VOL. 7 • NO. 2 • WINTER 2016 • 230–246

WILLIAM CAREY'S VISION FOR MISSIONARY PARTNERSHIPS

Andrew D. McFarland

Abstract

When the English Baptist missionary William Carey left England bound for India in 1793, he did not attempt the effort alone. Instead, he thought a brotherhood of serious Christians residing in England as essential for the undertaking. However, he expected them to provide more than funding. He trusted them to supply the love, encouragement, and support that would make missionary service possible. As a result, the partnership of William Carey with the BMS was founded on interdependence, and Carey's devotion to this fueled his perseverance through seasons of painful challenges. This was Carey's vision for missionary partnerships.

INTRODUCTION

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, England was saturated with a spirit of enthusiasm. For decades, powerful preachers like John Wesley and George Whitefield had canvased the countryside, stirring young English minds. Some of those were called to pastor churches, others to public holiness. Perhaps, it was only a matter of time before English Baptists experienced something extraordinary as well. Then in the spring of 1792, William Carey published his idea for the formation of the first missionary society—the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS). What could account for its founding at this point in history? Was it a simple business arrangement or something

more? What were the expectations of the BMS? What were the expectations of the missionaries? As it will be shown, the partnership of William Carey with the BMS was founded on interdependence, and his devotion to this strategy fueled his perseverance through seasons of painful challenges.

By the late 1790s, the majority of Protestants had been without a structure for missions for nearly three hundred years.[1] Before the Protestant Reformation, the task of missions belonged to the monastic orders of Roman Catholicism. However, the sweeping reforms of Martin Luther after the Diet of Worms (1521) drastically modified this arrangement. As Ralph Winter explains, "Martin Luther had been discontented with the apparent polarization between the vitality he eventually discovered in his own order and the very nominal parish life of his time."[2] His solution to the disparity was the elimination of the monastic order altogether.

Still, Lutheran theology can only partially explain the lull in missions. The complacency of subsequent Protestant traditions was also to blame. By the 1690s, the twin forces of industrialization and urbanization had introduced powerful cultural changes to European society. Gradually, the rural way of life began to disappear.[3] Moreover, churches failed to understand and adapt to their changing context. Therefore, Max Warren explains, "The missionary societies of the eighteenth century were, in fact, the way by which the Christian mind, yes and the Christian Church, began to grapple with its mission in a completely unfamiliar and very complicated world."[4] Given these conditions, it is not surprising that enthusiasts were thought to be enemies of the church.[5]

Even William Carey could not evade the stigma of enthusiasm. On five occasions between 1786 and 1792, the Northampton Association of Baptist ministers rejected his proposal that his brethren engage in foreign missions. To be sure, he was not persuaded by their arguments, yet neither did he fail to demonstrate the highest respect for his brethren's decision. Their first rejection, in 1786, was on theological grounds.[6] They coldly told him,

---

[1] Ralph D. Winter, "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, eds. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, 220–230 (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1999), 227. See also Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996), 247.

[2] Ibid., 226.

[3] Max A. Warren, "Why Missionary Societies and Not Missionary Churches," in *The Student World* 53, no 1–2, (1960): 150.

[4] Ibid., 153.

[5] John Wesley, "The Nature of Enthusiasm," in *The Works of John Wesley: First Series of Sermons 1–39, 3rd ed*, vol 5 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1986), 469.

[6] George Smith, *The Life of William Carey* (Lexington: Feather Trail Press, 2010), 23. See also Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society: Its Environment, Its Men, and Its Work*, vol 1 (London: Church Missionary Society, 1899), 57.

"Certainly, nothing can be done before another Pentecost."[7] However, their second rejection, two years later, gave him hope.[8] They agreed to hear his proposal if he would publish a pamphlet on the subject.[9]

By April of 1791, much of Carey's *Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* had been written. As a result, he felt confident to bring the matter before them again. However, for the third time, they rejected his proposal.[10] They complained it still sounded "too much like grasping at an object utterly beyond their reach."[11] The following month, he read the first draft of the *Enquiry* to them, and once again, they rejected it. However, it was not a rejection per se.[12] They simply had nothing more to add. Therefore, seeing they had exhausted their critique, Carey published the *Enquiry*, and the following May it was on sale at the minister's meeting in Nottingham.

At one point during the meeting, it was Carey's turn to preach. Not surprisingly, his sermon was a call to foreign missions. Like the previous year, their rejection was characterized by a lack of response.[13] However, indifference now gave way to fear, and they became eager to avoid the subject. Carey was confounded. After five years of pleading with his brethren and editing his proposal for every theological, historical, and practical objection they found, he was uncertain what else to do. At some point during the meeting, he cornered Andrew Fuller, asking, "Is there nothing again going to be done sir?"[14] This was the turning point. What caused his brethren to reconsider Carey's proposal is unclear, but by the end of the meeting, they had decided

---

[7] Roger E. Hedlund, "William Carey's Universal Significance," in *Carey's Obligation and India's Renaissance*, eds. J.T.K. Daniel and R. E. Hedlund, 96–113 (Serampore: Serampore College, 1993), 98. See also Mary Drewery, *William Carey: A Biography* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 31.

[8] S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey D.D., Fellow of Linnaean Society* (London: Hobber and Stoughton, 1924), 53. See also Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Birmingham: New Hope, 1991), 24.

[9] S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey,* 53. See also BMS, *Periodical Accounts Relative to the Baptist Missionary Society*, vol 1 (London: J.W. Morris, 1800), 2. From these accounts, it appears they first encouraged him to write the *Enquiry* in a small informal meeting and again later in the 1791 ministers' meeting at Clipstone.

[10] Ibid., 69.

[11] Ibid. See also Ernest A. Payne, "Carey's Enquiry," in *Evangelical Review of Theology*, vol 17, no 3 (July 1993): 310.

[12] Ibid., 69. See also Ibid., 310.

[13] George Smith, *The Life of William Carey*, 35. See also Drewery, *William Carey*, 39.

[14] J.C. Marshman, *The Life and Labours of Carey, Marshman, and Ward: The Serampore Missionaries* (London: Alexander Strahan & Company, 1864), 12. See also S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 84.

on "forming a Baptist Society for propagating the Gospel among the Heathens."[15]

After this meeting, the subject of foreign missions became an urgent matter. In October, they met to hammer out the seven original resolutions of the BMS.[16] The following January, Carey and John Thomas were set apart as the first missionaries.[17] In May of 1793, Carey, his family, his wife's sister Kitty, and John Thomas left to board the *Kron Princessa Maria*.[18] The sheer speed and magnitude of these developments can hardly be appreciated today. It must suffice to say that in twelve months, this small association of poor ministers was transformed from a gathering of missionary skeptics to a brotherhood of missionary administrators.

As Andrew Walls has shown, the historical significance of this development was that it paved the way for the entire missionary movement.[19] At the same time, given the state of global Christianity and the demand for missionary partnerships today, one cannot fail to also emphasize the contemporary significance. Carey's idea for the missionary society may be more relevant now than ever. Walls hints at this when he suggests, "it may now be appropriate to re-examine the 'obligation to use means,' and the purpose for which our 'means' is directed."[20] However, if Carey's idea for the missionary society is ever to be grasped, his understanding of partnership as interdependence must be revisited. Moreover, this cannot be done without answering the charges of some biographers that his approach reflected "materialistic institutionalization" or "human achievements."[21] It is to this task we now turn.

FOUNDATION OF THE BMS

For the early founders of the BMS, the first three resolutions of their October ministers' meeting were of paramount importance.[22] In the first resolution, they declared their full agreement with Carey's *Enquiry* and their intention to form a society according to his design. In the second resolution, they agreed with Carey that their society was to be one among many labor-

[15] Ibid., 12. See also Ibid., 84.

[16] BMS, *Periodical Accounts Relative to the Baptist Missionary Society*, vol 1 (London: J.W. Morris, 1800), 3.

[17] Ibid., 34. See also Marshman, *The Life and Labours of Carey,* 24.

[18] Drewery, *William Carey*, 52. See also Marshman, *The Life and Labours of Carey,* 28.

[19] Walls, *The Missionary Movement*, 253.

[20] Ibid.

[21] A. Christopher Smith, "The Spirit and Letter of Carey's Catalytic Watchword," in *The Baptist Quarterly*, vol 33, no 5 (1990): 231.

[22] BMS, *Periodical Accounts,* 3.

ing together in the common cause. In addition, in the same resolution, they left no ambiguity regarding their purpose as they incorporated it into their name—*The Particular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel Amongst the Heathen*. In the third resolution, they acknowledged the expense and unanimously agreed to fund the effort. These three resolutions served as the vows of the partnership between Carey and the BMS.

In the beginning, the BMS and Carey had a mutual understanding regarding the definition of a missionary society. This is evident by their joint affirmation of the design that Carey had put forward in his *Enquiry*.[23] His definition suggested,

> [S]uppose 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. 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.[24]

From his definition, he is clearly adamant about the character, and perhaps holiness, of society members. He insists that members (and missionaries alike) must be devoted to "the work" which he identifies in the preceding paragraph as "the exaltation of the Messiah's Kingdom."[25] Moreover, by mandating personal qualities like "serious religion" and "spirit of perseverance," he sets the bar high for membership. Like John Wesley, he had no problem suggesting the removal of someone from their midst that did not meet these most important requirements.

Although Carey's definition was embraced by the BMS, he was never interested in becoming its founder. He preferred, rather, to be its missionary.[26] Biographer Pearce Carey's account is revealing in this regard.[27] The brethren were asking John Thomas, who had been a surgeon for the East India Company, various questions of support pertaining to the cost of living in India. However, when the question was asked whether missionaries could support themselves, and Thomas confirmed they could, Carey volunteered to go.[28] This suggests that while the brethren were concerned with support,

---

[23] Ibid.

[24] William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*. (Leicester: Ireland, 1792), 82.

[25] Ibid.

[26] BMS, *Periodical Accounts,* 34. See also Marshman, *The Life and Labours of Carey,* 24.

[27] S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey,* 103.

[28] Ibid., 104.

Carey was contemplating sacrifice. After all, he wrote to his father, declaring in 1788, "The thought of a fellow creature perishing for ever should rouse all our activity and engage all our powers. . . . The matter is desperate. It calls for us to live and act alone for God."[29]

The same dedication is seen in the definition of Andrew Fuller, the esteemed first secretary of the BMS. Although not a definition per se, Fuller recalled his feelings about the Society's sending its first missionaries. He wrote it was as if "there was a gold mine in India, but it seemed almost as deep as the center of the earth. Who will venture to explore it? 'I will venture to go down,' said Carey to his brethren, 'but remember that you must hold the ropes.' We solemnly engaged to do so; nor while we live, shall we desert him."[30] Although this story has often been told, Carey's biographers have failed to highlight its most salient point. On being "lowered into the mine," Carey was dependent on his brethren for his survival, and his brethren were wholly dependent on him to "explore it." Fuller's assumption of trust was the key to his whole analogy. He was convinced that only a deep mutual trust would allow member and missionary to fully and jointly participate in the mission. This was Carey's vision for missionary partnerships.

FOUNDATION OF THE SERAMPORE MISSION

In spite of a healthy foundation, Carey's partnership with the BMS was not perfect. Like any relationship, they experienced seasons of disappointment, misunderstanding, complacency, and stubbornness. However, they had always been able to work out their differences through correspondence with an aim toward reconciliation. Even during the unpleasant controversy over Carey's self-support in the Indigo business, they expressed mutual empathy.[31] On hearing that the Society was offended by his actions, Carey reassured them of his dedication to the mission and his loyalty to them. He confessed, "we really thought we were acting in conformity with the universal wishes of the Society."[32]

Then in January of 1800, enormous changes occurred in the management, economy, and location of the mission when Carey relocated it to Serampore.

---

[29] *Carey to Father*, Jan 12, 1788, in Terry G. Carter, ed, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey* (Macon: Smyth and Helwys, 2000), 72.

[30] J.W. Morris, *Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Rev Andrew Fuller: Late Pastor of the Baptist Church at Kettering and First Secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society* (Boston: Lincoln and Edmonds, 1830), 87. See also George, *Faithful Witness,* 73.

[31] George, *Faithful Witness,* 107. See also S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey,* 164.

[32] *Carey to Society*, Jan 11, 1796, in Terry G. Carter, ed, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 203. See also Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792–1992* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1992), 40.

The fact is he really had no choice. The events up to November 1799 had left him in a pitiful state.[33] Although he had been in India for six years, he had seen no Indian conversions. During that time, he had also contended with problems of missionary expectation, support, illness, death, retention, and overextension. Due to the British government's prohibition of missionaries in India, the new missionary recruits sent to help him were prevented from leaving Calcutta. On hearing of their predicament, the Danish governor of Serampore, Colonial Bie, invited them to establish a mission under his protection. Serampore was significant because it was far enough from Calcutta to provide sanctuary from the British. To his credit, Carey recognized this was a unique opportunity.[34] The following month, he and the new missionary recruits purchased a large house with property and established a mission there.

Right away, some important changes in Carey's relationship with the BMS could be noted. Almost overnight, Carey's tiny group of missionaries now swelled to at least twenty-three men, women, and children. They quickly formed a tight-knit group they called the "mission family" and agreed on some general rules for communal living.[35] Two of these new recruits, Joshua Marshman and William Ward, were found to be exceptional leaders in the mission and so joined Carey in the formation of an alliance later referred to as "the Serampore Trio."

CHALLENGES OF CAREY'S PARTNERSHIP WITH THE BMS

By 1805, the size and the success of the mission led Carey and Marshman to request that the BMS consider adding members for the sake of the mission's longevity.[36] Although no action was taken until much later, this request represents the genesis of the controversy that was about to ensue. It seemed that in spite of the Society's wholesale affirmation of the *Enquiry*, Carey's insistence on "character" and "purpose" was never formally presented as a

---

[33] *Carey to Sisters*, Nov 30, 1799, in Terry G. Carter, ed, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 108.

[34] S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey,* 179. See also George, *Faithful Witness,* 121.

[35] *Carey to Ryland*, Dec 13, 1804, in Terry G. Carter, ed, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 276. See also *Ward to Ryland*, Mar 11, 1816, in Joseph Ivimey, *Letters on the Serampore Controversy addressed to the Rev Christopher Anderson* (London: Wightman, 1831), 106; BMS, *Periodical Accounts Relative to the Baptist Missionary Society*, vol 1 (London: J.W. Morris, 1801), 44 and S.D.L. Alagodi, "Carey's Experiment in Communal Living at Serampore," in *Carey's Obligation and India's Renaissance*, eds. J.T.K. Daniel and R. E. Hedlund, 18–33, 21.

[36] Eustace Carey, *Supplement to the Vindication of the Calcutta Baptist Missionaries* (London: Wightman, 1831), 207. See also Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, 27.

resolution.[37] Even if it had, their fourth resolution, which made all generous donors members, would have made it irrelevant.[38] Therefore, when John Sutcliff died in 1814 and Andrew Fuller in 1815, the BMS and the mission suffered bitterly from the actions of disingenuous men. At least three challenges of Carey's partnership with the BMS are significant.

1. Contagion of Anti-Missionary Spirit

The first challenge of Carey's partnership with the BMS was the rise of an anti-missionary spirit. As early as 1784, a "system of dual control" of India had been established between the East India Company and the British government.[39] Initially, their declared intentions were to oppose "schemes of conquest and extension of dominion in India," but little was actually done to resist these developments. In fact, it is likely this conviction, or something like it, was responsible for the government's early ban on missionaries in India.[40] However, what the British really meant was that no one *else* would be allowed to dominate India. This made missionary efforts malicious. When Carey and his small missionary band went to India in 1793, it was illegal.

Nevertheless, this anti-missionary spirit could not be quarantined within British policy. The English people readily assumed the same conviction. As a result, virtually no missionaries were to be found in England. The one exception was the London Missionary Society (LMS) who in 1796, had found thirty men, mostly craftsmen chosen to build mission stations, though four were ordained ministers.[41] The BMS and the Church Missionary Society (CMS) were not so fortunate.

The next year, the BMS had great difficulty finding missionaries.[42] A few years later, the CMS had the same experience. This led Charles Simeon to conclude, "I have endeavored (in a prudent way) to sound the dispositions of the serious young men respecting missions, and I am sorry to say not one of them says, 'Here am I, send me.'"[43] The reason for this disparity in

---

[37] Drewery, *William Carey*, 169.

[38] BMS, *Periodical Accounts Relative to the Baptist Missionary Society*, vol 1 (London: J.W. Morris, 1800), 4.

[39] Drewery, *William Carey*, 65.

[40] Tom Hiney, *On the Missionary Trail: A Journey Through Polynesia, Asia, and Africa with the London Missionary Society* (New York: Grove Press, 2000), 9. See also S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey,* 141.

[41] Ibid., 12.

[42] *BMS Minutes*, Kettering, (Aug 29, 1797): 86, in A. Christopher Smith, *The Serampore Mission Enterprise* (Bangalore: Center for Contemporary Christianity, 2006), 94.

[43] Charles Hole, *The Early History of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East to the End of A.D. 1814* (London: Church Missionary Society, 1896), 62. This entry from Simeon was made on Aug 22, 1800.

missionary recruitment was simple. Carey's early mission (1793–1797) and the LMS mission (1796–1800) gave the English the idea that all missionaries were "artisans and schoolteachers."[44] This younger generation of missionaries resented this "lower class" reputation and sought more "respectable vocations." The junior missionaries dispatched to India came with this assumption. However, the only "respectable vocations" for missionaries in India were found in Serampore and Calcutta. Even in those places, opportunities were rare, especially for dissenters.

This first group of missionaries, who came between 1803–1806, were John Biss, John Chamberlain, Richard Mardon, William Moore, Joshua Rowe, James Chater, and William Robinson.[45] Once in India, it was up to the senior missionaries to correct their unrealistic expectations for the missionary vocation. By 1809, Carey's frustration became apparent. In a letter to Fuller he pled, "I wish you send out men to begin new missions in the countries around."[46] He specifically complains of Robinson and Moore when he wrote,

> [R]obinson has been designed for Bantam and Tibet now nearly two years. . . . I believe he is strongly inclined to stay at Calcutta, where his abilities as an English preacher are (he thinks) acceptable. . . .As to Bro Moore, I have no hope that he ever will do anything, he knows nothing yet of the language, nor ever tries to acquire it. Indolence and a thirst for European society are his bane.[47]

Later, this "thirst for European society" became a regular complaint throughout his correspondence with the BMS. In fact, the problem became so pervasive he felt compelled to give it a name and definition, resolving to call it "an anti-missionary spirit which operates on a love of ease [and] an anxiety for European society."[48]

As early as 1811, it was clear that a very different understanding of a missionary was developing in England—one that did not value self-denial. Of course, someone will exclaim, "but they went to India!" To this, there can be no objection. Nevertheless, they were sent to India by the Baptist Missionary Society whose purpose had always been, before this time, fixed to

---

[44] John C. Bennett, "Charles Simeon: Church Loyalist and Mission Innovator," in *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson, Robert T. Coote, Norman A. Horner, and James M. Phillips, 3–10 (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994), 6.

[45] A. Christopher Smith, *The Serampore Mission Enterprise*, 100.

[46] *Carey to Fuller*, Oct 4, 1809, in Terry G. Carter, ed, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 133.

[47] Ibid.

[48] *Carey to Fuller*, Aug 2, 1811, in Terry G. Carter, ed. *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 134.

its name—*The Particular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel amongst the Heathen.* It is evident then that they could not escape the purpose to which they had attached themselves.

2. Lure of Vanity

The second challenge of Carey's partnership with the BMS could be dubbed "the lure of vanity." It was essentially the enlargement and relocation of the BMS in London. As he soon discovered, the junior missionaries in India were only half the problem. The other half was buried within the BMS in England. It was the 1805 request of Carey and Marshman that the BMS considered adding members.[49] This request was like a seed, which under the right conditions germinated and grew to such a size that it choked everything beneath it. Eventually, this "seed" grew under the careful watering of Joseph Ivimey, pastor of the Eagle Street church in London, and Joseph Gutteridge, deacon of the Prescot Street church in London.

BMS historian Brian Stanley has pointed out that two key documents led to the formation of the Baptist Union in 1813. The first was Ivimey's 1811 article in the *Baptist Magazine* entitled, "Union Essential to Prosperity."[50] He argued that Baptists had been in the shadows far too long and that it was time to take their place of prominence. In short, Stanley wrote, "Ivimey's plan for a 'Baptist union' was first and foremost a plan for the prosperity of the BMS."[51] Furthermore, it would remove the "seat of the society" to London which some referred to as "a vortex of vanity."[52]

Even so, just as Ivimey was advocating union through centralization, Carey was encouraging union through decentralization. This is evident when Fuller speaks of an 1811 review of the mission in India, which declared that the Serampore missionaries would "no longer speak of their undertaking as a single mission, but as being divided into five missions, according to the different languages of the countries; and which they denominate the United Missions of India."[53] If this is correct, by 1811, Carey and the BMS were already heading in opposite directions.

The second document was Gutteridge's 1812 "anonymous" letter to Fuller pleading for the formation of a corresponding committee in Lon-

---

[49] Eustace Carey, *Supplement*, 207. See also Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, 27.

[50] Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, 28.

[51] Ibid., 29.

[52] Ibid., 30. See also *Fuller to Ward*, Jul 9, 1812, in Anderson, *The Life and Letters of Christopher Anderson*, 208.

[53] Ivimey, *Letters on the Serampore Controversy*, 75. See also Francis Cox, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society From 1792 to 1842* (London: T. Ward and Co, 1842), 195, and George Smith, *The Life of William Carey*, 103.

don that could manage the affairs of the BMS after the deaths of the founding members.[54] Although anonymous, Fuller told William Ward he easily recognized the handwriting as Gutteridge's.[55] On the surface, his proposal appeared innocent, yet Fuller feared it might bring the Serampore mission dangerously close to what he called "the ditch of patronage."[56] Initially, he opposed the motion, but presumably, due to his failing health and anxiety for the security of the mission, he later supported it.

Almost immediately, the size of the BMS grew from seventeen members (1810) to thirty-six (1812) to as many as fifty (1819).[57] More importantly, all nineteen of the new members in 1812 were contemporaries of the junior missionaries with whom Carey was so frustrated.[58] Even so, these changes would have been acceptable if Fuller had not died in 1815. After he was gone, a small contingent of juniors found the confidence to inquire "whether the three senior brethren at Serampore were empowered to give orders on behalf of the Society in India."[59] This questioning of independence became the very issue that eventually led to the violent conflict and bitter divorce of Carey and the BMS in 1827.[60]

Nevertheless, the BMS grossly misunderstood the mission's strategy for independence. What they really meant was interdependence, which could be defined as two entities unable to exist apart from one another. This was how they perceived their relationship with mission stations they had planted and the BMS. After all, Carey confessed that relinquishing the stations would be like "having my limbs forcibly torn from me while living."[61] An even more detailed illustration for what they meant comes from Marshman's 1807 draft of the Trio's formal plan in which they explained, "each missionary station is considered as, in its own nature, independent, and all equally dependent on the Society. They bind themselves together, however, as an associated body, to obtain advantages from general union unattainable as individuals."[62] Had the BMS been able to recognize that none of the

---

[54] Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, 29.

[55] *Fuller to Ward*, Jul 9, 1812, in Hugh Anderson, *The Life and Letters of Christopher Anderson* (Edinburgh: William P. Kennedy, 1854), 207.

[56] *Anderson to Marshman*, Jun 17, 1833, in Hugh Anderson, *The Life and Letters of Christopher Anderson*, 301.

[57] Cox, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, 221. See also Ivimey, *Letters on the Serampore Controversy*, 16, 32.

[58] A. Christopher Smith, *The Serampore Mission Enterprise*, 88.

[59] Cox, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, 272.

[60] Ivimey, *Letters on the Serampore Controversy*, 87. See also Marshman, *The Life and Labours of Carey,* 290.

[61] *Carey to Steadman*, Jun 29, 1830, in Terry G. Carter, ed. *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 229.

[62] Eustace Carey, *Supplement*, 151.

seniors had any intention of secession from the Baptist Union, perhaps the question of independence would have been irrelevant.

Still, this question would never have been asked, or even tolerated, had the BMS seen them as brothers. Instead, it was now painfully clear they perceived them only as servants. Looking back on the controversy in 1830, Carey lamented, "The spread of the Gospel in India was the first object of the Society and it has been the first and last with us, to that object Bro Marshman, Bro Ward, and myself have uniformly devoted all our time, our strength, and our income."[63] Indeed, Carey had kept his vows to the end, even when the BMS had long since forgotten what they were.

3. Justification of European Prejudice

The third challenge of Carey's relationship with the BMS was the justification of European prejudice. However, this prejudice changed considerably from the time of Carey's leaving England in 1793, to his death in 1834. Within this short period, European prejudice within England and India assumed three forms.

The first form, prevalent in 1793, was embodied by the notion that Indians *could not* be converted. The widespread European assumption was that Indians were too ignorant to experience conversion. While Carey certainly acknowledged the "barbarous" living of pagans, he also challenged this notion of ignorance in his *Enquiry.* He wrote, "Barbarous as these poor heathens are, they appear to be as capable of knowledge as we are and in many places, at least, have discovered uncommon genius and teachability."[64] This was in part the reason why many, including his father and perhaps his wife, thought him mad when he announced his intentions for missionary service in India.[65] Even fellow Baptist ministers believed the "mission would come to nothing," and they urged others not to support it.[66]

Nevertheless, if Carey expected to escape such notions of prejudice by leaving England, he was surely disappointed. He found the same assumption among the Europeans in India. He complained, ". . . all say that the conversion of the natives is impossible."[67] Unlike others, he did not consider the European mind or culture to be superior to that of the Indian's. He insisted,

---

[63] *Carey to Steadman*, Jun 29, 1830, in Terry G. Carter, ed. *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 229.

[64] William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians*, 63.

[65] S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 109. See also *Carey's Journal*, Feb 17, 1795, in Terry G. Carter, ed. *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 53.

[66] Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, 17.

[67] *Carey's Journal*, Apr 8, 1794, in Terry G. Carter, ed. *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 23. For Henry Martyn's comments on European prejudice in 1806, see also Constance E. Padwick, *Henry Martyn: The Pioneer Translator Who Opened the Scriptures to the Muslim and Hindu Worlds* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 154.

"All my hope is in, and all my comfort arises, from God—without his power no European could possibly be converted."[68] As a result, this aversion to prejudice and "low view" of Europeans made him bad company. Furthermore, it deprived him of celebrating his efforts with like-minded friends, which caused him a great deal of discouragement. After all, not even his fellow missionary John Thomas was immune to the lure of prejudice.[69]

In 1806, a second form of European prejudice came into vogue—that Indians *should not* be converted. This development illustrated the rising influence of cultural, and particularly religious, relativism. The reason for the abrupt change was likely the Vellore Mutiny in 1806. It sent shockwaves of fear and anti-missionary fervor throughout India and England. J.C. Marshman gave a detailed description of what happened.[70] As a military post, Vellore served as the location for the barracks of British and Indian troops. Apparently, the trouble started when British officers ordered their Indian soldiers to remove their Vishnu marks from their foreheads and wear Turbans with leather on them. Before the situation could be contained, Indians had massacred a number of British. However, the rumor was widely disseminated that missionaries were somehow to blame. This created a strong anti-missionary reaction and a kind of public hyper-appreciation for all things Indian due to a fear for European sovereignty in India.[71]

At some point between 1806 and 1812, European prejudice was modified yet again. This third form affirmed that Indians could be converted and should be converted, but it held that Indians *could not* lead. This was the assumption of the second group of missionaries who came between 1812–1818. These were William Johns, John Lawson, Eustace Carey, William Yates, William Pearce, James Penny, and William Adam.[72] Carey's nephew, Eustace Carey, who was a leader among them, spoke for the lot. Regarding Indian led ministry, he insisted, "we think they can at present be employed as auxiliaries, and that so employed they are highly profitable, but to confide in them alone would be to ensure disappointment."[73] Therefore, in 1817, when these juniors left the Serampore mission to establish their own, their missionary strategy rested entirely on European superintendence. To make matters worse, they chose Calcutta, the bastion of European presence, as their base of operations.

---

[68] Ibid., 23.

[69] *Carey to Ryland*, Dec 26, 1793, in Terry G. Carter, ed. *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 132.

[70] Marshman, *The Life and Labours of Carey,* 150. See also Drewery, *William Carey*, 140 and Cox, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, 159.

[71] Ibid., 148.

[72] A. Christopher Smith, *The Serampore Mission Enterprise*, 100.

[73] Eustace Carey, *Supplement to the Vindication of the Calcutta Baptist Missionaries*, 67.

Of course, Carey was painfully aware of these developments, and he commented on the prejudice of Eustace in 1816.[74] Moreover, in 1817, he spoke of all the juniors as he complained they "seize upon any fault or failing of our native brethren, especially those employed in the work of the ministry . . . but they themselves settle down into a course of preaching to Europeans and aim at little more."[75] Still Carey's conflict with the junior missionaries had little to do with to whom they preached or what their criticisms were. Moreover, contrary to what has often been said, it had little to do with the living arrangements or the "harshness" of the senior missionaries. It was simply a disagreement over *whose* cause and *whose* country it was. As early as 1805, the Serampore mission had clearly given their answer in the eighth point of the "Form of Agreement," which declared their intention "to cultivate [Indian] spiritual gifts, ever pressing upon them their missionary obligation, since Indians only can win India for Christ."[76] The junior missionaries simply could not agree with this strategy.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this study, it was suggested that the partnership of William Carey with the BMS was founded on interdependence, and his devotion to this fueled his perseverance through seasons of painful challenges. Indeed, the evidence presented has strongly supported this conclusion. The practical expression of Carey's "means" was none other than the missionary society. He was totally convinced that the missionary society alone was the answer to the stalemate of nineteenth century Protestant mission.

However, if this was the case, the corollary is also true—the Serampore mission was not. Throughout his correspondence, he pleads with the BMS to "go on and increase," and he lists numerous regions that might prove to be "ripe unto harvest" for the propagation of the gospel. Nevertheless, it is a mistake to assume this arrangement was a "Christian business" founded simply to provide "religious products." Rather, the missionary society was, above all else, a brotherhood.

Perhaps the term "brotherhood" is most often misunderstood. First, it is important to understand that neither Carey, nor the original BMS

---

[74] *Carey to Ryland*, May 30, 1816, in Terry G. Carter, ed. *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 176.

[75] *Carey to Ryland*, Sep 1817, in Terry G. Carter, ed. *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 240.

[76] S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey D.D.,* 248. See also George, *Faithful Witness,* 123; George Smith, *The Life of William Carey*, 82; S.D.L. Alagodi, "Carey's Experiment in Communal Living at Serampore," in *Carey's Obligation and India's Renaissance*, eds. J.T.K. Daniel and R. E. Hedlund, 18–33, 29.

members, used this term lightly. They did not perceive it to mean casual friendship, and they certainly did not believe it meant absolute equality. Either of these meanings could easily have led them down a path of complacency. Rather, from the beginning, Carey considered his brethren *family*, and he sought to respect them as *elders*. How else can we explain his patience during five years of pleading with them to offer themselves for foreign missions? What other explanation could there possibly be for his utter refusal to formally separate with them during their fifteen years of bitter conflict? There can be, in fact, no other explanation. Their partnership was primarily a brotherhood.

Second, their brotherhood was founded to *propagate the Gospel among the heathen*. In fact, it was written into their very name, and it was the heart and soul of all they wished to attempt. Had they been interested in missions among Europeans, one can only guess they would have written that in. Furthermore, this might have been a worthwhile effort, especially given the extreme corruption of Europeans in India during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, the point remains. No matter how much the junior missionaries in India or the BMS members in London protested, their purpose had always been missions among "the heathen." Therefore, what do we make of their resistance to this? Who was really rebelling against the original principles of the mission? More importantly, who was faithful to them?

The challenges of Carey's partnership with the BMS are exceedingly convoluted. They are more akin to a never-ending labyrinth than a list of grievances. Perhaps, this is the reason so few have felt the energy to explore it. However, these challenges offer us much more than insight into the troubles of Carey and the BMS. They allow us a window into the human condition. Carey's struggle was not with the government, the BMS, or the junior missionaries. It was with what he called the "rapacious grasping of power."[77] All his challenges could be summed up by the human craving for power and control. At this point, it is also important to recognize that Carey and his missionary colleagues were not immune to such temptations. They could not avoid the temptation to "force" others to return to the original principles of the BMS. In this way, they too fell victim to the lure of power.

Carey's approach to partnership is particularly important for missiology today. It demonstrates how Christian communities might come together, organize for action, and align themselves with God's mission It explains how missionaries and pastors might relate to their sending agencies and overseers as they share in the work of God's mission. It shows that people can learn to put aside their theological differences for the sake of propagat-

[77] *Carey to Ryland*, Jun 14 1821, in Terry G. Carter, ed. *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 242.

ing the gospel. Finally, it reveals what is possible when people regard themselves as fellow laborers in the common cause of making God known in a context.

Carey's understanding of partnership has strong implications for how we might propagate the gospel throughout the world today. It highlights what is possible when God's people respond to God's invitation to participate in God's mission in a context. This perspective helps address the problem of power disparity in missionary relationships. It assumes that no partner has the right to claim ownership of the mission. Rather, each one is an integral part of God's plan. This is especially important for encouraging indigenous leadership. These partnerships provide future leaders the love of Christian community, the recognition of mutual giftedness, and the opportunity for collaborative service.

Regardless, we cannot afford to miss the genius of Carey's "means"—a brotherhood on mission. Far too much has already been done in the name of "individuals on mission." If we truly seek to represent the kingdom of God in the midst of pagans, there can be no other way. William Carey's role was to give us the model. Our responsibility now is to put into practice what we have seen and heard.

Bibliography

Alagodi, S.D.L. "Carey's Experiment in Communal Living at Serampore." In *Carey's Obligation and India's Renaissance*, edited by J.T.K. Daniel and R. E. Hedlund, 18–33. Serampore: Serampore College, 1993.

Anderson, Hugh. *The Life and Letters of Christopher Anderson*. Edinburgh: William P. Kennedy, 1854.

Bennett, John C. "Charles Simeon: Church Loyalist and Mission Innovator." In *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement*, edited by Gerald H. Anderson, Robert T. Coote, Norman A. Horner, and James M. Phillips, 3–10. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994.

BMS. *BMS Minutes*. Kettering, Aug 29, 1797.

BMS. *Periodical Accounts Relative to the Baptist Missionary Society*. vol 1. London: J.W. Morris, 1800.

BMS. *Periodical Accounts Relative to the Baptist Missionary Society*. vol 2. London: J.W. Morris, 1801.

Carey, Eustace. *Supplement to the Vindication of the Calcutta Baptist Missionaries*. London: Wightman, 1831.

Carey, S. Pearce. *William Carey D.D., Fellow of Linnaean Society*. London: Hobber and Stoughton, 1924.

Carey, William. *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*. Leicester: Ireland, 1792.

Carter, Terry G., ed. *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*. Macon: Smyth and Helwys, 2000.

Cox, Francis. *History of the Baptist Missionary Society from 1792 to 1842*. London: T. Ward and Co., 1842.

Drewery, Mary. *William Carey: A Biography*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979.

George, Timothy. *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey*. Birmingham: New Hope, 1991.
Hedlund, Roger E. "William Carey's Universal Significance." In *Carey's Obligation and India's Renaissance*, edited by J.T.K. Daniel and R. E. Hedlund, 96–113. Serampore: Serampore College, 1993.
Hiney, Tom. *On the Missionary Trail: A Journey Through Polynesia, Asia, and Africa with the London Missionary Society*. New York: Grove Press, 2000.
Hole, Charles. *The Early History of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East to the End of A.D. 1814*. London: Church Missionary Society, 1896.
Ivimey, Joseph. *Letters on the Serampore Controversy Addressed to the Rev Christopher Anderson*. London: Wightman, 1831.
Marshman, J.C. *The Life and Labours of Carey, Marshman, and Ward: The Serampore Missionaries*. London: Alexander Strahan & Company, 1864.
Morris, J.W. *Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Rev Andrew Fuller: Late Pastor of the Baptist Church at Kettering and First Secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society.* Boston: Lincoln and Edmonds, 1830.
Padwick, Constance E. *Henry Martyn: The Pioneer Translator Who Opened the Scriptures to the Muslim and Hindu Worlds*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1980.
Payne, Ernest A. "Carey's Enquiry." In *Evangelical Review of Theology*, vol. 17, no. 3 (July 1993).
Smith, A. Christopher. "The Spirit and Letter of Carey's Catalytic Watchword." In *The Baptist Quarterly*. vol 33, no. 5 (1990).
Smith, A. Christopher. *The Serampore Mission Enterprise*. Bangalore: Center for Contemporary Christianity, 2006.
Smith, George. *The Life of William Carey*. Lexington: Feather Trail Press, 2010.
Stanley, Brian. *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792–1992*. Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1992.
Stock, Eugene. *The History of the Church Missionary Society: Its Environment, Its Men, and Its Work*. vol 1. London: Church Missionary Society (1899).
Walls, Andrew F. *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996.
Warren, Max A. "Why missionary societies and not missionary churches." In *The Student World* 53, no. 1–2 (1960).
Wesley, John. "The Nature of Enthusiasm." In *The Works of John Wesley: First Series of Sermons 1–39. 3rd ed*. vol 5. Peabody: Hendrickson (1986).
Winter, Ralph D. "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission." In *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, edited by Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, 220–230. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1999.

About the Author

Andy is a PhD student in intercultural studies, with a concentration in evangelization at Asbury Theological Seminary. He lives in Kentucky with his wife and three children. His interests are cross-cultural evangelism, discipleship, and church planting in North American and Indian contexts. His research focuses on the significance of William Carey's missionary partnerships. He has served as a local pastor in the United Methodist Church (2002–2008), a member of the Parkland Regional Youth Pastors Alliance (2002–2005), and as an urban church planter (1996–1999, 2009–2010). He currently serves as the American representative for Bethany Mission Welfare Society in Vizianagaram, India.