront. When Birmingham businessman, Thomas Potts, offered to underwrite the publication of the *Enquiry*, Carey expressed doubts about his ability to produce the type of pamphlet required. Potts advised him; "If you can't do it as you wish, do it as you can, and I'll give you £10 towards its printing."³⁸ It was this practical approach characteristic of England's working classes that Carey brought to bear on missionary problems in years to come.

³⁷As already alluded to, Bebbington uses the simple term activism, but the context of his statements (see Bebbington, 41) supports the conclusion that the primary focus of this activism was missions and evangelism even though it extended to broader social concerns.

³⁸S. P. Carey, 50.

Carey's effort, while not polished by the literary standards of the day, proved to be effective. Fuller eventually threw his whole weight behind the endeavor, but it would be four years from the time it was suggested Carey write down his thoughts. In April of 1792 at an association meeting in Clipstone, Fuller preached a message titled, *The Pernicious Influence of Delay in Religious Concerns*. He dealt with the effect of delay in a broad range of spiritual circumstance, but he made especially strong statements about world evangelism:

[so] few and feeble efforts have been made for the propagation of the gospel in the world. When the Lord Jesus commissioned his apostles, he commanded them to—Go, and teach all nations, to preach the gospel to every creature; and notwithstanding the difficulties and opposition that would lie in the way. The apostles executed their commission with assiduity and fidelity; but since their days, we seem to sit down half contented that the greater part of the world should still remain in ignorance and idolatry.³⁹

His development of this theme shows considerable dependence on the practical theology Carey expresses in the *Enquiry*. The question arises, how much is the product of their personal interaction? Fuller appeals to the motivating factor of the value of men's souls and then raises the issue of practical means with a reference to societies, "Are there no opportunities for societies, or individuals in Christian nations, to convey the gospel to the heathens?"⁴⁰

This sermon was included in *The Memoirs of the Late Rev. Samuel Pearce* which Fuller compiled. In his sermon Fuller asks, "Ought we not then to try, at least, by some means to convey more of the good tidings of salvation to the world around us . . . ?" This question is followed by a significant footnote, perhaps of Fuller's own composition:

It may not be amiss to inform the reader, that at the time of the above discourse being delivered, the Rev. Mr. CAREY of Leicester, was present. After worship, when the ministers were together, he moved the question, "*Whether something might not be done in the way of sending the Gospel into the heathen world?*" It was well known at the same time the Mr. CAREY had written a judicious piece upon the subject, which he had by him in manuscript, shewing the duty of Christians in that matter, and the practicability of

³⁹Andrew Fuller, *Memoirs of the Late Rev. Samuel Pearce, A.M.* (London: J.W. Morris, 1800), 84.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 84.

the undertaking. It was therefore agreed as the first step proper to be taken, that Mr. CAREY be requested to revise and print his manuscript.⁴¹

A resolution to revise and print his *Enquiry* would not have been sufficient to satisfy Carey. The next month at the association meeting in Nottingham Carey delivered what has come to be remembered as “The Deathless Sermon.” He took as his text Isaiah 54:2, “Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.” Verse four feigns, “Fear not . . .” The sermon itself was not preserved, but its two principle points remain as a missionary standard, “Expect great things, attempt great things.”⁴² In these six words Carey compressed the essence of his missiology. There was an absolute dependence on a Sovereign God. This dependence was not enervating, it produced bold action. This was Evangelical Calvinism in its highest form.

As the Nottingham meeting drew to a close, the Northamptonshire Association still wavered. Fuller was about to adjourn the meeting when Carey grabbed his arm and exclaimed, “Is there nothing again going to be done, sir?”⁴³ The final barrier crumbled and before the ministers headed south into the night they approved Fuller’s motion: “Resolved, that a plan be prepared against the next minister’s meeting at Kettering, for forming a Baptist Society for propagating the Gospel among the Heathens.”⁴⁴ It was appropriate that *The Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Amongst the Heathen* was formed at Kettering where

⁴¹Fuller, 85-86.

⁴²S. P. Carey, 72. There is some doubt on the exact form of the famous phrase. This is the form used by John Clark Marshman.

⁴³S. P. Carey, 78.

⁴⁴Ibid.

Fuller pastored and where years before Doddridge had made his own missionary proposal. Fuller would spend the rest of his life in service to the new society.

Carey's *Enquiry* fulfilled its purpose. Hearts had been prepared by years of prayer in response to Jonathan Edwards *Humble Attempt*, but Edwards himself had shown, by his missionary years in Stockbridge, that the time comes when prayer alone is not enough. In Carey's words, "If you want the kingdom of God speeded go out and speed it yourselves; only obedience rationalizes prayer: only missions redeem your intercessions from insincerity."⁴⁵

⁴⁵Oussoren, 16.

CHAPTER 6

THE USE OF MEANS

Over the years, the missionary endeavor launched by Carey's *Enquiry* grew beyond all expectations. The activities of the missionaries would come to the attention of the colonial authorities and would be heatedly debated in parliament. Great issues of colonial governance and the relation of church and state were at stake, but the debates revealed something of Britain's views not just on religion, but on class as well. Differences were highlighted that touched on views of work, money, community, and church organization.

In 1808 and 1809, the activities of the Serampore missionaries came under the critical examination of the *Edinburgh Review*, perhaps the most prestigious publication of its day. In its pages the missionaries were ridiculed for their religious fervor and criticized for holding the unfashionable idea that the Indians should hear the gospel. They were described as “a nest of consecrated cobblers,”¹ as if they were as low and dangerous as vipers. One author, Robert Southey, the biographer of Cowper and Lord Nelson, offered a qualified defense of the Serampore missionaries:

We . . . are neither blind to what is erroneous in their doctrine, nor ludicrous in their phraseology: but the anti-missionaries cull out from their journals and letters all that is ridiculous, sectarian and trifling: call them *fools*, madmen, tinkers, Calvinists and schismatics: and keep out of sight their love of man, and their zeal for God, and their self-devotement, their indefatigable industry, their unequalled learning. These low-born and low-bred mechanics have translated the whole Bible into Bengalee, and have by this time printed

¹John Clark Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward: Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission*. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1859), 1:375.

it. They are printing the New Testament in the Sanscrit, the Orissa, the Mahratta, the Hindoostanee, and the Guzerattee, and translating it into Persic, Telinga, Carnata, Chinese, the language of the Sikhs, and of the Burmans, and in four of these languages they are going on with the Bible.²

Perhaps a little qualified support is better than no support at all. Southey does not attempt to defend their “erroneous doctrine” or “ludicrous phraseology”. His strategy is to concede that their theology and background are not really of the better sort, but that they had accomplished noble things in spite of the disadvantage of coming from the lower classes. Although there was not a well-born gentleman among them, they managed to translate and print the Bible in numerous languages:

Extraordinary as this is, it will appear more so, when it is remembered that of these men, one was originally a shoemaker, another a printer at Hull, and a third a master of a charity school at Bristol. Only fourteen years have elapsed since Thomas and Carey set foot in India, and in that time these missionaries have acquired this gift or tongues. In fourteen years these low-born, low-bred mechanics have done more towards spreading the knowledge of the Scriptures among the heathen, than has been accomplished, or even attempted, by all the world besides.”³

Southey refers to the former trades of the members of the Serampore Trio. Carey had been a shoemaker, William Ward a printer and newspaper publisher, and Joshua Marshman a school teacher. While Southey’s defense was doubtless well-intended, it never occurred to him that in the providence of God, the missionaries’ former occupations were not an impediment but an actual benefit to the mission. Nor did it occur to him that a difference in mindset may have been critical element in their success. Unconcerned with aristocratic propriety, these “low-bred mechanics” were products of industrial England and their greatest concern was how to get things done.

²Marshman, 378-379.

³Ibid.

Most of the men involved in the early years of the BMS and the Serampore Mission were “low-bred mechanics,” men accustomed to earning their bread by manual labor. While there were levels of English society that were preoccupied with how to leisurely pass the time on annual income generated by a sizeable estates, that reality was a distant one for men like Carey the cobbler and Fuller the son of dairy farmers. Survival for the working classes required a practical prudence which was foreign to the better sorts of people that inhabit the pages of a Jane Austen novel. The poor had to make the sort of practical evaluations which led Carey’s father to apprentice him to a shoemaker. The family trade of tammy weaving was being reshaped by the rise of industrial mills while shoemaking was a growing business in Northamptonshire.

In Carey’s world, one prayed for God to provide and believed He would. But the shoes still had to be made and the ten miles to Thomas Gotch’s house in Kettering had to be walked to deliver them. Carey taught school to provide for his family, because the church couldn’t afford to provide a salary. There was no living like that of an Anglican minister. And like his father Edmund, Carey kept an ear to the ground to know what was happening in the world because choosing the right apprenticeship could make the difference between starving or not.

A Blue Collar Approach

David Bebbington has asserted that activism is one of the “enduring hallmarks of the Evangelical movement.”⁴ He sees Edward’s theology as the catalyst, even though, as our earlier chapters have attempted to show, Calvin himself and the later Puritans made

⁴D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (Great Britain: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 41.

significant missionary efforts. Significantly, Bebbington recognizes that Edwards advocated missionary endeavor without denying his Calvinist theology:

It was still believed by Jonathan Edwards for instance, that God exercises his sovereignty in men's salvation by bestowing the means of grace on one people but not on another. Now, however, it was increasingly held that human beings could be the appointed agents of bringing the gospel to unevangelized nations. We know, wrote Edwards; that it is God's manner to make use of means in carrying on his work in the world. . . .⁵

With the *Enquiry*, particular Baptists take an additional step, "Means were now held to be obligatory, for, as Carey contended, the Great Commission is still binding on believers."⁶

Bebbington defines "means" fairly broadly but in a way that is consistent with Carey's use of the term: "Means" was the key word signifying the whole apparatus of human agency."⁷

As already discussed in chapter five, Bebbington sees the source of Evangelical activism in a new understanding of assurance which Jonathan Edwards derives from John Locke's theory of knowledge. This is debated by other scholars, and in Carey's case, it is perhaps best to see his missionary drive as the result of the development of Reformation themes:⁸ the weight of Reformation theology and the examples of others outlined in previous chapters brings him to see the Great Commission as personally binding. Outside influences are admitted, the Enlightenment was providing new intellectual tools, and Carey was of course stimulated by Cook's voyages among many other elements now ascribed to the Enlightenment, but perhaps not enough weight has been given to his working class origins.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Themes which, are of course, neatly summarized by Bebbington's quadrilateral.

Carey, as well as Ward and Marshman, came from what we would today call a blue collar background. They were men who earned their bread by manual labor. As such, they understood something basic about God's creation. The world is malleable; matter can be shaped and reshaped to suit a variety of purposes. Stone becomes walls and wood becomes chairs. Leather can be cut and sewn to make shoes. In addition, matter can be shaped to form tools; intermediate forms that provide greater efficiency.

One of Carey's great insights is that just as a farmer must use a plow, those who would answer the missionary call must grasp appropriate tools. Ironically, it was characteristic of both the Hindu and the British class system to look down on the mere laborer. Hands calloused by the constant use of tools were not marks of respect.

In chapter five, we stated that Carey's missiology, as developed in the *Enquiry* turned on three related concepts: duty, providence, and means. We dealt with the first of these in the last chapter. In regard to means, in the first paragraph of the Introduction to the *Enquiry* Carey writes; "As our blessed Lord has required us to pray that his kingdom may come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven, it becomes us not only to express our desires of that event by words, but by the use of every lawful method to spread the knowledge of his name."⁹ The formula is simple: obedience (duty) to a sovereign God demands not just words but action—and action must be channeled by means. Perforce, these means must be selected from those available, by God's providence, in a particular historical-cultural context.

Carey links the use of means to the ministry of the Apostles after the resurrection of Christ, "When he had laid down his life, and taken it up again, he sent forth his disciples to preach the good tidings to every creature, and to endeavor *by all possible means* to bring over

⁹William Carey, *An Enquiry Into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, 1961), 31.

a lost world to God.”¹⁰ While he does not elaborate at this point on the means used by the apostles, it is clear that he feels the use of means is biblically warranted. The use of the word *possible* implies a standard of practicality. The perfect tool is not always available, but the perfect should not be made enemy of the good.

Carey’s specific suggestion in the *Enquiry* is that a Society be formed. Andrew Walls has written that, “There never was a theology of the voluntary society. The voluntary society is one of God’s theological jokes, whereby he makes tender mockery of his people when they take themselves too seriously.”¹¹ Strictly speaking, Walls is right. The Particular Baptists did not develop a specific theology of the missionary society. Neither did those from other denominations who followed with their own societies. However, their approach was not atheological. Rather they came at the issue from a surprising direction. As we shall see, they linked their missiology, not to ecclesiology but directly to theology proper. The result is a missiology that perhaps could have only come in God’s providence from dissenting pastors with calloused hands.

A Theology of Means

In the years that followed the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society, Andrew Fuller worked tirelessly on behalf of the BMS. Understanding the key role the idea played in their missiology he was a regular advocate for the use of means. He was of one mind with Carey on the issue from early on; a fact made clear by a message he preached at Clipstone on April 27, 1791 at the association meeting where Carey made a draft of his

¹⁰Carey, 33 Emphasis mine.

¹¹Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (Edinburgh: Orbis Books, 1970), 246.

Enquiry available for consideration to his fellow pastors. The message was titled *The Pernicious Influence of Delay in Religious Matters*. Although it dealt with a broad range of spiritual matters he also focused on the subject of missions:

We *pray* for the conversion and salvation of the world, and yet *neglect the ordinary means* by which those ends have been used to be accomplished. It pleased God, heretofore, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believed: and there is reason to think it will still please God to work by that distinguished means. Ought we not then at least to try by some means to convey more of the good news of salvation to the world around us than has hitherto been conveyed? The encouragement to the heathen is still in force, “Whosoever *shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*: but how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?”¹²

This message combined with the introduction of the *Enquiry* set a process in motion which led to the birth of the BMS. The similarity in reasoning suggests that both the message and the *Enquiry* owed something to the interaction between Carey and Fuller.

Not quite ten years later Fuller spoke at the annual meeting of the Bedford Union. In a sermon titled *God’s Approbation Necessary for Success* he drew principles from the story of the conquest of the Promised Land in the Old Testament:

Thus it has long been in the Christian church the gospel having obtained a footing in the western nations, we have acted as though we were willing that Satan should enjoy the other parts without molestation. Every heathen and Mahomedan country has seemed to be a city walled up to heaven, and the inhabitants terrible to us as the sons of Anak. And even in our native country, an evangelical ministry having obtained a kind of establishment in some places, we have long acted as if we thought the rest were to be given up by consent, and left to perish without any means being used for their salvation! If God means to save any of them, it seems, he must bring them under the gospel, or the gospel, in some miraculous manner, to them: whereas the command of the Saviour is that we *go*, and preach it to every creature. All that Israel gained was by dint of the sword.¹³

¹²Andrew Fuller, *The Complete Works of Rev. Andrew Fuller* (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1845), 1:148.

¹³Joseph Belcher, ed., *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 1:188.

Here again we hear echoes of Carey's *Enquiry*. Like Carey, he attacks the notion that obedience must depend on previous miraculous intervention. The command stands and obedience requires the grasping of the means at hand, represented in this case by the sword taken up by the Israelites. Fuller apparently continued to meditate on the use of means in the history God's working with Israel, because in 1814 he returned to the subject in an address delivered to the *British and Foreign School Society* in London:

If it be the design of God to diffuse the knowledge of himself over the earth in these last days, it might be expected that suitable means and instruments would be employed to accomplish it. When he meant to rear a tabernacle in the wilderness, he raised up Bezaleel and Aholiab, and other wise-hearted men, in whom he put wisdom and understanding. Thus we might expect men to be gifted and qualified for the work appointed them, and to be stirred up to engage in it. It might be expected, supposing a great work designed to be accomplished, that societies would be formed, some to translate the sacred Scriptures into the languages of the nations, some to give them circulation, some to scatter tracts which shall impress their leading principles, some to preach the gospel, and some to teach the rising generation to read and write.¹⁴

Fuller sees no contradiction between divine activity and human agency. The two artisans commissioned to construct the tabernacle are taken as examples of the manner in which men and their abilities are used by God to fulfill his purposes. At this stage, Fuller has expanded the range of "lawful means" to include translation, publication, and education. This goes beyond Carey's suggestion in the *Enquiry* that a Society be formed, but it reflects the developments on the field in 1814.

Means and Providence

Carey and Fuller took as their point of departure for their missiology, not ecclesiology, but a subject under theology proper. They built a theological framework for the

¹⁴Fuller, 419.

use of means on the foundation of the doctrine of Providence. This can be seen in the first section of the *Enquiry* where Carey argues that the Great Commission is non-binding if it can be shown to have been repealed.¹⁵ In the absence of a specific repeal or “counter-revelation,” only “natural impossibility” could make it non-binding. Paul had not been responsible to evangelize “Otaheite¹⁶ because no such place was then discovered.” Carey devised a missiological approach that begins with scripture and works outward to take into account the actual condition of the world. In the process he cut the Gordian knot of Protestant missions which was how to devise organizational structures that were coherent with their ecclesiology.

In one of the most compelling paragraphs in the *Enquiry* Carey demonstrates the simple directness with which he used the doctrine of divine Providence to break through the reigning inertia:

It has been said that we ought not to force our way, but to wait for the openings, and leadings of Providence; but it might with equal propriety be answered in this case, neither ought we to neglect embracing those openings which daily present themselves to us. What openings of providence do we wait for? We can neither expect to be transported into the heathen world without ordinary means, nor to be endowed with the gift of tongues, &c, when we arrive there. These would not be providential interpositions, but miraculous ones. Where a command exists nothing can be necessary to render it binding but a removal of those obstacles which render obedience impossible, and these are removed already.¹⁷

The doctrine of providence effectively bridges the gap between Carey’s view of duty and his call for the use of means.

It would be a mistake to say that Carey and Fuller were unconcerned about other areas of doctrine such as eschatology or ecclesiology. There is ample evidence to show that they struggled to be faithful in matters of church order. What is more, a case can be made

¹⁵Carey, 37.

¹⁶Tahiti.

¹⁷Carey, 38.

that their Baptist polity, which emphasized the independency of the local congregations, was one of the providential factors which enabled the formation of the BMS. However, their missiology was an offshoot of theology proper. The commands of a sovereign God must be obeyed. And a high view of divine providence called for a laying hold of the means made available in their particular historical context. By allowing their missiology to be driven by the doctrine of providence rather than their ecclesiology they unlocked the door of the modern missionary movement.

Behind this missiology lay the expectations of the Puritan Hope, but they were not preoccupied with a minute deciphering of the signs of the times or in promoting specific schemes about the future. They were convinced God was working out His purpose in history in their own days and that the confluence of geopolitics, culture, and technology was divinely ordered for the spread of the gospel. For example, Carey saw the invention of the “mariners compass” as providential:

Men can now sail with as much certainty through the Great South Sea, as they can through the Mediterranean, or any lesser Sea. Yea, and providence seems in a manner to invite us to the trial, as there are to our knowledge trading companies, whose commerce lies in many places where these barbarians dwell. At one time or other ships are sent to visit places of more recent discovery, and to explore parts the most unknown; and every fresh account of their ignorance or cruelty, should call forth our pity, and excite us to concur with providence in seeking their eternal good.¹⁸

The doctrine of Providence was their north star in matters large and small. They not only saw God’s hand in world-historical developments that made missions feasible, but in countless smaller demonstrations of God’s guiding hand. The circumstances of Carey’s departure to India were accompanied by many obvious signs. In later years, they came to see God’s hand especially at work in their arrival in Serampore. John Clarke Marshman

¹⁸Carey, 94-95.

provides a description of Carey's arrival that must have been an echo of his parents' own views:

Mr. Carey arrived at Serampore with his family, consisting of four sons, and a wife in a state of hopeless insanity, on the 10th of January. Thus were the missionaries emphatically led "by a way they knew not." The opposition of Government, which at first threatened to extinguish missionary efforts in Bengal, became, under Providence, the occasion of removing the seat of the mission from one of the most unsuitable localities to the immediate vicinity of the metropolis, yet beyond the reach of the British authorities. . . . If the settlement of Serampore had not existed, or if it had not been at the time under the Danish flag, Mr. Marshman and Mr. Ward would, in all human probability, have been constrained to return forthwith to England, and the mission might have expired in its cradle. Mr. Carey would not have been permitted either to establish a press for the printing of the Scriptures at Mudnabatty, or to receive any addition of missionaries, and his labours would probably have become extinct on his death.¹⁹

Providence, Prayer and Practicality

While the missionary approach advocated by Carey and Fuller was eminently practical it should not be confused with raw pragmatism. Their mission theology flowed from their view of divine Providence, one that ran counter to the deism that had come out of the English enlightenment. While men like Jefferson believed in a divine watchmaker, God who at most had been active in the original creation, Carey and Fuller saw God as an active shaper of history. God was shaping human cultures to provide the tools for the spread of the gospel.²⁰

This perspective of God's providence was expressed by Rufus Anderson, a 19th century American, who saw in the "The Protestant form of association"²¹ an indication that the modern period represents "'the fullness of time' for the world's conversion. . . . Never, till now, did the social condition of mankind render it possible to organize the armies

¹⁹Marshman, 124.

²⁰ A point of view that might be worked out in relation to the doctrine of the incarnation.

²¹Walls, 223.

requisite for the world's spiritual conquest."²² This passage is cited by Andrew Walls as an example of what he calls the American approach to missions though he recognizes that this perspective, "had been adumbrated half a century earlier by William Carey, himself wide open to American influences of his own day."²³

Andrew Fuller had expressed similar sentiments in his sermon *The Increase of Knowledge* in 1814:

Who can observe the movements of the present time without perceiving in them the finger of God? [The] institution of Sunday schools, as they are called, for the children or the poor, took the lead about thirty years ago; since then, other institutions of various kinds have followed; but they have all risen *nearly* together, and all indicate a divine design. They form a whole, and, like the different parts of a machine, all work together.²⁴

This statement also reveals the practical approach of Fuller. In this case, he is referring to the various educational institutions which had arisen as adjuncts to the missionary enterprise. They all fit together like "parts of a machine." The missionary task was to be carried forward by human institutions designed with specific practical purposes in mind. However, this was not seen to contradict that the missionary enterprise was wholly dependent on God. It was carried out at His command and depended on his providential enablement. Fuller made this point in 1801:

"Establish thou the work of our hands upon us: yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." It was the work of Moses and Joshua, and the rest of God's servants, to mould and form the people, especially the rising generation: to instruct them in the words of the Lord, and impress their hearts with the vast importance of obeying them. And this has been the work of God's servants in every age. This is our object in our stated and occasional labours, *in* village-preaching, and in foreign missions: this is the object in the present undertaking: but all is nothing, unless God establish the work of

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., 224.

²⁴Andrew Fuller, *The Complete Works of Rev. Andrew Fuller* (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1845), 1:419.

our hands. Except the Lord build the house, the builders labour in vain.” As we must never confide in God to the neglect of means; so we must never engage in the use of means without a sense of our dependence on God.²⁵

This dependence on God found expression in urgent prayer. In the *Enquiry*, Carey pointed to the effects of the associational prayer meetings which had begun after Sutcliff had published Edwards’ *An Humble Attempt*:

I trust our monthly prayer meetings for the success of the gospel have not been in vain. It is true a want of importunity too generally attends our prayers; yet unimportant, and feeble as they have been, it is to be believed that God has heard, and in a measure answered them. The churches that have engaged in the practice have in general since that time been evidently on the increase . . .²⁶

Carey enumerates what were in his view the results of that prayer; the resolution of certain doctrinal controversies, increased calls to preach the gospel, the increase of civil and religious liberty. He expected this would result in the retreat of Catholicism and the eventual abolition of “the inhuman Slave Trade.” He saw in the establishment of a free settlement in Sierra Leone “an effort which, if succeeded with a divine blessing, not only promises to open a way for honourable commerce with that extensive country, and for the civilization of its inhabitants, but may prove the happy means of introducing amongst them the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”²⁷

Carey was convinced that the Lord who had given the Great Commission moved the world by his hand of providence. Because of this, prayer could produce concrete change in the political and social conditions that were the context for the task of missions. While his focus on means was eminently practical it was never an expression of self-sufficiency. “If a

²⁵Fuller, 413 - Message titled “*Desire for the Success of God’s Cause*” delivered at the opening of a new Baptist meeting house at Boston, Lincolnshire, June 25, 1801.

²⁶Carey, 79.

²⁷Carey, 105 This statement anticipates David Livingstone’s famous three C’s: commerce, Christianity and civilization.

temple is raised for God in the heathen world, it will not be by might nor by power, nor by the authority of the magistrate, or the eloquence of the orator; but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts. We must therefore be in real earnest in supplication his blessing upon our labours.”²⁸

Pitfalls

The *Enquiry* represents a breakthrough in missiological thinking. Its emphasis on prayerful dependence on God and perseverant practical effort continues to be the secret of missionary fruitfulness. This biblical balance must be maintained between two opposing extremes. These extremes of error were illustrated in the early part of the 19th century by developments related to the London Missionary Society. In the 1820s there was a growing sense that the missionary movement had begun to lose its way by relying more on the human elements of bureaucratic organization and fundraising than on the power of God.

One of the most vocal critics was Edward Irving, an eloquent Scottish minister who eventually led a movement that in some ways foreshadows modern Pentecostalism. Irving felt that, “missionaries, like the earliest apostles, should be sent forth ‘destitute of all visible sustenance and of all human support.’ They should be compelled to rely on God alone. Why should they need the bureaucratic organization of a missionary society to back them?”²⁹ Some missionary organizations were forced to signal, “they were more than business enterprises by opening their meetings with prayer”³⁰ While Irving’s quixotic reading of the

²⁸Ibid., 103.

²⁹Bebbington, 77.

³⁰Ibid.

New Testament account of apostolic missions might be set aside, his critique had hit the mark. The growth of “faith” missions was the eventual outcome.

While Irving had identified a weakness, his prescription was as damaging as the original ill. His theology was influenced in large degree by the philosophical fashions of the day. At the time, romanticism was growing as a reaction to the utilitarianism that emerged from the Enlightenment. Irving was influenced by figures like Wordsworth and Coleridge, the last a close friend who admired his dramatic preaching style. Carey’s generation of Baptist leaders, among others, had fought the negative effects of the Enlightenment with biblical theology; Fuller had written against socinianism, and Joshua Marshman attacked the Unitarian views of the Indian intellectual, Ram Mohan Roy. Irving’s response was to follow popular philosophy to the opposite extreme.

Even before Carey’s generation had passed, many had lost the old Protestant sense of *Coram Deo*: of living life before the face of God. Deism had banished God from the created world and with Him the doctrine of Providence and the sense that God orders all things. Without a strong doctrine of Providence, Carey’s insistence on the use of means becomes utilitarianism. The only option then lays on one of the two extremes. The first is an embrace of pragmatism to advance God’s kingdom entirely by human agency. The means become the end; social aid replaces the Gospel. On the other extreme Carey’s balance is replaced with a magical spirituality that values intense experience and fantastic testimonies of the miraculous over tangible fruit in the form of disciplined converts.

By building their missiology on theology proper Carey and Fuller not only cut the Gordian knot of Protestant missions—the dilemma of ecclesiology and missions agency—but they found in the doctrine of divine Providence a biblical principle which allowed them to

move outward into the world and forward into the future effectively employing the means made available by God who orders all things.

CHAPTER 7

INNOVATIVE INSTITUTIONS

The first collection for the Particular Baptist Missionary Society was taken in Andrew Fuller's snuff box. On a day that showed the first signs of the coming winter, October 2, 1792, the pastors of the Northamptonshire Association gathered in Kettering for a meeting hosted by Fuller's church.¹

The day's events were orchestrated by Fuller. They met early at the home of Fuller's deacon, Thomas Gotch. This same deacon had been Carey's benefactor. As a business man, he bought Carey's production of shoes. Following Fuller's advice, he one day told Carey to bring him no more shoes because he would pay him a stipend to support him in his ministry and studies. It was this eye for practical ways to promote the work that made Fuller the ideal host for the inaugural meeting of the BMS and the obvious choice to be its first secretary.

Fuller had broken up the hard ground through his theological writings. Carey planted the seed with his *Enquiry* and its concrete agenda but it was Fuller who in large part was responsible for seeing that agenda enacted. In the morning meeting, John Ryland preached from Isaiah 43:13, "I will work, and who shall let it?"² Still, the pastors of the association were reluctant to take the momentous step because they felt themselves inadequate for such a cause. As pastors of small churches from small villages, the unprecedented project of world evangelization seemed overwhelming. Fuller would write years later, "There was little or no respectability amongst us, not so much as a squire to take the chair."³

¹Samuel Pearce Carey, *William Carey* (London: The Wakeman Trust, 1923), 82.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 83.

Carey had brought to the meeting the latest issue of the Moravians *Periodical Accounts* which told of fruit amongst the American Indians, and in the West Indies, and efforts in Tranquebar and Africa. He appealed to the group in these terms “See what Moravians are daring, and some of them British like ourselves, and many only artisans and poor! Cannot we Baptists at least attempt *something* in fealty to the same Lord?” Following this urging they issued a resolution:

Humbly desirous of making an effort for the propagation of the Gospel amongst the Heathen, according to the recommendation of Carey’s *Enquiry*, we unanimously resolve to act in Society together for this purpose; and, as in the divided state of Christendom each denomination, but exerting itself separately, seems likeliest to accomplish the great end, we name this the Particular Baptist Missionary Society for the Propagation of the gospel amongst the Heathen.⁴

The minimum commitment was to be half a guinea. Thirteen men signed their names.⁵ Many were unable to meet their financial commitment on that day. One would have to borrow money and one would take a year to raise his portion of the funds. But those who gave on that day placed their offering in Andrew Fuller’s snuff box. For those who might think the snuff box seems an inappropriate vessel, Samuel Pearce Carey notes that “a representation of Paul’s conversion . . . was finely impressed on its lid.”⁶

A Voluntary Society

The Baptist Missionary Society was Carey’s answer to the instrumental question. If the Great Commission was still binding and must be fulfilled, the next question must be “How, then?” or to use terminology closer to Carey’s own, “by what means?” Fuller’s snuff box is an example of an answer to the same question applied to the collection taken on the day of the society’s founding. When the first collection was taken for the BMS, Fuller looked around for available means. Though Samuel Pearce Carey points out that a scene of

⁴Ibid., 84.

⁵Ibid., 85.

⁶Ibid.

Paul's conversion was engraved on the lid, this does not entirely erase the impression that there was something slightly inappropriate about the use of a snuff box. In the same way, Carey looked about and found in the voluntary society a functional tool though it may seem inappropriate and in need of improvement.⁷ The virtue in Fuller's and Carey's actions lies in not allowing the ad hoc nature of the society to deter them from immediate action. They had identified a serviceable if imperfect vehicle and they used it.

David Bebbington's quadrilateral⁸ has provided us with a useful way of tracing key themes through different stages in the development in the history of Protestant missions. The quadrilateral does not cover the key issues of ecclesiology and institutional development. This is not a criticism of the quadrilateral. As a description of tendencies which Evangelicals had in common it simply could not include an agreement on ecclesiological forms. From the dawn of the Reformation one of the biggest impediments to the growth of Protestant missions had been the failure to fill the institutional vacuum which in the Catholic Church was filled by the missionary orders. William Carey deserves the title of father of modern missions because his proposals in the *Enquiry*, ad hoc as they may have been, filled that vacuum.

The Particular Baptist Missionary Society was the first of several organizational forms that were adopted and adapted to serve the needs of the missionary movement. The society was dependent on two organizations which existed prior to its birth; first, the local Baptist church and second, a newer development, the Baptist association. Once in India there were other organizational innovations. The Serampore Mission became the nerve center for not only the work in India but all of Asia. In fact, for a time, it played a key role in the BMS's projects around the world. At Serampore, numerous adjunct ministries grew up including a translation enterprise on a scale never before seen, a print shop which functioned on an industrial scale, a publishing house which produced books and periodicals in English

⁷ This is reflective of the incarnational nature of missions.

⁸ Biblicism, conversionism, crucicentrism, activism.

and Indian languages, a bank, a school system that spread throughout Bengal, a seminary and university. Each of these was developed in support of the true focus which was the preaching of the gospel through a network of mission stations and the planting of local churches. The mission station system, administered from Serampore, spread across India. They made significant efforts as far away as Bhutan, Burma and Java.

The BMS was modeled in part on previous religious societies. Samuel Pearce Carey points out that the name was deliberately reminiscent of the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. This choice highlights the roots of the modern missionary movement in older Protestant ideas and institutions. At the same time the addition of three words, describing the society's objective, show how the Baptist society was an unprecedented development from these historic roots:

[the] added words 'amongst the Heathen' marked a vastly greater and far more courageous objective. The aim of the older Anglican Society, as its own charter defined it, was 'for the spiritual benefit of our loving subjects', with just an added bonus of blessing for their heathen neighbours. It was a colonial enterprise, while the Baptist Society was a missionary one.⁹

There were other important distinctions. In many ways the model for BMS was drawn from the culture at large, "In the mid-eighteenth century a plethora of new forms of sociability—beyond the traditional bonds of family, state, court, and the established church—arose in the cities of the European-controlled world. In contrast to those older forms, voluntary entry was the most important criterion for the new clubs. . . ." ¹⁰ As we have seen, as pastor at Harvey Lane in Leicester, Carey had some experience in the new types of social organizations, first as a member of the Non-conformist committee and then by participation in the Philosophical Institute.¹¹

⁹S. P. Carey, 85.

¹⁰Stefan-Ludwig Hoffman, *Civil Society (1750-1914)*. (New York: Plagrave MacMillan, 2006), 11.

¹¹S. P. Carey, 59-60.

Alexis De Tocqueville saw the voluntary society as one of the key characteristics of the new American democracy which he visited in 1831:

Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions, constantly form associations. They have not only commercial and manufacturing companies, in which all take part, but associations of a thousand other kinds, - religious, moral, serious, futile, general or restricted, enormous or diminutive. The Americans make associations to give entertainments, to found seminaries, to build inns, to construct churches, to diffuse books, to send missionaries to the antipodes. . . .¹²

De Tocqueville recognized that the voluntary society had its roots in English culture even though it took on unique forms and dimensions in America. Of the English he said that they “consider associations as a powerful means of action,” but Americans “seem to regard it as the only means they have of acting.”¹³ What De Tocqueville did perhaps not clearly perceive was the extent to which the principle of voluntary association was the product of the development of Protestant church forms in England and America. The rise of congregational forms of church government prepared the ground for the growth of these organizations. When Carey proposed the formation of a voluntary society he was laying hold of a social tool that owed its origins to the type of church government common to his own denomination:

Suppose a company of serious Christians, ministers and private persons, were to form themselves into a society, and make a number of rules respecting the regulation of the plan, and the persons who are to be employed as missionaries, the means of defraying the expense, etc., etc.. This society must consist of persons whose hearts are in the work, men of serious religion, and possessing a spirit of perseverance; there must be a determination not to admit any person who is not of this description, or to retain him longer than he answers to it.¹⁴

As a *voluntary* society it resembled others of its day. The great difference lay in its purpose. It was unique in being the first voluntary society organized for world mission. In

¹²Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 596.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴ William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, 1961), 108.

God's providence, this step led to an unleashing of evangelistic energies not seen since the time of the apostles. In 1837, Rufus Anderson would write:

[what] we see in Missionary, Bible, Tract and other kindred societies, not restricted to ecclesiastics, nor to any one profession, but combining all classes, embracing the masses of the people; and all free, open, and responsible . . . it is the contributors of the funds who are the real association . . . the individuals, churches, congregations, who freely act together, through such agencies for an object of common interest. . . . This Protestant form of association - free, open, responsible, embracing all classes, both sexes, all ages, the masses of the people—is peculiar to modern times, and almost to our age.¹⁵

This openness of the voluntary society was evident at the founding of the BMS. The lead had been taken by ordained ministers of the gospel, but lay people were brought into the process early on. Thomas Potts had underwritten the publication of the *Enquiry*, Thomas Gotch had provided a stipend to support Carey and he hosted the early morning meeting on the day the society was formed. Appropriately, that historic day ended and the decisive step to form the society was taken in the home of another layperson, “For the evening fellowship and business the ministers were welcomed, as so often before, into the hospitable home of Mrs. Wallis, the home that they called ‘Gospel Inn’ so many preachers having been guests there through the twenty years of its standing. Deacon Beeby Wallis had died not long before, but his widow gathered them to her table. . . .”¹⁶

While they may have felt they were a poor and unimportant group, the Northamptonshire Baptists had providentially tapped into one of the great veins of history. Their very lack of influence forced them into productive paths which may have been closed to them had they had more influential members. De Tocqueville made a distinction between British and American forms of voluntary associations, “Wherever, at the head of some new

¹⁵Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (Edinburgh: Orbis Books, 1970), 242.

¹⁶S. P. Carey, 82.

undertaking, you see the government in France, or a man of rank in England, in the United States you will be sure to find an association.” The insight of this statement is confirmed by considering the role that Wilberforce played in the abolition of the slave trade in Britain. The Particular Baptist Society, though lamenting an initial lack of influence, was actually in the social vanguard in 1792. The society form was easily transferable to America and served to strengthen the Atlantic network of Evangelicals.

The Society and Baptist Polity

The voluntary society represented, in Andrew Wall’s phrase, “the fortunate subversion of the church.”¹⁷ Not every result of the growth of voluntary societies alongside the church has been fortunate, but the phrase is useful to provide a focal point on the significant changes which came about. At the same time, it is helpful to see that the degree of subversion would have varied according to the nature of the church in question. The voluntary society would have been most subversive of the established church. If the various churches were placed on a scale limited on one end by the most hierarchical, and on the other end the most congregational, it becomes clear that congregational churches would have suffered the least disruption. In fact it might be argued, in the case of the Particular Baptists, that the establishment of a society was a logical development of their own system.

The London Confession of 1644 expressed the Baptist point of view on the independency of local congregations and their need to associate, “And although the particular Congregations be distinct and several Bodies, every one a compact and knit Citie in it selfe; yet are they all to walk by one and the same Rule, and by all means help one of another in all needful affaires of the Church, as members of one body in the common faith under Christ

¹⁷Walls, 243.

their only head.”¹⁸ The Northamptonshire Association held its inaugural meeting at Kettering in May of 1765. “[T]hey could hardly have envisaged the way in which their association would be instrumental in meeting the needs of many far from their fields, towns and villages. For it was in this association that the Baptist Missionary Society would be conceived. . . .”¹⁹ The missionary society was in tune with the new environment of democracy, and was capable of harnessing the energies of individuals and churches. While it would be a mistake to say that it created no tensions, far from being a threat to the congregational form of church polity, some saw it as a guarantor of the independency of local churches.²⁰

It must be said that the missionary concern for India was not unique to the Baptists. Carey himself documents previous efforts in the sub-continent. Not mentioned by Carey was the *Christian Knowledge Society*, which had maintained a mission in Bengal to those of European descent. While it did not have as its purpose the conversion of the heathen, it was an important precursor to Serampore. In India, missions found an able advocate in the person of Charles Grant, a Scotsman who went out as a writer for the East India Company. He advanced to positions of great importance under Governor-General Cornwallis and accumulated a significant fortune. He looked to promote Christian causes and was especially concerned to awaken the British conscience to the need to evangelize the Indians. He supported Dr. John Thomas, Carey’s first partner in India, for three years in the area of Malda as he attempted to begin a mission work. In 1792, the same year the BMS was founded, he wrote a pamphlet entitled *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic*

¹⁸William Latane Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1959), 168-169.

¹⁹Michael A. G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, His Friends and His Times* (England: Evangelical Press, 1994), 111.

²⁰Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 348.

*Subjects of Great Britain.*²¹ This pamphlet would play a key supportive role in disputes about missionary activities which arose in Parliament in 1813. As a Member of Parliament on his return from India, he joined forces with William Wilberforce in support of Evangelical causes.

In 1786, Grant had drawn up a plan for “A Mission to Bengal” which “embraced the division of the province into eight missionary circles, in each of which a young clergyman of the Church of England was to be stationed upon a salary of 350*l.* a year. He was to be employed in setting up schools, superintending catechists, and establishing churches.”²²

Grant, and a Church of England chaplain, David Brown, who joined him in the project, were convinced that nothing could be done without the aid of the government. They approached Lord Cornwallis, the Governor-General who dismissed their proposal with the statement that, “he had no faith in such schemes, and thought they must prove ineffectual.”²³ Following this disappointment they sent the proposal to the Archbishops of Canterbury and London and to ministers aligned with the Evangelical wing of the Church of England. Wilberforce supported the cause but they found few others willing to make an effort:

The Archbishop of Canterbury entertained it with a degree of caution bordering on lukewarmness; and the Bishop of London, while he wished every success to so benevolent a project, declined to take any active part in promoting it, on the ground that he had entered earnestly into Mr. Wilberforce's views for the amelioration of the condition of the slaves in the West Indies, and had no leisure to bestow on the East.²⁴

²¹ This article was written by Edward James Rapson and was published in 1890
Edward James Rapson, “Charles Grant (1746-1823)” *A Web of English History*, compiled by Marjorie Bloy, <http://www.historyhome.co.uk/people/grant.htm> (accessed December 2010).

²² John Clark Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward: Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission*. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1859), 1.31-32.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Marshman, 34.

In 1790, Grant returned to England and with the support of Wilberforce began an effort to lay the proposal before the King and Prime Minister Pitt. Wilberforce's political allies, however, said the time was not right because of tensions on the European continent and that the proposal should be 'limited to the diffusion of knowledge generally, leaving it to be inferred that Christianity would be included in the plan.'²⁵ Wilberforce was an ardent proponent and supporter of Grant's ideas and came close to significant victories in Parliament but without ultimate success. Years later Grant would write, "I had formed the design of a mission to Bengal: Providence reserved that honour for the Baptists."²⁶

It should be immediately noted when the BMS was formed it was opposed by important elements of every denomination, including the Baptists. The Congregationalists expressed no support. The Presbyterian General Assembly said the scheme was revolutionary although John Erskine offered his support. And the Baptists of London, led by Samuel Stennett refused their support. There were missionary minded individuals in every denomination. The reason the modern missionary movement began with a group of insignificant pastors in Northamptonshire is that as Baptists they did not need the approval of Parliament or of their brethren in London.²⁷

²⁵Ibid., 35.

²⁶George Smith, *The Life of William Carey, D. D.* (London: John Murray, 1885), 54.

²⁷ This statement is not offered as an argument in support of Baptist polity. It is simply descriptive of the conditions surrounding the founding of the BMS, an event which led to the birth of many other societies with a variety of relationships with established churches. The ideal relationship between local churches, denominations, mission agencies, missionaries, field organizations, and national churches is still an open question today, including among Baptists.

The Serampore Mission

The formation of the Particular Baptist society was only the first step in launching a missionary enterprise. The Society gave structure to the support efforts of individuals and churches in Britain, but a plan was needed for the mission field. In the *Enquiry*, Carey actually dealt with field structure before he proposed the formation of a society. From the beginning, it is clear that Carey was thinking of a team effort on a large scale. His proposal involved sending more than one family and the specialization of tasks:

It might be necessary, however, for two, at least, to go together, and in general I should think it best that they should be married men, and to prevent their time from being employed in procuring necessaries, two, or more, other persons, with their wives and families, might also accompany them, who would be wholly employed in providing for them.²⁸

Carey provides a number of practical suggestions including the cultivation of a small plot of land and the purchase of a cow and a bull; “Those who attend the missionaries should understand husbandry, fishing, fowling, etc., and be provided with the necessary implements for these purposes.”²⁹

There is a characteristic optimism in this passage which marked Carey all his life. The reality, once they reached India, at least for the first few years, was quite different. He attempted to farm in Sundarbans, but under great privation. His severe economic distress was the result of difficulty of communication with the society at home, the disastrous management of their common funds by John Thomas and the failure of the modest commercial ventures they had counted on. His situation was only relieved when he took employment as an indigo planter. While he saw this as a great opportunity to support himself, and have opportunities for evangelism and deepening his knowledge of the language

²⁸Carey, 99.

²⁹Ibid.

and culture through contact with the workers, this position led to his first serious conflict with the BMS which questioned whether he had lost his original focus.

Prospering sufficiently in India to have sufficient resources to live and engage in effective ministry proved to be a significant challenge. While he never lost his forward thinking, one wonders if he ever saw the irony in the sentence he wrote in the *Enquiry* concerning methods of self-support, “Indeed a variety of methods may be thought of, and when once the work is undertaken, many things will suggest themselves to us, of which we at present can form no idea.”³⁰ Not only could he “form no idea” of what lay ahead, the BMS consistently struggled to comprehend the true state of affairs in India as the years passed.

The Serampore mission can be seen as a world-historical success achieved with a failed model. To understand this it is necessary to understand the dimensions of the Serampore mission. It included the central Serampore community formed by three families, a number of auxiliary ministries run by the missionaries and Indian coworkers, and a growing network of itinerant preachers, mission outstations and church plants. The model for each of these levels of ministry was different. The core Serampore community was modeled on Moravian communities. The auxiliary ministries were of various kinds: printing, publication, and education for example. The models for these ministries were taken from British public life and adapted to the Indian setting. The model for the system of missions stations was perhaps *sui generis* but owed much to the village preaching Carey had practiced while a pastor in England. Ultimately, they formed local Baptist churches which differed little from their counterparts in Britain.

The Serampore mission as a community expired with the death of the first generation of missionaries, but the auxiliary ministries, mission outstations and church plants continued

³⁰Carey, 100.

on. Some, such as the Serampore College and the Carey Baptist Church (the Lal Bazaar church) exist down to this day.

The priority of Serampore was described in the full title of the *Enquiry*; “the conversion of the heathen.” But the same title shows that the *Enquiry* is an argument for the “use of means.” By means it becomes clear that Carey has in mind auxiliary organizations. The Serampore Community, which served as the hub for all of the activities of Serampore mission, was modeled on ideas drawn from the Moravians. That it survived until 1837 is a testament, not to the wisdom of the model but the character of the first generation of missionaries. Carey’s proposal in the *Enquiry* was based on his acquaintance with the advance of the Moravian efforts around the world, but it was offered while still in a state of considerable ignorance about actual conditions in India.

In 1797 after Carey had been in India for five years, four families were prepared to come out to India to join him. He sent a proposal to Fuller which echoed the ideas he had expressed in the *Enquiry*. At that time, Carey was still living at Mudnabatty and he proposed a community in the vicinity of Malda. He sent cost estimates based on arranging very primitive living conditions.

John Clarke Marshman, the son of one of those families, would grow up in the Serampore community. As an adult he gained a reputation for his scholarship and for writing the definitive history of the Serampore Mission. His history is one of the most valuable resources on the mission. In it he defends his parents and Carey in terms which make his admiration for them very clear. At the same time he was a clear-eyed critic of the weaknesses of the Mission. His evaluation of Carey’s original plan is quite critical:

The primitive simplicity of his plan is a pleasing index of his zeal and disinterestedness, but it is no proof of his judgment. Such a settlement could not have

held together for a twelvemonth. Even if his straw houses and mud floors had not sent half the little community to the grave during the first rainy season, the inconceivable distress to which the European missionaries and their European families must have been subject in such a settlement, must have broken it up almost as soon as it was formed. It will serve to show how little India was known at that time in England, that a project so Utopian was not only received by Mr. Fuller with approbation, but that he determined to give it a practical exemplification, and that four missionaries were sent out immediately after to make an experiment of this Moravian settlement.³¹

But it appealed to Carey's character. Carey would not have been Carey had he not been willing to pay an enormous personal cost for the sake of the gospel. He was not, however, as sensitive as might have been prudent to the needs of his family and others. This lack of prudence was not due to callousness but to a certain level of impracticability. In the *Enquiry* he described his vision of a Moravian style settlement:

In most countries it would be necessary for them to cultivate a little spot of ground just for their support, which would be a resource to them, whenever their supplies failed. Not to mention the advantages they would reap from each other's company, it would take off the enormous expense which has always attended undertakings of this kind, the first expense being the whole; for though a large colony needs support for a considerable time, yet so small a number would, upon receiving the first crop, maintain themselves. They would have the advantage of choosing their situation, their wants would be few; the women, and even the children, would be necessary for domestic purposes; and a few articles of flock, as a cow or two, and a bull, and a few other cattle of both sexes, a very few utensils of husbandry, and some corn to sow their land, would be sufficient.³²

The vision is idyllic. His reference to the women and the children, who would be necessary for domestic purposes, gives an insight into his view of his family. He could not conceive of his wife and children being any less dedicated to the grand project, or less capable of adapting to extreme circumstances than himself. Discussion of the tragic results of these expectations in his own family would require more space than we have available here.

³¹Marshman, 79.

³²Carey, 99-100.

Serampore became the center for the missionary activities by providential circumstance. Carey had hoped to build the mission in Mudnabatty. His work on the indigo plantations provided a certain amount of income and it was close to Malda, a cultural center which would provide resources for their work in translation of the scriptures. After establishing his family at Mudnabatty, he wrote the BMS telling them his position allowed him to support himself.³³ In spite of the fact Carey had always maintained the ideal of self-support, and had made his ideas clear in the *Enquiry*, this report brought the censure of some members of the society, particularly London Baptists, who after their initial refusal had joined the society once the effort was on its way to success. Carey responded with a letter that betrays the hurt he felt. He defended his position and pointed out that, though no one had ever specifically mentioned working with indigo, the committee had suggested he find ways to support himself by farming and trading in timbers. He defended his administration of the funds which came to him saying they were spent on activities related to the gospel. “The love of money has not prompted me to this indigo business. I am indeed poor, and always shall be, till the Bible is published in Bengali and Hindustani, and the people need no further instruction.”³⁴ This distrust must have been doubly painful given the fact that due to the problems of communications of the period they had received no communication from the BMS for almost two years upon arrival and would have starved were it not for Carey’s initiative.³⁵

³³S. P. Carey, 155.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 160-161.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 159.

In 1799, six years after Carey's arrival, the new missionaries arrived in India but were not given permission to stay by the authorities. Providentially, they were offered a place at Serampore, a Danish enclave near Calcutta.

That the Serampore community worked at all is a testament to the character of missionaries involved. William Carey, Joshua Marshman, and William Ward are often referred to as the Serampore Trio. This highlights the fact that the accomplishments of the Serampore Mission were the product of teamwork between three unique men who contributed their own talents. It fails to take into account the crucial role played by Hannah Marshman who managed the domestic concerns of the mission, provided a mother figure for Carey's children and ran a growing system of schools that accomplished important ministry goals and provided financing for the mission.

Hannah is given her due by current students of Serampore College. In November, they take a week's holiday and participate in sporting activities such as cricket and football. Four teams compete in the various sports under the names of Carey, Marshman and Ward. The fourth team is named Hannah in honor of Mrs. Marshman.

John Clark Marshman provides a description of the early days of the community where he was raised:

It was determined to form a common stock, to dine at a common table, and to give each family a trifling allowance . . . for personal expenses. All the missionaries were to be considered on a footing of equality, and to preach and conduct social devotions in turn. The superintendence of domestic arrangements and expenditure was to be entrusted to each missionary in rotation for a month. Mr. Carey had charge of the public chest as treasurer, and also of the medicine chest, for India was then considered so unhealthy that a constant resort to medicine was deemed essential to existence. Mr. Fountain was appointed librarian. One evening in the week was to be devoted to the adjustment of differences and the renewal of their pledge of mutual love; and it was resolved that no one should engage in any private trade, and that whatever might be earned should be credited to the common stock.³⁶

³⁶Marshman, 124-125.

Years later a visitor left a description of the day's routine at Serampore:

In the afternoon we left for Serampore. We were met by Dr Marshman and Mr Ward, who, with their wives, received us very cordially. The three families live in separate houses, but eat together in a large hall. The buildings stand close to the river. The bell rings at 5 for the boys to rise for school; at 8 for breakfast, and immediately after breakfast for prayers in the large and elegant chapel: a hymn, Bible chapter and prayer. On Sunday, English worship 11 to 1; Bengali in the afternoon, and English again in the evening. Monday evening, a conference for the native Christians, Tuesday evening, an hour spent in examining difficult Scriptures; Thursday and Saturday evening, conferences. The garden is as superior to any in America, as America's best is to a common farmer's. It consists of several acres, under the highest cultivation. Fruit, flowers and vegetables grow in abundance. The pineapple grows on a low bush, the plantain on a tall stock, and the cocoa-nut on a high tree.³⁷

In a letter, Marshman supplied an anecdote that illuminates the frugal lifestyle of the Serampore Community:

For fifteen years we made Bengalee rum a substitute for all wine and beer, merely because it was a rupee a gallon, while beer was twelve rupees a dozen, or six rupees a gallon. Now as a gallon of this country rum, mixed with water,—for I never knew it drunk alone,—would make at least four gallons of beverage, this was a thirtieth the price of beer, and our regard for missionary economy, which was then rigid almost beyond belief fixed us to the nauseous drink. When the tumbler full of it was brought to Dr. Carey, about nine in the evening, as he sat at his desk with his translations, he would drink it down at one draft, simply to get rid of it.³⁸

Over the years the mission company grew quite large. One visitor from America reported over 100 people sitting down together at mealtime.³⁹ There were families of the original missionaries, plus pundits involved in translation work, students at the school, and a constant flow of visitors both European and Indian. For many years it was the greatest center of missionary activity in the world, but a variety of factors contributed to its demise upon the passing of the first generation of missionaries.

³⁷S. P. Carey, 294.

³⁸John Clark Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward: Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission*. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1859) 2:109-110.

³⁹S. P. Carey, 295.

Serampore's Decline

The first factor related to its eventual decline was its location. When Carey first arrived in India missionaries were illegal. The Danish colony was a welcome haven outside of British jurisdiction. At the same time it was close enough to Calcutta to provide important advantages. After 1813, the work of the missionaries was legalized by Parliament and newer missionaries were able to settle directly in Calcutta so the location at Serampore was no longer crucial.

Second, conflict developed between the missionaries of the first generation and younger missionaries who followed; and between the leadership of Serampore and a new generation of leaders of the BMS in Britain after the passing of Fuller, Sutcliffe and Ryland. There were several sources of this conflict. The second generation of missionaries was not cut from the same cloth as the first. On the one hand, it was probably not realistic to expect the newer missionaries to adapt to the same Spartan lifestyle as the Serampore Trio. On the other hand, the new generation failed to measure up in the eyes of their elders. William Ward complained to Andrew Fuller in 1807:

My dear Fuller, all that is human that we want at present is, one or two tried men, qualified to translate and to govern honestly and mildly when we are dead and gone. You send us raw young men, perhaps religious adventurers. One of them tells me he once wanted to go to the West Indies, as a clerk, or something in a plantation then to become an officer: last or all, he became a missionary. He is really a good man, but to him the Mission is a sinecure.⁴⁰

Concerned that the wrong people would gain control of the mission the Trio took measures to safeguard the work; an action that created greater tension. Carey complained that the younger missionaries were more interested in the comforts of Calcutta than the hard work of itinerant preaching. Ward wrote to Fuller regarding one of the missionaries, "He

⁴⁰Marshman, 303.

translates in none of the languages; he has attempted no language but the Bengalee and in this, I fear, he will never be worth a straw. He makes one blush every time he endeavours to speak in this language, and as to his hearers profiting by this jargon, it is out of the question."⁴¹ Carey was equally severe in reference to two of them, "They will do nothing, and can do nothing."⁴²

It is apparent that the recruitment process left something to be desired. In the *Enquiry*, Carey had emphasized the importance of this process and the necessary qualities of the men to be recruited. "The Missionaries must be men of great piety, prudence, courage, and forbearance; of undoubted orthodoxy in their sentiments, and must enter with all their hearts into the spirit of their mission; they must be willing to leave all the comforts of life behind them. . . ."⁴³ Carey suggested the formation of a committee to, among other responsibilities, review the candidates, paying special attention to their theological views.⁴⁴ That the BMS failed to a degree is evident from the fact that in 1820 one of the missionaries sent out made known his Unitarian convictions and severed his relationship with the BMS, but not before demanding a share of mission funds for his own use.⁴⁵

One wonders how Fuller failed in this regard, but it is useful to know that he found himself fighting a losing battle against the growing influence of London Baptists. After his death a new generation of leaders whose roots were not in the Northamptonshire Association attempted to exert authority. The senior missionaries felt they were not being trusted and

⁴¹Marshman, 458.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Carey, 100.

⁴⁴Ibid., 109.

⁴⁵Marshman, 226.

they resented the high tone adopted by the new leadership. They especially resented the insinuation that they were mere employees of the society which Carey had himself founded. The situation was aggravated by unethical actions on the part of some of the younger missionaries, and the situation worsened till there was a definitive split between the BMS and the Serampore Mission.

Carey was not totally above blame in the rupture which occurred in relations. His Moravian scheme was not entirely practical. It was made less so by his insistence that the missionaries all be considered equals; an innovation on the original Moravian model. This was workable as long as those in question were Carey, Marshman and Ward, but the new generation showed a different set of values. Ryland would write Carey, “Who of us (members of the committee at home) ever advocated the democratic nonsense of every apprentice we send you being equal the moment he set his foot on Bengal ground? You may have had such notions; we never infused them into your mind.”⁴⁶

One scholar finds the roots of the disharmony between the missionaries in the lack of clearly defined roles for the younger missionaries, a responsibility that should have been assumed by the committee before sending the new men out.⁴⁷ In regard to the conflict between the Serampore missionaries and the BMS, John Clark Marshman attributes it in part to a difference in understanding of the relationship between the missionaries of Serampore and the BMS committee. The BMS saw the Serampore missionaries as their subordinates. This might have been a more tenable interpretation of the BMS’s relationship with the newer missionaries since they were entirely dependent on the financial support of the society. The

⁴⁶A. H. Oussoren, *William Carey Especially His Missionary Principles* (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff's Uitgeversmaatschappij N.V., 1945), 169.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 171.

older Trio, however, had to a great degree lived by their own labors and had financed the growth of the Serampore Mission from income which they produced themselves. This had been Carey's principle from the time of the *Enquiry*. This and their undisputed experience led the Trio to the conviction they were entitled to run their own affairs. While Fuller was alive, the BMS and the Serampore Mission functioned as effective partners, but with his death the cordial relationship unraveled. The ensuing acrimony was played out in publications in India and on both sides of the Atlantic:

[the] Trio after Fuller's demise took what they regarded as necessary measures to thwart any attempts by the B.M.S. to exert control over their funds or proceedings. *Specifically*, the Mission establishment—schools, printing plant, houses, church—was placed in trust under their own control, and a statement drafted that no one then in India nor anyone who came later was to have any authority over the Mission unless conferred by the three trustees, Carey, Marshman and Ward. The B.M.S. professed alarm at this plan which merely legalized the situation which had long existed. In answer to protests, Carey reminded John Ryland, then Secretary, that 'we are your Brethren, not your servants'. After further acrimony the Society formally disclaimed 'any intention to interfere with the management of the property at Serampore.'⁴⁸

It has been said that the first half of Carey's missionary career was spent in conflict with colonial authorities and the second half in conflict with his own society. The conflict cut Serampore off from significant sources of support in England, and with leaders of BMS in England actively working against them, from a growing source of support in America. The conflict was a great source of grief to Carey in his last years, but Serampore's outreach continued to grow up to the time of his death. The mission itself was never an end in itself. As we shall see, it existed to support a wide spread network of itinerant preachers, both Indian and European, who established mission stations and then local churches. By the time the Serampore Trio had all passed away, the Serampore mission had begun to be eclipsed by

⁴⁸E. Daniel Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries in India* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), 25.

other growing works in India, including that of Baptists from America. But they all followed a trail blazed by Carey, Marshman and Ward.

CHAPTER 8

INDIAN CONVERSIONS AND THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS

Modern Kolkata overwhelms the first time visitor like a flood. Just beyond the doors of the air terminal the visitor is swept into a cataract of people: modern India surging from the innumerable fountains of the past. Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs jostle each other to greet a family member or stop a taxi. Multiple languages: English, Bengali, and Hindustani, bubble in the air.

Except for the taxis and other modern flotsam, Carey's first impression on landing in Calcutta must have been similar. His first contact with the people of India came on November 9th, 1793, when two boats came alongside their ship as it headed for port. John Thomas, Carey's first colleague, asked the men in one boat a leading question. To the query of whether they had any Shastra's [holy writings] they answered "We are poor men—those who have many cowries—(or are rich) read the Shastras but we do not know them."¹ Carey felt affection for the men from the start. He wrote, "They appear to be intelligent persons tho of the lowest caste—rather beneath the middle stature and appeared to be very attentive to whatever we said to them." In this journal entry, the final one at sea, he anticipates the coming labors, "O may my Heart be prepared for our Work—and the Kingdom of Christ set up among the poor Hindus. . . ."

As they neared Calcutta the missionaries went ashore in a native boat before the ship docked. Since they came without a license they wanted to avoid contact with port authorities. As they waited for the tide they found themselves near a market where Thomas

¹Terry G. Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2000), 7.

took the opportunity to preach. Carey could understand almost nothing of Thomas's Bengali sermon but he was impressed with the way the people listened as Thomas spoke for three hours.² While his hope for quick conversions was to be frustrated, the work had begun in earnest the first day in the country.

Thomas's question to the boatmen about their Shastras foreshadowed the methodology that Carey and the Serampore Trio were to adopt in the years ahead. They engaged the religious beliefs of the people and spoke from the true Shastras: the Bible. Their missions methodology can be seen as an outworking of Reformation principles. The elements of Bebbington's quadrilateral: biblicism, conversionism, crucicentrism, and activism were the central preoccupation of Carey from the day he first walked on Indian soil. The Trio was convinced that the greatest need of the inhabitants of India was for conversion. Serampore can be seen as the supreme expression of Evangelical activism if by activism is meant the preaching of biblical message of the cross of Christ with a view to the conversion of the heathen. In support of this primary ministry, they developed many auxiliary efforts giving precedence to those that would allow the people of India to read the Bible in their own languages. As a result, Serampore made an indelible impression on the culture of India.

Carey had come to India to preach the gospel, but before he could carry out his purpose he had to learn the languages and the culture of the people. The degree to which communication is a culturally conditioned process is not always clear to the missionary until he is actually on the field. Complicating the task is the fact that the gospel itself can only be fully understood against the backdrop of salvation history: a providentially-guided historical process which produced the cultural categories that make the work of Christ comprehensible. When the gospel is to be carried to a cultural setting outside the West with its Judeo-Christian heritage, the task is enormous. The language or languages must be learned and the culture must be understood and scouted for points of contact, for bridges which will bear the

²Carey, Samuel Pearce. *William Carey* (London: The Wakeman Trust, 1923), 134.

weight of the gospel; and idols must be marked for destruction. Preaching can never be done in isolation from a cultural calculus. It requires the consideration of cultural presuppositions and it produces consequences that are often subversive of cultural standards.

Carey had shown an aptitude for languages before leaving England. He had taught himself Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Dutch and French. On the voyage, he had begun his studies of Bengali. Once in India he engaged a pundit, Ram Basu, who would be beside him even during the difficult time in the Sundarbans.

He began preaching as soon as able. At Mudnabatty he preached faithfully for six years without any apparent success:

I feel as a farmer does about his crop; sometimes I think the seed is springing up, and then I hope; a little time blasts all, and my hopes are gone like a cloud. They were only weeds which appeared, or if a little corn sprung up, it quickly died, being either choked with weeds, or parched up by the sun of persecution. Yet I still hope in God, and will go forth in his strength, and make mention of his righteousness, and of his only. I preach every day to the natives, and twice on the Lord's day constantly, besides other itinerant labours.³

Once they were established in Serampore, the missionaries preached at the Danish church. However, they soon began itinerant preaching. The method itself, to go from village to village preaching, can be seen in direct relation to that of earlier evangelical revivalists. The large difference was to be found in Bengal itself, a territory with no active churches which could provide a seedbed for the revival.

Hard Thumps–Satire in Apologetics

Carey felt that the religious views of the Indians required him to engage in aggressive apologetics. In a letter to Fuller in November of 1800 he wrote, “We know nothing of the disputes which you in Europe are engaged in; ours bear a nearer resemblance to those of the Protestants with the Papists at the Reformation. . . .”⁴ He goes on to say that their apologetic

³John Clark Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward: Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1859), 1:89.

⁴Carter, 148.

task might actually more resemble that “of the old Fathers, with the Heathen, and Gnosticks such as you will find in Justin Martyr and Irenaeus.”⁵

In his apologetics, Carey frequently turned to satire and ridicule as a strategy against the beliefs of the Hindu’s. William Ward, in his journal, summarized Carey’s approach on a number of occasions. Under the heading “Lord’s Day, Feb. 16 [1800]” he records:

Brother Carey went amongst some washermen, &c. this morning. They were pretty attentive. Several women were also present. One of them asked Brother C. what she should eat in order to be saved? Brother C. preached at home from, ‘Awake thou that sleepeth.’, &c. In the evening Brother C. went amongst the natives. We caught a number gazing at a god in a box. After exposing to ridicule this hawker of gods, who sneaked off very soon, Brother C. disputed and explained for some time.⁶

On another occasion Ward wrote:

Brother Carey had warm dispute with the natives in the street in the evening. One argument was that there really were no Brahmans for they were all drowned in the deluge. If they had not they would have lost caste since, either by drinking spirits, which is now very common, or by eating with those who do. The family saved in the deluge were not Brahmans. One man contended that God had created a new race of Brahmans after the flood, but he was not able to establish his point.⁷

Samuel Pearce Carey collected some of Carey’s more notable responses to Hindu beliefs, “‘You think you’ll be saved by the incessant naming of your god or *debtah*? A parrot’s holiness and yours is one.’ Seeing some idol he would *ask*. ‘what is that?’ ‘our god,’ they would reply. He would then retort: ‘Did that make men, or did men make that?’”⁸ To a wandering Hindu monk who claimed an ability to change water to milk he said, on inviting him to dinner, that if he had scruples about eating with them, he “need not fear, even should

⁵Ibid.

⁶ William Ward, *William Ward's Missionary Journal 1799-1811*, Compiled by E. Daniel Potts, 69 Typewritten copies are held by the Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford, England and the Carey Library and Research Centre, Serampore College, Serampore, India.

⁷Ibid., 70.

⁸S. P. Carey, 190.

the food be forbidden. A person who can change water into milk can surely change forbidden food into lawful.”⁹

Carey was especially aggressive with the Brahmans. William Ward records an occasion in September of 1800 when two Brahmans challenged Carey to a debate when he visited their village. Carey lingered a considerable time. When one of the Brahmans said he must leave or be late for worship Carey replied, “if he was anything of a Brahman he might order the evening to stay for him, as a Brahman was said to have done formerly, when he had overslept himself. . . .”¹⁰ Carey went on to inform the Brahman that he despised his gods - to which the Brahman responded that he had the power to kill him, but would not since for the moment he was relating to Carey as a man not a god. The Brahmans were taken aback by Carey’s knowledge of their Shastras and soon learned to not challenge him in debate.¹¹

Carey was also aggressive in his encounters with Muslims. In one encounter, he asked a Muslim if he knew how each chapter of the Koran began. When he answered that that he did not (each chapter begins with the phrase “in the name of God, gracious and merciful”) and that he could not read it because it was in Arabic, Carey asked, “how can you Obey it? And wherefore are you Muhammadens?”¹²

Carey attempted to use the Koran and Hindu Shastras as a point of contact with the people:

I took occasion to observe that both in the Shastras and Koran there were many good observations and Rules, and which ought to be attended to, but that one thing, they could not inform us of, viz. how God can forgive Sin, consistent with his Justice, and save sinners in a Way an which Justice and Mercy could Harmonize. I told them that

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ward, 97.

¹¹S. P. Carey, 190.

¹²Carter, 10.

their Books were like a Loaf of Bread in which was a considerable quantity of Good Flour, but also a little very malignant Poisounn. which made the whole so poisonous that whoever should eat of it would die. . . .¹³

This aggressive apologetic approach appears to have been questioned both by William Ward, Carey's Serampore colleague and some of Carey's biographers. Samuel Pearce Carey implies there was an evolution in Carey's speaking from aggressive apologetics to a more cross-centered preaching.¹⁴ Daniel Potts says the same thing in more explicit terms.¹⁵

Perhaps there was some development in Carey's approach to evangelism, but it is also possible to show that his evangelism, and that of his coworkers at Serampore, consistently contained two elements: a critique of India's religions and a positive presentation of the message of the cross. There may have been some adjustment in the proportions of these two elements and some modification of tone, but both elements are found consistently across the span of Carey's ministry.

As early as August of 1795, while Carey was still at Mudnabatty, he wrote the Society and described the services he conducted in Bengali:

First, Munshi reads a Chapter in Bengali. Then we Sing; afterwards I pray, and preach to then in that Language. Partly from Local Circumstances, and partly from paucity of Words, my Preaching is very different to what it was in England; but the Guilt and depravity of Mankind and the Redemption by Christ, with the presence of God's Mercy; are the themes I most insist upon. . . .¹⁶

While the Serampore missionaries made the preaching of the cross central to their evangelistic efforts, they still felt that part of their task was to discredit false religious beliefs.

¹³Ibid., 58.

¹⁴S. P. Carey, 191.

¹⁵Potts, 37.

¹⁶Carter, 84.

Potts recognizes this when he quotes an article from the *Friend of India* published in the later years of the Serampore mission in 1823:

[the] Trio said that they knew that “to insult a man . . . [was] . . . not precisely the mode best suited to gain his confidence and win his affection” - but added that ‘as men of integrity and common sense’ they were forced to inform the Indians ‘that “their stock” is really “a doctrine of vanities”; their books esteemed sacred, merely human compositions; and that to obtain salvation, they must turn from dumb idols to serve the living and true God.’¹⁷

While Carey’s approach may have seemed strident at times, he explained his motivation, “I am like one finding his neighbor asleep with his house on fire. I fetch him hard thumps to warn him of danger and promote his escape.”¹⁸ Ward described his demeanor as he addressed the lost, “Our Lord’s Day evening congregation of servants is composed of Hindoos, Mussulmans, and Hindoo Portuguese. Brother C. was very earnest and affectionate this evening, & addressed each class according to the delusions in which they were brought up, with earnest tears.”¹⁹

The Serampore Trio came to see their apologetics as an appropriate method in the context of Hinduism. Marshman wrote, “The Hindoos are not so much afraid of becoming Christians as of being made Christians; of embracing a doctrine when previous and ample examination has convinced them of its truth as of being compelled to embrace it while they, through ignorance, hold it in abhorrence. Discussion, especially of a religious nature, is familiar with the Hindoos; it agrees with their taste, and the country is almost full of it.

¹⁷Potts, 38.

¹⁸S. P. Carey, 190.

¹⁹Ward, 97.

Among the various sects of the Brahmans it is carried to a surprising extent, and it has been thus for many centuries.”²⁰

It is possible that Carey’s early satirical approach was influenced by Enlightenment models such as Jonathan Swift. However, as Oussoren points out, there were models readily available in scripture itself, including the Hebrew prophets.²¹

Joshua Marshman carried out a public debate with one of the great figures of India during the early 19th century. Ram Mohan Roy was an influential intellectual who promoted the modernization of India and was an ally of the Serampore missionaries in the battle to abolish sati—the practice of widow-burning. Roy was a great admirer of the teachings of Jesus but did not see him as the Son of God. His position was much closer to that of English Unitarians. Joshua Marshman engaged him in a series of articles in the *Friend of India*, a publication of the Serampore Press. These articles were published as a book in 1822 titled *A Defence of the Deity and Atonement of Jesus Christ*. The exchange was noted for the civility of its tone.²² Since the debate was published it allowed the Serampore Mission to make a stand for the truth that had an effect back in England as well.

The Preaching of the Cross

While it may be that Carey’s apologetic style evolved, the preaching of the cross was always his central concern. In 1794, before he had mastered the languages of India he wrote in his journal on March 29th:

²⁰Joshua Marshman, *Advantages of Christianity in Promoting the Establishment and Prosperity of the British Government in India* (London: Smith's Printing Office, 1813), 3.

²¹Oussoren, 204.

²²Marshman, 2:239.

Through mistake spent this Day as the Sabbath. I have however abundant reason to be thankful for the mistake, it has been a time of refreshing indeed to me; O what is there in all this world worth living for but the presence and service of God—I feel a burning desire that all the World may know this God and serve him—O how long will it be till I shall know so much of the Language of the Country as to preach Christ Crucified to them; but bless God I make some progress.²³

In April of 1796 Carey wrote to his sisters from Mudnabatty a letter that captures his passion and the specific content of his preaching:

I know not what to say about the Mission. I feel as a Farmer does about his crop; sometimes I think the seed is springing, and then I hope; a little time blasts all and my hopes are gone like a Cloud. Twas only weeds that appeared; or if a little Corn spring up. it quickly died, being either choked with Weeds, or parched up by the sun of Persecution. Yet, I still hope in God and will go forth in his strength and make mention of his Righteousness, even of him only.

I preach every day to the Natives, and twice on the Lord's Day constantly, besides other itinerant labours, and I try to speak of Jesus Christ and him crucified, and of him alone, but my soul is often much dejected to see no fruit. This morning I preached to a number from "to know the Love of God which passeth knowledge". I was much affected myself filled with grief and anguish of Heart, because I knew they were going to Idolatrous and Mohammedan feasts immediately after, this being the first day of the Hindu Year; and the new Moon Ramadan of the Mohammedans. They are going I suppose to their Abominations at this moment, but I hope to preach to them again in the evening. I spoke of the Love of God in bearing with his Enemy's, in supporting and providing for them, in sending his Son to die for them, in sending the Gospel to them, and in saving many of them from eternal Wrath.²⁴

Years later Carey's advice to his son, Jabez echoes the concerns he expressed in Mudnabatty, "I rejoice that you have begun to preach in Malay. Consider this as your greatest work and labour to build up the people in Faith and Holiness but above all labour to lay Christ Crucified as the foundation on which you build for all that is not built on that foundation will fail."²⁵

²³Carter, 21.

²⁴Carter, 85.

²⁵Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, *Family Letters of Dr. William Carey* (Serampore: Non-Liner, 2007), 121.

In 1805, the Serampore missionaries published *The Form of Agreement* which outlined the guiding principles of the mission. These principles grew out of Carey's earlier vision but reflected the mature experience of the Serampore Trio. The fifth statement dealt with the centrality of the cross in evangelism. They distinguished between general "truths" and the specific message of the cross:

In preaching to the heathen, we must keep to the example of St. Paul, and make the greatest subject of our preaching, Christ Crucified. It would be very easy for a missionary to preach nothing but truths, and that for many years together, without any well-grounded hope of becoming useful to one soul. The doctrine of Christ's expiatory death and all-sufficient merits had been, and must ever remain, the great means of conversion.²⁶

They go on to connect this approach to preaching with the Protestant Reformation:

This doctrine, and others immediately connected with it, have constantly nourished and sanctified the church. Oh that these glorious truths ever be the joy and strength of our own souls and then we will not fail to become the matter of our conversation to others. It was the proclaiming of these doctrines that made the Reformation from Popery in the time of Luther spread with such rapidity. It was these truths that filled the sermons to the modern Apostles, Whitefield, Wesley, etc., when the light of the Gospel which had been held up with such glorious effects by the Puritans was almost extinguished in England.²⁷

In their view the message of the cross was the link that connected the first generation of Reformers with the Puritans and the later leaders of the Evangelical Revival. While they do not say so explicitly, it is clear that they saw their own ministry as another link in the chain. They go on to mention the centrality of the cross in the preaching of the Moravian and then they reflect on their own efforts:

So far as our experience goes in this work, we must freely acknowledge, that every Hindoo among us who has been gained to Christ, has been won by the astonishing and all-constraining love exhibited in our redeemer's propitiatory death. O then may

²⁶Oussoren, 276.

²⁷Oussoren, 277.

we resolve to know nothing among Hindoos and Mussulmans but Christ and Him crucified.²⁸

Conversion

The BMS missionaries preached for seven years before winning their first convert in December of 1800. Appropriately, he came to Christ through the testimony of John Thomas who had actually been actively seeking the conversion of the Bengals for fourteen years since 1786.²⁹ Perhaps it is also appropriate that Krishna Pal had heard the gospel from Moravian missionaries many years before. He had also heard it again earlier that year from the Baptist missionaries.³⁰ He came to Christ after dislocating an arm in a fall by the river. He was attended by Dr. John Thomas who was visiting the Serampore mission at the time.

Upon his conversion the missionaries gave him a devotional chant in “rhyming Bengali” that contributed to his understanding of conversion:

Sin confessing, sin forsaking,
Christ’s righteousness embracing,
The soul is free.³¹

Krishna Pal was baptized on Sunday, December 28, 1800. His family soon followed him, and in spite of stiff persecution, persevered in the faith. In 1802, he addressed a letter to the churches of the England in which he gave testimony of his conversion:

Serampore
12 October, 1802

To the Brethren of the Church of our Saviour Jesus Christ, our souls' beloved, my affectionately embracing representation. The love of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ,

²⁸Ibid., 276-277.

²⁹Arthur C. Chute, *John Thomas, First Baptist Missionary to Bengal* (Halifax: Baptist Book and Tract Society, 1893), 16.

³⁰S. P. Carey, 195.

³¹Ibid.

was made known by brother Thomas. In that day our minds were filled with joy. Then judging, we understood that we were dwelling in darkness. Through the door of manifestation we came to know that sin confessing, sin forsaking, Christ's righteousness embracing, salvation would be obtained. By light springing up in the heart we knew that sinners, becoming repentant, through the sufferings of Christ, obtain salvation. In this rejoicing, and in Christ's love believing, I obtained mercy. Now it is in my mind continually to dwell in *the* love of Christ; this is the desire of my soul. Do you pour down your love upon us that, as the *chatak*, we may be satisfied—the bird that opens its bill, when it rains, and catches the drops from the clouds, I will tell to the world that Christ hath saved me. I will proclaim His love with rejoicing. Christ, the world to save, gave His own soul! Such love was never heard, for enemies Christ gave His own soul! Such compassion, where shall we get? For the sake of saving sinners He forsook the happiness of Heaven. I will constantly stay near Him. I will dwell in the town of joy.

Krishna³²

The letter was translated by the missionaries, but the unique syntax surely represents Krishna's Bengali voice. There is evidence of the teaching Krishna received. The phrase "sin confessing, sin forsaking" is from the original Bengali chant given him at the time of his conversion. The sentence, "By light springing up in the heart we knew that sinners, becoming repentant, through the sufferings of Christ, obtain salvation" seems to echo a Calvinist, even an Edwardian, understanding of the divine initiative in salvation.³³

There is no reason to doubt that the letter is Krishna's' composition. He went on to become an effective preacher, known of his "considerable grace of manner and address,"³⁴ perhaps more effective than the missionaries themselves. He wrote a hymn which came to be sung in large parts of the English speaking world. The version which gained popularity was polished by Joshua Marshman, but a more literal translation retains the power and allows a greater sense of Krishna's' unique voice.

³²Ibid., 227.

³³ See Edward's sermon A Divine and Supernatural Light
<http://www.ccel.org/e/edwards/works2.iii.i.html>.

³⁴S. P. Carey, 358.

1. Never again forget. Make this the essence [*core*]
Jesus, the [*true*] Brahma. For salvation His is the name.

2. Forsake, leave far behind all other works
Keep Christ's love-wealth in your heart.

3. Truth, grace and forgiveness all boundless:
Jesus by His own blood delivers the sinner.

4. I say it again and again: He is the [*true*] Saint and Friend.
It is the name of Jesus that takes me across.

Chorus-

*That One who gave up His own life,
Sinners to redeem,
O my soul, do not forget Him.* ³⁵

Here the Spirit of the Reformation, with its emphasis on gospel truth expressed in the vernacular, and on teaching converts through catechisms and hymns makes its appearance in Indian form.

Krishna, a carpenter, was of the Sudra caste, the lowest of the four traditional *varnas*. More conversions followed including, from the higher castes. The first Kshatriya, a caste which traditionally consisted of nobles and warriors, was converted in 1801.³⁶ The first Brahman, the caste of priests and teachers, was converted in 1803.³⁷ Carey had written Fuller, "When Krishna and Goluk rejected their caste, many wondered at it; but the majority endeavored to carry it off with a high hand, and tauntingly asked, have any of the Brahmins and Kayusts believed on him? What great thing to have a carpenter and a distiller reject their caste?"³⁸ Carey wrote that the conversion of members of the higher castes "had deprived

³⁵Ibid., 227.

³⁶Marshman, 1:154.

³⁷Ibid., 1:176.

³⁸Ibid., 1:156.

them of that small consolation.” The first Brahmin to convert had long before begun to doubt the truth of Hinduism. He had been affected by the memorization of a metrical version of the Ten Commandments in an English Primer which contained the couplet:

Adore no other gods, but only One:
Worship not God by anything you see³⁹

That Krishna Pal became an effective teacher, preacher, and hymn writer is ironic; as a Sudra he would have been prohibited from studying the Vedas.

By the end of 1802, they had “thirteen native communicants in the Church and eight inquirers.”⁴⁰ By 1807, they could report that they had baptized one hundred converts, including 12 Brahmins, 16 of the writer class, and 5 Muslims.⁴¹ In 1813 alone they baptized one hundred and sixteen converts.⁴² By 1821, they had baptized approximately 1400 converts.⁴³ The Serampore missionaries were dissatisfied with this number but they could not have imagined that by the twenty-first century, while Christianity remains a small proportion of the total population of India, by one estimate, with 1.7 million Baptists, it is the second largest Baptist country in the world following the United States.⁴⁴ This, of course, does not include the millions of Indian Christians that belong to other denominations.

Krishna Pal can be taken as emblematic of all the converts that followed. He gave a great portion of his life to itinerant preaching. William Ward recorded in his journal that

³⁹Ibid., 1:155.

⁴⁰Marshman, 1:174.

⁴¹Ibid., 1:324.

⁴²Ibid., 2:76.

⁴³Potts, 36.

⁴⁴Study and Research Division, Baptist World Alliance, “Who are the Baptists? India and Burma,” *We Baptists* (Franklin, TN: Providence House, 1999), 13-15 available from <http://www.bwa-baptist-heritage.org/hst-ind.htm> (accessed December 2010).

when asked by a European if he had converted for money, he responded simply that he received no money, “it was the work of love, in doing which he got much joy and comfort.”⁴⁵ Samuel Pearce Carey writes that, “As he lay dying at Serampore, Krishna was asked if he still loved Christ. “‘Yes,’ he replied, ‘but not as much as He loves me.’”⁴⁶

Expansion

Not long after establishing the mission at Serampore, the Trio began itinerant preaching tours. They extended these tours out to ever greater distances. In 1802, Marshman led the first trip to Jessore, about ninety-five kilometers to the north east of Serampore in what is now Bangladesh. In 1803, they began regular preaching in Calcutta which would lead to the eventual establishment of a church at Lal Bazaar.⁴⁷ In 1807, they began efforts in Burma.⁴⁸ In 1809, Carey’s son Felix attempted to lead a mission which eventually failed amidst tragedy (his family was drowned in an accident) and personal weakness but which would lead eventually to the great work of American Baptists under Adoniram Judson.⁴⁹ In 1808, an expedition was sent to Bhutan, five hundred kilometers to the north at the foot of the Himalayas.⁵⁰ In 1812, a team was sent to Agra, more than 1100 kilometers to the north-west. In 1812, a first abortive effort was made in Java.⁵¹ In 1813, Carey’s son, Jabez

⁴⁵Potts, 132.

⁴⁶S. P. Carey, 358.

⁴⁷Marshman, 1:178.

⁴⁸Ibid., 1:298.

⁴⁹Ibid., 1:412.

⁵⁰Ibid., 1:385.

⁵¹Ibid., 1:494.

managed to establish the Java station on a permanent basis.⁵² In 1814, John Chamberlain, a missionary who came out to India after Ward and Marshman, made a fruitful trip to Delhi, almost 1300 kilometers to the north-west of Serampore.

Translation and Publication

The Serampore missionaries worked hard to make the gospel accessible to the people of India. Their efforts included the translation and publication of the scriptures in the languages of India. Their efforts in translating and printing tend to become the main focus of studies of Serampore because of their monumental proportions, and because as time went along Carey dedicated more of his time to this work. However, it should be seen that their preoccupation with translation and printing was part of their larger project of evangelization and church planting.

In their annual report to the BMS from 1815, they laid out the relationship between their translation efforts, their educational efforts and their evangelism and church planting:

First, the formation of stations, where the “the standard of the Cross shall be erected, and the Gospel preached to the people, and from whence ultimately spring churches.” Secondly, the translation of the Scriptures: and, thirdly, the instruction of youth in the knowledge of the Bible and of the literature suited to the state of the country: that thus divine knowledge may be diffused abroad, and teachers and pastors be raised up to make known the Gospel. These three objects, they remark, were intimately linked together in the prosecution or the great work.⁵³

This describes a missionary cycle, beginning and ending with the preaching of the gospel, first by the missionaries and then national “teachers and pastors raised up to make known the Gospel.” This statement makes it clear that their first priority was the preaching of the gospel and planting churches.

⁵²Ibid., 2:74.

⁵³Marshman, 2:97.

Like their Protestant forebears they were convinced that the publication of the Bible in the vernacular was a necessary precondition to the spread of the gospel. What is more, they were convinced the Bible itself was sufficient to bring readers to Christ. In 1801, William Ward had left a copy of Carey's Bengali translation of the New Testament in Ram Krishanpur. "A certain Krishna Das read it, and kept rereading it to his neighbors, till the village was transformed."⁵⁴ Three years later they sent an embassy to Serampore to thank the publishers. "These were Jaganath Das, who had long since smashed his idols, Sebak Ram, former ringleader of lewd songs, and fisherman Gobhardan."⁵⁵ Amidst rejoicing they were baptized by the missionaries. In the BMS annual report for 1819 they mention another case, "Tarachund, a zealous native preacher, who, with several others, was converted from Heathenism by the bare perusal of the Scriptures."⁵⁶

The press at Serampore was kept busy printing not only Bibles, but tracts with portions of scripture. This led to the conversion of Petumber Sing who became one of the most able Indian preachers of the gospel:

Petumber Sing . . . was nearly sixty years or age, of an active and inquisitive mind, and great simplicity of character. He had read all the native religious works which then existed in manuscript, and had travelled to many shrines to discover a system of religious belief in which he could place confidence. The result of his inquiries, however, only served to increase his dissatisfaction with the national creed, and he quietly relinquished the worship of idols. In this state of mind, one of the tracts distributed by Mr. Ward, in his recent missionary tour, fell into his hands, and told him that the missionaries at Serampore had come from a distant land to promote the eternal happiness of the Hindoos, and that salvation was to be obtained only through the atonement of Christ. He lost no time in proceeding to Serampore, a distance of thirty miles, in order to hear more of this "new way." After receiving instruction for two or three days, he returned to his family to impart the glad tidings to them,

⁵⁴S. P. Carey, 243.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶BMS Annual Report 1819, 33.

promising to return in a fortnight. He was again at Serampore before a week had elapsed, and threw up his caste by eating with the missionaries. . . .⁵⁷

Cross-cultural Preaching

The Trio also tried to find culturally effective ways of preaching. Sometimes they missed the obvious. Ward wrote, “Preaching in black cloth in this climate is a sad burden. My clothes have been saturated with perspiration three times today, and the very papers in my pocket are dyed black. . . .”⁵⁸ One wonders why they did not adopt local dress. John Thomas did because it was “economical and efficient.”⁵⁹ He was delighted with the results. When he visited Serampore, the missionaries failed to recognize him and spoke to him as to a Bengali.⁶⁰

While the Serampore Trio might have benefited from adopting Thomas’s Bengali dress, they adapted their evangelistic approach in other ways. William Ward described an innovative method, “In this country it is common for a few of the poorest of the people to take up the trade of ballad-singers for they have no written nor printed books to sell.”⁶¹ They took advantage of this custom for the propagation of the gospel. “This morning, Carey, Marshman and I made our stand where four roads meet and began singing our ballad. People looked out of their houses; some came, and all seemed astonished to see three sahibs turned ballad-singers. This evening three of us went one way, and three another.”⁶² The Serampore missionaries took advantage of the interest to distribute copies of the Christian hymns.

⁵⁷Marshman, 1:154-155.

⁵⁸Marshman, 1:434.

⁵⁹C. B. Lewis, *The Life of John Thomas* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1873), 360.

⁶⁰Lewis, 362.

⁶¹S. P. Carey, 187.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 187-188.

Ward recounts an episode in 1800 when they went to a village where they had preached before, but found the place they used occupied by a large crowd listening to Bengali musicians:

We were afraid we had lost the day; but we made a stand within sight of Creeshno's (Krishna) worshippers, and like so many ballad-singers began "Who besides can recover" in Bengalle. Parbotee sang lustily. Presently the Bengallee performers were left destitute and sheered off. We had a company which filled the street. Bro. C. so preached that one Brahaman wept & many seemed affected.⁶³

Ward reported that this approach produced a constant flow of visitors to the premises of the Serampore mission "and no small portion of Mr. Carey's time was occupied in answering their objections, and explaining the principles of Christian truth to them."⁶⁴

Indian Preachers

The Serampore missionaries were convinced that national preachers were the key to reaching India. They were concerned to adapt their own methods where possible to make their own preaching more effective and they placed a premium on acquiring the greatest possible fluency, but they recognized that the key was "native" preachers. In 1819, in their report to the BMS they outlined the advantages of raising up Indian preachers of the Gospel. These included the native's ability to travel more economically, his greater endurance in India's climate and his greater effectiveness since, "he knows the way to the hearts, as well as the heads of his countrymen. . . ."⁶⁵

⁶³Potts, 88.

⁶⁴Marshman, 1:129.

⁶⁵BMS, 56.

To train the Indian preachers they took them on their itinerant preaching tours, “Carey took Pitambar Singh to Sukh Sagar, and Krishna Pal to Jessore. Ward took Krishna Pal to Debhatta, and later, Krishna Prasad and Ram Ratan as far as Dinajpur and Mudnabati.”⁶⁶ When Serampore College was founded the Trio reported that its objects were, “to train up pious youth for the Christian ministry, to augment the biblical knowledge of such as are already employed in preaching, and to enable those who by loss of cast, have bent reduced to indigence, to maintain themselves.”⁶⁷

The wisdom of this approach was confirmed when in 1806 after the Vellore Mutiny the Serampore missionaries were prohibited from preaching:

Krishna Pal and Jagannath Das ventured into Burdwan with, as Ward put it, 'the spirit of martyrs.' The brethren could endure to be silenced so long as men like these openly preached. Indeed their speech was often more compelling than their own-as Ward felt when listening to a gifted young evangelist in Hindi. 'Oh, I saw that the Gospel was as sweet in this as in any other tongue! At his aptness and tenderness I could scarcely hold back tears.'⁶⁸

Serampore's strategy depended on the training of Indian preachers. This strategy had given ample evidence of its effectiveness, but when John Clarke Marshman published his history of the Serampore Mission in 1859, he lamented that the vision of Carey, Marshman and Ward had been abandoned. He quoted Ward who in a letter to Ryland explained their vision:

It be vain to expect that the Gospel will ever spread widely in this country, till God so blesses the means as that *native men* shall be raised up, who will carry the despised doctrine, brought into the country by the Mlechas (barbarians, non-Hindus), into the very teeth of the brahmins, and prove from the Scriptures that this is indeed the Christ that should come into the world.⁶⁹

⁶⁶S. P. Carey, 226.

⁶⁷BMS, 12.

⁶⁸S. P. Carey, 253.

⁶⁹Marshman, 1:182.

At this point JC Marshman inserts his own evaluation of developments after the passing of Carey, Ward, and his father:

It was to this agency they looked for naturalizing Christianity in India. It is lamentable to reflect that no systematic effort has been made by any missionary body to carry out these sound views during the subsequent half century of missionary labours, and that the attention of missionary societies has been too prominently directed to the multiplication of European labourers. It is scarcely possible to estimate the impression which might have been produced in the country, if it had been made the primary object of solicitude to strengthen every missionary circle in India with a large body of native itinerants, under European supervision.⁷⁰

The Serampore Trio believed in the potential of the Indian people. Sadly, their biblical egalitarianism was in marked contrast to that of most Europeans of the day.

Church Planting

All of the efforts that went into establishing a missionary society as sending agency, and of forming the Serampore mission and its many auxiliary ministries, were for the purpose of supporting an itinerant preaching ministry and establishing of local churches. Each station ideally consisted of a European missionary and an Indian preacher. The churches that were established were formed on the Baptist model. Their development provided another demonstration of the Serampore Trio's biblical egalitarianism.

The congregation at Serampore, and later the Lal Bazaar church in Calcutta, dealt with several cases of church discipline. While the situations were painful, it did not occur to the missionaries to treat the Indian converts with lower expectations than they would have in England. Carey dealt with the issues that arose in much the same manner that he had dealt with problems in his pastorates at Moulton and Leicester. The Indian Christians were expected to grow in grace and obedience just like the Europeans.

⁷⁰Ibid., 1:183.

In the same way, the congregations themselves were treated with the same dignity as Baptist churches in England, with their emphasis on independency. In 1815, in the midst of the crisis generated by the change of leadership caused by the death of Fuller, Carey wrote John Ryland, “The churches in India also are as independent as they are in England. We may give an opinion or even advice at Berhampore or elsewhere, but we have no authority over it; and we want none.”⁷¹ The offer of advice was well within the Baptist view of the need for local churches to be related by associations. Again, this is not meant as a defense of Baptist polity. Rather, it is offered as evidence that Carey’s ecclesiological convictions had not wavered. All of the machinery of society and mission were set in motion to provide the infrastructure required for the planting of New Testament churches in the Baptist mold. Carey at least, saw no conflict between the society approach and his Baptist view of the church.

In 1835 a report from Serampore gave the following details of the work:

There are now eighteen mission stations and eleven out stations. The surface over which the mission extends is very large. Delhi is as distant from Serampore as the capital of Sweden is from England; and the extreme distance between the stations is more than that of Petersburg from London. At these stations we have at least fifty European and Asiatic laborers, while the number is continually, though gradually on the increase. Of these fifty, forty-two or forty three have been turned from darkness to light on *Indian* ground; and of this number not fewer thirty-eight were *born* in India.⁷²

A letter that adds additional details from Joshua Marshman dated November 5, 1835 was printed below this report:

As I am greatly pressed for time, I can enlarge no further than to say, that our gracious Redeemer has neither forsaken us at Serampore, nor left us wholly without tokens of his gracious presence and approbation. Our *nine* missionary stations he has increased to *eighteen*, in these last seven years; and of the brethren who labor in them, nearly

⁷¹*Letters from the Rev. Dr. Carey* (London: Parbury, Allen and Co., 1828), 2.

⁷²Ira Mason Allen, from the Church Register, *The Triennial Baptist Register*. no. 2. 1836.

fifty of different nations, (for with us there is no difference of blood or color, since HE hath made of *one blood* all the nations of the earth,) all with the exception of five have been by his grace raised up in India itself. And I feel thankful while I add, that if we may adopt the primitive maxim, as old as Tertullian, "*Ubi tres ecclesia est,*" there are among those eighteen stations, twenty-six infant churches rising up, the greater part of whose members are natives of India.

When Marshman penned this letter he was the sole surviving member of the Serampore Trio. William Ward had died of cholera in 1823. William Carey had passed away on June 9, 1834 after a series of debilitating bouts of illnesses. His strength had held out long enough to finish the final revision of his Bengali translation.⁷³ Marshman would live on till 1837. Before he died he established the first hospital in Serampore.

⁷³Marshman, 2:475.

CHAPTER 9

SERAMPORE CHRISTIANITY AND INDIAN CULTURE

India achieved independence from the British Raj in 1947. The first days of modern India were turbulent and marked by bloodshed. The country was torn into three parts as Muslim-dominated regions split away to become Pakistan and Bangladesh. When Gandhi was assassinated in 1948 by a Hindu nationalist, those who loved India must have despaired. But modern India has turned a corner. While enormous challenges remain, India has taken its place among the most influential nations on the planet. The creativity of Indians across a wide range of technical fields has begun to produce economic benefits, and its role as the world's most populous democracy has made India's voice an important one on the geo-political stage. India has retained the parliamentary system which is a legacy of the British Raj, but in its constitution has made significant advances over the British status quo by eliminating aristocratic titles and abolishing the practice of untouchability.

Indian scholar and Christian activist Vishal Mangalwadi finds the roots of modern India's advance not just in the efforts of Gandhi and the figures of the independence movement, but in William Carey's career at Serampore; "India's independence in 1947 was not only a victory for Mahatma Gandhi and the 'freedom fighters,' but even more fundamentally a triumph for Carey's evangelical England. It marked the victory of the early missionaries over the narrow commercial, political, and military vested interests of England, as well as a victory for the heart and mind of India."¹

¹Ruth and Vishal Mangalwadi, *The Legacy of William Carey: A Model for the Transformation of a Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1999), 102.

For the Love of India

The Serampore Trio loved India and its people. We have already seen Carey's first reaction upon arriving in India. William Ward also recorded his impressions when he arrived. His enthusiasm on encountering an elephant reflects his feeling for the entire country:

This is indeed a wonderful animal. I am filled with wonder every time I see one. A man placed by his side seems a dwarf looking up at the Irish giant, & yet a little child can command him. When ordered, he prostrated himself; a ladder was then reared against him, & we ascended [to] the seat fastened on his back, where we sat as comfortably as in a two-armed chair. One rode on his neck, with a thick stick pointed with iron in his hand; another sat on his rump holding the umbrella over us, & another man came behind having in his hand another pointed club. Thus we marched across the country about 10 miles; the elephant with his trunk pulling down the branches of trees in our way with the utmost ease.²

Samuel Pearce, a Baptist pastor who supported the work of the Serampore missionaries and corresponded with them was impressed with much of what he read in a work titled *Code of Hindoo Laws*.³ He wrote, "How much is there to admire in it, founded on the principles of justice. The most salutary regulations are adopted in many circumstances." He felt, however, it was a pity that, "so much excellence should be abused by laws to establish or countenance idolatry, magic, prostitution, prayers for the dead, false-witnessing, theft, and suicide?" Their moral state moved him to compassion, "How perfect is the morality of the gospel of Jesus: and how desirable that they should embrace it. Ought not means to be used? Can we assist them too soon?"⁴

²E. Daniel Potts, "William Ward's Missionary Journal 1799-1811." *The Baptist Quarterly* 25 (Baptist Missionary Society), 1973: 111-114, 60.

³ Probably "A Code of Gentoo laws, or, Ordinations of the Pundits : from a Persian Translation, Made from the Original, Written in the Shanscrit Language" by Nathaniel Brassey Halhed which was printed in 1776.

⁴ Andrew Fuller, *Memoirs of the Late Rev. Samuel Pearce, A.M.* (London: J.W. Morris, 1800), 54.

As Carey's knowledge of Bengali deepened he became an advocate for its development as a literary vehicle. In the early twentieth century the great Bengali scholar Dinesh Chandra Sen quoted Carey on the title page of his *History of Bengali Language and Literature*, "This language, current through an extent of country nearly equal to Great Britain, when properly cultivated, will be inferior to none in elegance and perspicuity."⁵ Sen's citation does the double service of showing Carey's regard for the language and Sen's esteem for Carey.

Carey and Serampore are still honored in modern India. Some ideologues would reject all links to the past associated with colonialism, but more mature observers try to separate the good from the bad. A great country that has so much to offer the world is not diminished by recognizing benefactors from the past. While many would reject Carey's faith, and the bluntness in which certain opinions were expressed, it is clear that Carey and his colleagues truly loved India and its people.

Opposing the Darkness

While the missionaries loved India, at times they were shocked by the religious practices they observed. Carey described the Indian practice of "self tormenting":

To Day self tormenting was carried to a greater length than Yesterday—A number of people came near to our Gate with Drums, and Dancing; when presently a Man had two pieces of Bamboo—of twenty feet Long, and each as thick as a Man's finger, these were passed through his sides—and held at each end by two Men; while he danced backwards and forward in a manner almost frantic, but seemingly insensitive to pain. . . ."⁶

⁵ Dinesh Chandra Sen, *Bengali Language and Literature* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1911), from the title page.

⁶Terry G. Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2000), 23.

Serampore was located in a region noted for its worship of the Juggernaut (Jagannath). Juggernaut was a form of Krishna worshipped with an annual procession of enormous carts with wooden wheels capable of crushing a man. Some devotees would throw themselves under the wheels. Certain contemporary sources would deny the violence of Juggernaut worship, but it is attested by the eyewitness accounts of Claudius Buchanan, the Anglican chaplain who travelled in Orissa and Bengal.⁷ If this were the only example of the disregard for human life perhaps it might be possible to conclude that Buchanan exaggerated. However, other customs such as infanticide by exposure and *sati* (*sutee*), the burning of widows, were amply attested and opposed not only by the Christian missionaries but “enlightened heathens” such as Ram Mohun Roy. In April of 1799, Carey wrote Ryland to describe in great detail an example of *sati* he had witnessed:

When a quantity of dry Cocoa leaves, and other substances were heaped over them to considerable height, and then Ghee—melted preserved butter poured on top. Two Bamboos were then put over them and held fast down, and fire put to the Pile blazed which immediately very fiercely owing to the dry and combustible materials of which it was composed. No sooner was the fire kindled than all the people set up a great shout, “Hurree Bol, Hurree Bol”—which is a common shout of joy, and invocation of Hurree the wife of Hur or Seeb [*Shiva?*]. It was impossible to have heard the Woman had she groaned, or even cried aloud on account of the mad noise of the people, and it was impossible for her to stir, or struggle, on account of the Bamboo which were held down on them like the levers of a press.⁸

Carey was not one to mince words and he speaks of the effects of India’s religions in the strongest terms. In his journal, for example, he describes Hindu cosmology in detail, and then in reference to their understanding of time, states, “Their Chronology is equally

⁷Claudius Buchanan, *The Works of the Rev. Claudius Buchanan* (Boston : Samuel T. Armstrong, 1812), 106-107.

⁸Carter, 80.

ridiculous.”⁹ Carey also expressed a low opinion of the conduct of many Indians saying they were, “abundantly supplied with a dreadful stock of low cunning and deceit.”¹⁰

This was not an expression of racism; Carey did not believe in the innate superiority of the European. He had written a defense of the “barbarous heathens” in the *Enquiry*, “they appear to be as capable of knowledge as we are; and in many place, at least, have discovered uncommon genius and tractableness. . . .”¹¹ Although he was not referring to India in this passage—he probably had in mind incidents from Captain Cook’s voyages - it is a clear indication of Carey’s views on race. He goes on to defend the “heathen” against those who considered them especially violent attributing their reactions to the provocation of Europeans. He was also a stern critic of the moral condition of Europeans, “It is also a melancholy fact, that the vices of the Europeans have been communicated wherever they themselves have been; so that the religious state of even heathens has been rendered worse by intercourse with them!”¹²

The Serampore Trio was convinced that all nations were “of one blood.”¹³ Their theology told them that all men were depraved, European or Asian. All men needed Christ. A statement in *the Form of Agreement* makes this clear by pointing to the depravity of the missionaries own ancestors:

Oh! may our hearts bleed over these poor idolaters, and may their case lie with continued weight on our minds, that we may resemble that eminent Missionary, who compared the travail of his soul, on account of the spiritual state of those committed to his charge, to the pains of childbirth. But while we thus mourn over their miserable condition, we should not be discouraged, as though their recovery were impossible.

⁹Ibid., 13.

¹⁰Leighton and Mornay Williams, ed. *Serampore Letters 1800-1816* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1892), 61-62.

¹¹William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, 1961), 89.

¹²Carey, 90.

¹³Ira Mason Allen, from the Church Register, *The Triennial Baptist Register*. no. 2. 1836.

He who raised the Scottish and brutalized Britons to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, can raise these slaves of superstition, purify their hearts by faith, and make them worshippers of the one God in spirit and in truth. The promises are fully sufficient to remove our doubts, and to make us anticipate that not very distant period when He will famish all the gods of India, and cause these very idolaters to cast their idols to the moles and to the bats, and renounce for ever the work of their own hands.

14

Understanding India

In December of 1800, Carey wrote a lengthy letter to an American correspondent which contained, among other things, Carey's thoughts on the culture of India. First, Carey felt the Hindus were limited, not by any racial inferiority but by what we would today call their worldview. "I suppose that no people can have more completely surrendered their reason than the Hindoos. In all matters of business and every thing relating to this world, they are not deficient in knowledge, but in all things relating to religion, they are apparently void of all understanding."¹⁵ Notice that while the limitation is religious at its roots, in Carey's view it affects, not their intelligence, but their rationality.

Second, their religious worldview controlled their lives, but offered no tangible benefit, "Their books abound with the most abominable stories, and the characters of their gods are drawn in colour so black that even the father of wickedness himself would scarcely own. The Hindoos are not fond of hearing in detail the vices of their gods, yet so devoted are they to their old customs, that they constantly adore characters the most detestable."¹⁶

William Ward expressed a similar point of view in his journal, "Their religion is the off-

¹⁴A. H. Oussoren, *William Carey Especially His Missionary Principles* (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff's Uitgeversmaatschappij N.V., 1945), 275.

¹⁵Williams, 61-62.

¹⁶Ibid.

spring of fear, & and their feelings the same as those of man believing in ghosts & evil spirits walking thro' a church-yard in a gloomy night."¹⁷

Third, their religion had a formative effect on their moral life, "It is not to be thought that the moral character of a people should be better than that of their gods. Men made themselves idols after their own hearts, and therefore to look for good morals among idolaters is the height of folly. The conduct of the Hindoos but too fully proves the truth of this observation, for they are literally sunk into the dregs of vice."¹⁸ Carey might well have agreed with T. S. Eliot who saw "the culture of a people as an incarnation of its religion."¹⁹

Engaging the Culture

Before 1813, the policy of the East India Company was to meddle as little as possible in the culture of India. They resisted attempts to convert, or even to educate the people. They preferred an unchanging status quo that guaranteed maximum profitability. This began to change with the Charter Act of 1813. A debate eventually developed over the language of instruction to be used in India. Before this time, the national employees of the East India Company had been educated in Persian and Arabic, but in 1835 Thomas Babington Macaulay presented, in his *Minute on Indian Education* a proposal they be instructed in English. Macaulay is now a controversial figure, but most observers would concede that his intentions were benefic towards India. While in India, he drew up the Indian Penal Code

¹⁷Potts, 60.

¹⁸Williams, 61.

¹⁹T. S. Eliot, *Christianity and Culture* (New York: Harcourt, 1948), 105.

which still serves as the basis of Indian law. However, his views, which prevailed on education, are disputed. The introduction of English has been a benefit to India, but it is interesting to contrast these with those of William Carey and the Serampore Trio. At Serampore, they were intent on providing the intellectual tools which would allow Bengali and other Indian languages to become modern literary vehicles. It is not an exaggeration to say that their work began a process that led to the work of Nobel Laureate Rabindranth Tagore.

A. H. Ousseren compared Carey's views on culture with those of Zinzendorf, the chief figure behind the Moravians remarkable missionary endeavors. Both agreed that conversion must come before an attempt to civilize a people. They differed significantly, however, on the process of civilization. Ousseren quotes Zinzendorf as saying, "I don't acknowledge any difference between the nations in matters relating to the heart. A Hottentot must lead exactly just the same life as an Englishman or German."²⁰ Carey's approach, however, was to "guide the native life in such a way that it really makes the missionaries superfluous and that all the treasures of the native culture are Christianized."²¹ While that which was unbiblical must be abandoned, Ousseren maintains that Carey attempted to "lead their culture to the cross." The result would not be a copy of European culture but a new culture uniquely Indian and Christian.

Ousseren actually describes a third possible approach to Christianity and culture. Catholicism sacrificed its Christian principles to preserve the local culture. Carey had warned against this approach in the *Enquiry*:

²⁰Oussoren, 265.

²¹Ibid., 264.

The Jesuits indeed once made many converts to popery among the Chinese; but their highest aim seemed to be to obtain their good opinion; for though the converts professed themselves Christians, yet they were allowed to honour the image of CONFUCIUS their great law-giver; and at length their ambitious intrigues brought upon them the displeasure of government, which terminated in the suppression of the million, and almost, if not entirely, of the Christian name.²²

The Serampore Trio found a biblical balance between the syncretism of Catholic missions and the cultural leveling of Zinzendorf. Their position better reflects the unity and diversity which is a characteristic of the New Testament church.

The Serampore Trio made the preaching of the gospel their first priority, but they saw no contradiction in engaging in social action to end some of the worst practices of Hindu society. In this they joined with Ram Mohun Roy, the Indian intellectual who was influenced by Christianity and the Enlightenment. Throughout his career Carey actively opposed *sati* and infanticide. In 1803, the Serampore mission took it upon itself to gather data to make the extent of the problem of *sati* known. They paid agents to make inquiries in a 30 mile radius of Calcutta. Then they paid ten men to watch key areas along the Hooghly River for a period of six months. They determined that there were 300 cases during that period. The Trio submitted their data to the colonial government, but no action was taken for another quarter of a century.²³ After considerable deliberation, on December 4th, 1829, the colonial government under Lord William Betnick issued a regulation making those involved in the practice chargeable with homicide. The regulation was immediately forwarded to William Carey at Serampore for translation into Bengali. Though it was Sunday, Carey

²²Carey, 90.

²³John Clark Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward: Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission*. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1859), 1:221-223.

decided to not go into the pulpit that day because any delay might mean the loss of more human life.²⁴

On these issues the Serampore Trio considered there was no neutral ground. Ultimately, they evaluated all elements of the culture through the filter of Scripture as best they could. Not every judgment was negative. As we have seen, Carey had a profound appreciation for the languages of the sub-continent. Other elements were more difficult to judge. They did not require new converts to change their pagan names. They felt the New Testament provided sufficient examples of Greek Christians who retained their original names. They did require women converts to not wear their jewelry, presumably in response to New Testament injunctions to avoid excessive adornment. However, they did not require Brahmin converts to quit wearing the *poita*, the sacred thread that identified the upper castes as “twice-born”:

The converts were . . . baptized and preached to their fellow-countrymen with the *poita* across the shoulder. This practice gave great umbrage to the Hindoo priesthood; and, on one occasion, the wealthy natives of Serampore lodged a complaint on this ground in the magistrate's court, and demanded that he should restrain those who had renounced Hindooism from appearing in the *poita*; but he rejected their petition. The missionaries, in their anxiety not to interfere unnecessarily with the national habits and customs of the converts, did not deem it necessary to make any rule on the subject. The brahmin convert continued to wear the thread for nearly three years after his baptism, and then he, and another convert of the same class, renounced it voluntarily. Mr. Ward remarks, on this event, “How much better is love and illumination than force! If we had compelled these brethren to leave off their *poitas*, perhaps they might have been attached to them while they lived.”²⁵

The Serampore missionaries engaged the culture through a broad range of initiatives. Their first priority was preaching of the gospel. As a result, their activities clustered around the tasks of reaching the lost, training national leaders and planting new churches. These

²⁴John Clark Marshman, 2:412.

²⁵Marshman, 1:176-177.

priorities were similar to those of the leaders of Evangelical revival and can be fairly characterized as lining up with the elements of Bebbington's quadrilateral. However, there was an expanded range of activities due to the differing cultural and historic circumstances. First, the leaders of the Evangelical revival had benefitted from the work of the earlier reformers in making the scriptures available in the vernacular. It was possible to preach in the field because the scriptures were already available in the King's English. The Serampore missionaries had to do in one generation what had been had been spread across multiple generations in Europe. Second, the Serampore missionaries had to make church-planting and the training of nationals a priority in a way which had never been necessary before. The leaders of the Evangelical revival, as well as the initial generation of leaders of the Reformation worked against the background of preexisting church structures. Their goal was to reform what already existed. In India, there was no church to reform.

The Bible Publishing Enterprise

It is possible that the largest enduring impact on Indian culture was the product of their efforts to provide the scriptures in the languages of the people. William Carey is probably most famous for his colossal feats of translation. However, the Serampore mission expanded its efforts to include the printing of the Bible and the creation of a literate population through education. Carey's personal accomplishments are staggering, but no matter how significant, they are only a part of all that Serampore accomplished.

At its height, there was nothing like the translation enterprise in the world. While Carey was at the center of the activities, it should be understood that he led a team of

missionaries and Indian pundits. The work was done with great thoroughness. Ward described Carey's method:

At an early period each new pundit's first attempts were brought to the test, when, after he had advanced some way his MS. was put to the press, and the first sheet was examined by an initiated native assistant sitting by the side of this original native translator. The first and second proofs were thus corrected, which brought the sheet as near as these could to the original Sanskrit. The third proof was then carried to Dr Carey by the translator himself, and they went over this together, and over as many more proofs of the same sheet as the Doctor thought necessary, sometimes more and sometimes fewer, and after this the sheet was ordered to the press.²⁶

Carey had finished the greater part of his first translation of the Bible into Bengali, with the assistance of his pundit and John Fountain, during the five years at Mudnabatty.²⁷ At Serampore he expanded his efforts. As the years passed he came to dedicate the greater part of his time to this area where he was particularly gifted. The responsibility for itinerant preaching passed to others, especially after he was offered a post at Fort William College which kept him in Calcutta for a part of each week. This post provided needed income which was contributed to the common fund at Serampore. More importantly it put him in touch on a daily basis with the greatest Indian pundits. It should be noted that at this juncture, Carey's own reputation as a scholar was such that he was asked to teach Bengali at the college although as a dissenter he could not be named a full professor.

Carey's translation efforts have at times been subject to criticism. Henry Martyn, the great Anglican missionary wrote to a friend that, "I have grievous complaints to make, that the immense work of translating the services into the languages of the East is left to Dissenters, who cannot in ten years supply the want of what we gain by a classical education."²⁸ No doubt Carey and the other members of the Serampore Trio would have

²⁶Samuel Pearce Carey, *William Carey* (London: The Wakeman Trust, 1923), 388.

²⁷S. P. Carey, 178.

preferred a classical education at the great English public schools had such an opportunity been open to dissenters. While the quality of Martyn's education was doubtless above reproach, one wonders how well he was able to judge the quality of the work at Serampore at this stage since by his own admission he had only been in the country four months and he had seen, "little more of it than what lies between Serampore and Calcutta: and the little time that can be spent out of doors affords very small opportunities of acquiring local knowledge. My whole employment is preparing sermons and learning the language."²⁹

Carey's translations were certainly not perfect. He recognized this himself and made a thorough revision of his Bengali Bible. The enduring value of Carey's work is attested to by Dr. Dipankar Haldar, a New Testament scholar who has been Secretary of the Calcutta Auxiliary of the Bible Society who states that the Bible Society in India has found it difficult to promote newer translations because Cary's Bengali translation remains the favorite of many Indian Christians.³⁰

Samuel Pearce Carey provides a chart that shows that Carey translated the whole Bible into nine languages; Bengali, Oriya, Marathi, Hindi, Assamese, Punjab, Pashto, Kashmir, and Sanskrit.³¹ He translated the New Testament into an additional twenty-one languages, smaller portions into five languages more.

The translations were at the core of Serampore's literary effort, but their listing does not cover all that was produced. Carey wrote grammars for Sanskrit, Bengali and Marathi. He also composed books of dialogues for aiding the teaching of these languages. He also

²⁸Henry Martyn, *Journals and Letters of the Rev. Henry Martyn, B. D.* Edited by S. Wilberforce. (London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1837), 1:360.

²⁹Ibid .

³⁰The author interviewed Dr. Haldar at Serampore College in November of 2009.

³¹S. P. Carey, 397.

translated the *Ramayana*, an ancient Sanskrit epic that Andrew Fuller derogatively called “that piece of lumber” but Carey saw as an important piece of literature in spite of its polytheistic nature.³² William Ward produced one of the first important scholarly studies of Hinduism, *A View of the History, Literature, and Mythology of the Hindoos Including a Minute Description of their Manners and Customs, and Translations of Their Principle Works*. He also published a broader study titled *A View of all Religions*. Joshua Marshman produced a translation of the Bible into Chinese and polemical works that engaged the unique views of Ram Mohan Roy.

In addition to their individual publications, the Trio cooperated to produce the first magazine ever published in any oriental language, the *Dig-dursun*, and the first newspaper printed in an oriental language, the *Sumachar Durpun*.³³ These publications printed local news stories and articles designed to produce a spirit of enquiry among the Indian population. For example, the first issue of the *Dig-dursun* contained an article on the geographic limits of ‘Hindoostan’ and an account of the discovery of America. They also published *The Friend of India*, an English quarterly which concentrated on matters of religion and education.

William Ward, in a letter to a cousin gave a description of the printing operations at Serampore just before the great fire:

As you enter, you see your cousin, in a small room, dressed in a white jacket, reading or writing, and looking over the office, which is more than 170 feet long. There you find Indians translating the Scriptures into the different tongues. or correcting proof sheets. You observe, laid out in cases, types in Arabic, Persian, Nagari, Telugu, Punjabi, Bengali, Marathi, Chinese, Oriya, Burmese, Kanarese, Greek, Hebrew and English. Hindus, Mussulmans and Christian Indians are busy - composing, correcting, distributing. Next are four men throwing off the Scripture sheets in the different languages; others folding the sheets and delivering them, to the large store-room and six Mussulmans do the binding. Beyond the office are the varied type-casters. Besides

³²Ibid., 217.

³³Marshman, 2:161-163.

a group of men making ink; and in a spacious open walled-round place, our paper-mill, for we manufacture our own paper.³⁴

A few things bear examination. First is the sheer scale of the operation. Its holy ambition is breathtaking. The list of typefaces shows that the Trio saw Serampore as a center not just for reaching the Indian sub-continent, but all of Asia. For a time Chinese was taught and studied at Serampore and Marshman completed a Chinese translation of the bible. Second, the comprehensiveness of their efforts. Carey's translation efforts were significant in their own right, but to this they added the entire chain of production—not just printing, but as a matter of necessity the manufacture of paper. Paper imported from England was too expensive so they took it upon themselves to make their own paper mill. For this purpose they imported what may have been the first steam engine in India, a machine which became a local attraction. They were also obliged produce their own ink, and to make their own type foundry, and they found talented Indians who became experts in the field and who produced the first typesets for many of the languages of the sub-continent. Third, while the reference to “low bred mechanics” referred to earlier was obviously meant to denigrate the Serampore Trio, it is doubtful that a member of the English aristocracy would have had the practical mindset, skills and work ethic to achieve what the Serampore Trio accomplished. This approach to work and the world stood in stark contrast to that of Brahminsim as well. Fourth, the key roles given to nationals foreshadows modern productive India.

Limited space does not allow thorough treatment of Serampore's accomplishments in the fields of education and science. Carey contributed articles to the prestigious *Asiatick Researches*. His induction into the Linnaean Society for his contributions to botany and

³⁴S. P. Carey, 284.

Indian agriculture provides an indication of the breadth of Serampore's engagement with the larger culture, both that of India and of the global community of the day.

Caste and the Church

The Serampore Trio took a stand in one specific area that ran not only counter to the pervading Hindu culture, but to the position taken by other Christian bodies. Their biblical anthropology—and their ecclesiology—placed them in explicit opposition to the Indian caste system. To have taken another stance would have put him in opposition to the principles of unity that had guided Carey in his pastorates at Moulton and Leicester. While they did not seek government intervention, they saw that Hinduism and the caste system were the biggest obstacles to the conversion of Indians and to their progress. Samuel Pearce Carey

summarizes Carey's views on caste and the effect of the Hindu worldview:

'Never was a people more willing to hear, yet more slow to understand.' they heard of the new way, but followed the old. Custom was king. The past forbade the least change. 'Caste,' he said, has cut off all motives to inquiry and exertion, and made stupid contentment the habit of their lives.' Their minds resembled their mud homesteads, destitute of pictures, ornaments, and books. 'Harmless, indifferent, vacant,' he writes, 'they plod on in the path of their forefathers; and even truth in geography, astronomy, or any other science, if out of their beaten track, make no more impression on them than the sublimer truths of religion.'³⁵

The Serampore Trio repeatedly referred to Hinduism and the caste system as "binding chains." It is notable that the Serampore missionaries did not appeal to the colonial authorities to abolish the caste system. Instead they saw it as something to be barred from the life of the church. They countered the evil at three critical points. First, new believers were not allowed to maintain Hindu rules of commensality. The Hindu idea of ritual contamination from sharing a meal with a person of a lower case was obviously contrary to

³⁵S. P. Carey, 162.

the spirit and letter of the New Testament. When Krishna Pal, the first convert was baptized, he was immediately invited to dine with the others at Serampore. By this Krishna effectively broke caste. This became the common practice at Serampore.

To have given ground at this important point would have placed in jeopardy the very idea of Christian communion. Samuel Pearce, an English pastor who was a friend of Carey and Fuller, and an ardent supporter of the Baptist Missionary Society, got to the heart of the issue when he recorded in his journal:

Oct. 18. I dreamed that I saw one of the Christian Hindoos. O how I loved him! I long to realize my dream. How pleasant will it be to sit down at the Lord's table with our [black]³⁶ brethren, and hear Jesus preached in their language. Surely then will come to pass the saying that is written, In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, all are one in him.³⁷

To have allowed Hindu rules of commensality to prevail would have destroyed the symbolism of the Lord's Supper. Andrew Fuller wrote the believers at Serampore that, 'To unite with the church below is to be akin with that which is above. Satan divides men from God and one another. The Gospel makes us one.'³⁸

The second critical point at which the caste system was overturned was marriage. In April of 1803, the Serampore community celebrated the first marriage between converts. In a simple ceremony on mats under a tree, Krisnu-prisad, a *Brahmin*, wed the daughter of Krishna Pal who was a *Sudra*. That a Brahmin married a *Sudra* was remarkable in itself; William Ward pointed out an additional fact - when the bride and groom signed the marriage

³⁶ The type in the edition available to me is almost illegible at this point, but appears to be the word 'black'.

³⁷ Andrew Fuller, *Memoirs of the Late Rev. Samuel Pearce, A.M.* (London: J.W. Morris, 1800), 48.

³⁸ S. P. Carey, 202.

agreement it was the first “to which a Hindoo female had probably put her name for centuries.”³⁹

The third point at which they acted to counteract the caste system was in the handling of death. During his early years in India, Carey had felt the impact of Hindu customs when his child died and no one could be found to bury it. In the same year as the first wedding, the first baptized Hindu died after short illness. John Clarke Marshman reported that his peacefulness at death produced a positive effect on the other new believers. The Serampore missionaries had purchased a plot of land to serve as a cemetery. When the time came for the burial, the coffin bearers were chosen to make a strong Christian statement. “There, in the presence of a silent and astonished multitude, Mr. Marshman and Mr. Felix Carey, Bhyrub, a baptized Brahmin, and Peeroo, a baptized Mahomedan, placed the coffin on their shoulders, and singing the Bengalee hymn, ‘Salvation through the death of Christ,’ carried it through the streets. . . .”⁴⁰ John Clarke Marshman sums up, “This procedure may be considered as having completed the abolition of caste among the native Christian community.”⁴¹

The Serampore Trio showed a remarkable clarity of vision on the issue of caste. It is all the more remarkable for the fact that many European Christians did not grasp the importance of the issue. The Serampore missionaries showed flexibility in other areas, but not on the core issue of caste divisions in the church.

The first missionaries on the Coromandel Coast had allowed the system to continue with disastrous results. The outcasts (Dalits) were excluded from the Lord’s Supper and

³⁹Marshman, 1:181 Ruth Mangalwadi has pointed out the role of Carey and Serampore in dignifying women. Their opposition to sati and infanticide was opposition to the Hindu treatment of women.

⁴⁰Ibid., 1:185.

⁴¹Ibid.

eventually separate churches were formed. John Clarke Marshman's comment on the issue can be taken as an echo of the sentiments of his father and the other Serampore missionaries:

This institution, which might be considered as the great bulwark of Hindooism, the converts had been permitted to take with them into the Christian church, and this idolatrous distinction had been allowed to intrude itself into the solemnities of the holy communion; the Brahmin Christian received the elements before the Soodra Christian, and the cup of blessing was thus converted into a chalice of abomination.⁴²

The Serampore missionaries clearly saw caste as “the bulwark of Hindooism” and they understood it to be an expression of idolatry incompatible with the Gospel.

The Serampore position on caste anticipates Abraham Kuyper who wrote that Calvinism teaches the equality of men before God, “Hence Calvinism condemns not merely all open slavery and systems of caste, but also covert slavery of woman and of the poor; it is opposed to all hierarchy among men. . . .”⁴³

Other Europeans tended to see it as a similar system to their own class system and excused it on that basis. To do otherwise was seen as dangerous since to admit that the caste system was evil would eventually bring the European system into question. Lord Wellesley, when Governor General of India, favored the conversion of the heathen; but he expressed concern about the circulation of the Bible because, “it taught the doctrine of Christian equality.”⁴⁴

Carey himself had been the object of both European and Hindu prejudice. One well known story tells that while he was professor at Fort William College he entered the classroom one day to discover a pair of shoes hanging from his desk; an allusion to his days as a shoe maker, a trade that was seen as unclean since it involved the handling of animal

⁴²Ibid., 1:177.

⁴³Abraham Kuyper, *Calvinism*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1931), 19.

⁴⁴Potts, 90.

skins.⁴⁵ On another occasion, “A young British staff-officer sitting next to Carey in India at the Governor-General’s table—and in the hearing of others—rudely and disdainfully asked him if he had not once been a shoe-maker. ‘No’, Carey replied. Then to the surprised and incredulous questioner he added, ‘Not even a shoe-maker, sir: just a cobbler.’”⁴⁶

This prejudice on the part of Europeans led to the founding of the Lal Bazaar Church in Calcutta. David Brown, the senior chaplain in Calcutta visited Carey to inquire if the missionaries might be persuaded to give attention to the lower classes. There were those who bore, “the Christian name, [but] were too low in the scale of society to intrude into the patrician congregations of the Mission Church and the Presidency Church. . . .”⁴⁷

These attitudes were found among the second generation of BMS missionaries as well and were a factor in discontinuing Serampore’s program of preparing Indian preachers after the death of Marshman, the last member of the Trio. Eustace Carey was William’s nephew but he had little of his uncle’s spirit. He argued that the Indians were “only newly awakened from heathen superstition’ and had “little previous mental culture”⁴⁸ and so could not be trusted to be faithful exponents of Christianity. In addition he felt that too much emphasis on preparing Indian missionaries would discourage the recruitment of Europeans. In contrast, the Serampore Trio stated in the *Form of Agreement*:

Another part of our work is the forming of our native brethren to usefulness, fostering every kind of genius, and cherishing every gift and grace in them. In this respect we can scarcely be too lavish of our attention to their improvement. It is only by means of native preachers that we can hope for the universal spread of the Gospel throughout this immense continent.⁴⁹

⁴⁵S. P. Carey, 260.

⁴⁶Ibid., 30.

⁴⁷Marshman, 1:175.

⁴⁸Potts, 34.

The Indian Constitution has outlawed caste-based discrimination, but related issues still bedevil India. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, a leader of India's *dalits* and the chief architect of the Indian constitution said, "Hinduism is not a religion but a disease. People of every caste should flee from it as from the plague. When Hindus have extracted nectar from poison, let them begin to talk of extracting salvation from Hinduism."⁵⁰ His strong statement echoes the Serampore Trio's conviction that Hinduism was a form of spiritual bondage. Ambedkar swore he would not die as a Hindu. He reportedly considered Christianity for a time before turning to Buddhism. Perhaps the outcome would have been different had the church's testimony been less sullied.

Remarkably, an important principle of the modern Church Growth Movement is derived from the checkered history of missions in India. The homogeneous principle promoted by Donald MacGavran, a former missionary in India, states that people like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers. MacGavran should not be dismissed lightly. For example, his criticism of the mission station system deserves to be considered in light of Serampore's experience. But the homogeneous principle does not seem to rise to New Testament standards. As another missionary from India, Lesslie Newbigin, writes, "McGavran (if I understand him) thinks that in the interest of effective evangelization the Christians should be organized in separate groups according to their caste origins. This, in his view, would make it easier and more natural for Hindus from the same

⁴⁹Oussoren, 279.

⁵⁰Monodeep Daniel, "Models of Leadership in the Indian Church: An Evaluation." *Studies in World Christianity* (Edinburgh University Press) 67-90, 74.

caste to be converted.”⁵¹ Newbigin goes on to state that most of the Christians he knows in Madras, “would reject this on ethical grounds, believing that it is an essential part of Christian witness” to challenge the culture.

This last statement echoes the convictions of the Serampore Trio: Indian Christians are not only abundantly capable of sharing the gospel with their fellow countrymen; if we will listen, they might teach those of us in the West something about the gospel as well.

⁵¹Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 145.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

In 1793, not long after William Carey arrived in India, he wrote the Baptist Missionary Society urging greater efforts, “Africa is but a little way from England, Madagascar but a little farther. South America, and all the numerous and large islands in the India and China seas, I hope will not be passed over.” His outward voyage must have still been in his mind, and under the great weight of his missionary vision the world’s dimensions seemed to be compressed and the opportunities enlarged, “A large field opens on every side. Oh, that many labourers may be thrust out into the vineyard of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that the Gentiles may come to the knowledge of the truth as it is in him.”¹

Thirty years later in February 1823, Carey wrote to his son Jabez who at the time was serving in Ajmere, Rajastan in northern India:

The cause of God and truth is evidently gaining ground in different parts of the world; all accounts from almost all parts contain something more or less encouraging upon that head. I trust that the Lord will give more and more success to the word of his grace till the knowledge of his name shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.²

By that time the greatest expansion of Christianity in history was well under way. Referring to the period that followed the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society, Kenneth Scott Latourette has written, “This Protestantism was characterized by an

¹John Clark Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward: Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission*. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1859), 1:160-61.

²Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, *Family Letters of Dr. William Carey* (Serampore: Non-Liner, 2007), 53.

unbounding vitality and a daring unequalled in Christian history. Through it for the first time plans were seriously elaborated for bringing the Christian message to all men. . . .”³

The London missionary society was organized in 1795 as a vehicle for Congregationalists. In 1796, the Presbyterians began the Scottish Missionary Society and the Glasgow Missionary society. In 1799, members of the Clapham group and other Evangelical members of the Church of England started the Church Missionary Society. Other organizations followed in quick succession; the Religious Tract Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society among them.⁴

The Reformation had burst its European banks and was at flood stage. Serampore was the first significant stream, but through the new course it cut burst the pent-up waters of the Evangelical awakening. The Northamptonshire Baptists were the forerunners, but their role is not proof of superior virtue, but of Providence’s preference for doing great things with the most humble instruments.

Scholars such as Andrew Walls and Philip Jenkins have pointed out that significant changes are still taking place in world Christianity. “Whatever Europeans or North Americans may believe, Christianity is doing very well indeed in the global South—not just surviving but expanding.”⁵ Jenkins writes that, “By 2050, only about one-fifth of the world’s 3 billion Christians will be non-Hispanic whites.”⁶ Africa and Latin America will compete “for the title of most Christian continent.”⁷

These statistics include the Catholic Church, but it is true that the most dynamic movements in the two-thirds world can trace their roots to the surge of missionary endeavor

³Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), 44.

⁴Latourette, 1033.

⁵Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom" The Coming of Global Christianity*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 2.

⁶Jenkins, 3.

⁷Ibid.

which found its first stream from Serampore. William Carey lived more years of his life in India than in Europe. He never returned to England and was buried at Serampore. The English can claim him, but he belongs to India. Ideologues would drive a wedge between the first generations of missionaries and the churches they birthed. If this were allowed the church of the south would be deprived of important parts of its heritage: a theological lineage that can be traced back through Carey and Fuller to Edwards, Brainerd, and the Puritans; back through Calvin and Luther at the dawn of the Reformation; back yet further through Augustine of North Africa; and further still to Paul who was born in Asia Minor; and Thomas who first carried the gospel to India.

The future of world mission to an ever increasing degree now depends on the churches of the global south. Ironically, the task of replanting the gospel in the European heartland of the Reformation is falling to missionaries from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. While the Serampore Trio might have been surprised at this development, surely their advice to this new generation of missionaries would be the same as the watchword they lived by: expect great things from God; attempt great things for God.

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