

An Ecclesiological Mission: The Basis for William Carey's Threefold Mission Strategy

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William Carey serves as a historical example as to why missionaries must have a solid ecclesiological framework before stepping foot on foreign soil. If one of the missionary's primary tasks—or one might argue the primary task—is to plant churches, then he should know what he believes about the church. Before being sent, Carey showed three aspects of his ecclesiological beliefs in his pastoral oversight of two local churches and as an advocate for the fulfillment of the Great Commission through the cooperation of local churches: he believed the church was (1) missional, (2) logocentric, and (3) didactic. While his beliefs are evident in his groundbreaking missiological work, An Enquiry, much can also be gleaned from Carey's journal, selected letters, numerous biographies, and other related works. In the following article, in order to defend my position, I will note the transition of Carey as pastor to Carey as both missionary, pastor (still), and indigenous church planter. After introducing Carey as a pastor, I will focus on each subsection of Carey's threefold mission strategy—(1) evangelism, (2) translation, and (3) education—and how each component is based on Carey's ecclesiological framework noted above. Carey believed the church was functionally missional and didactic, which led to his immediate focus on evangelism and education. He also believed the church was ontologically logocentric, which led to his ongoing translation of Scripture for the native people.

Key Words: church history, church planting, ecclesiology, missions, missions history, mission strategy, William Carey

In October of 1783, William Carey was baptized by John Ryland Jr., his friend and future partner in the ministry. Shortly thereafter, Ryland commented on this event; to him, Carey's baptism was “merely the baptism of a poor journeyman shoemaker, and the service attracted no special attention.”¹ Ryland could not have been more wrong. In 1793, William Carey, along with Dr. John Thomas, sailed for India never to return again. As for Carey's purpose in this foreign land, he elaborated more than

thirty-five years after arriving, four years before his death:

The spread of the Gospel in India was the first object of the [Baptist Missionary] 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, except a pittance scarcely sufficient for our necessary expences [sic] can be called a reserve.²

Though Carey faced seven years of fruitless labor upon his arrival in India, he and the rest of the Serampore Trio—Joshua Marshman and William Ward—are estimated to have eventually had more than 500 converts in 1813 and as many as 1,266 converts at the end of 1832.³ Moreover, some scholars estimate that the Trio helped translate the Bible into forty or more languages.⁴ By 1818, it is reported that Carey and company had “established 100 native schools with more than 10,000 scholars,”⁵ and in 1852, because of the Trio's educational emphasis, “[Mission] schools [in India] still contained four times as many pupils as government ones.”⁶ In every sense of the word, William Carey was most certainly a faithful *missionary*, as God had called him to be.

Yet, lest some may forget, *Carey was also a faithful pastor*. Essential to his work as a missionary was his prior and ongoing experience as shepherd of various local congregations. What is more, Carey's ecclesiological beliefs held supreme weight as he determined the strategy he and others would employ to make Christ known among India's lost masses.

Consequently, William Carey's basic threefold strategy for mission—(1) evangelism, (2) translation, and (3) education⁷—serves as a testament

² William Carey to Steadman, June 29, 1830, in Terry G. Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 2000), 229.

³ Kanti Prasanna Sen Gupta, *The Christian Missionaries in Bengal 1793–1833* (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1971), 140–41.

⁴ See John Brown Myers, ed., *The Centenary Celebration of the Baptist Missionary Society 1892–1893* (Holborn: The Baptist Missionary Society, 1893), 225; G. Winfred Hervey, *The Story of Baptist Missions in Foreign Lands, From the Time of Carey to the Present Date* (St. Louis: C. R. Barns Publishing Co., 1892), 41; William Carey to an unknown recipient, Feb 7, 1819, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 165.

⁵ J. T. K. Daniel, ed., *Bicentenary Volume: William Carey's Arrival in India 1793–1993, Serampore College 1818–1993* (West Bengal, India: Serampore College, 1993), 74.

⁶ E. Daniel Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries in India, 1793–1837: The History of Serampore and Its Missions* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 136.

⁷ As for proof for this, in one of the earliest works on the Serampore Trio, J.

¹ John Ryland Jr., in John Taylor, comp., *Biographical and Literary Notices of William Carey, D. D.* (Northampton: Taylor and Son, 1886), 107.

of his ecclesiological beliefs, primarily developed prior to his departure for India from England, where he had served as a pastor for almost eight years at two churches. In direct relation to this threefold strategy, Carey believed the church was (1) missional, (2) logocentric,⁸ and (3) didactic. In these three subsections, one can see both strengths and weaknesses in Carey's strategy that missionaries can learn from today.

Before moving on, it is essential to address the nature of studying a missionary's theology. Many scholars have forthrightly stated that William Carey was no theologian.⁹ To some degree, they are right. Carey never wrote a theological treatise; he most certainly never wrote an ecclesiological work. However, he did care about theology, which is clear in his writing on other topics.¹⁰ Therefore, this study consists of an examination of

C. Marshman writes, "In the original constitution of the Society, the three objects to which its attention and its funds were to be directed were, the preaching of the gospel, the translation of the Scriptures, and the establishment of schools" (John Clark Marshman, *The Life and Labours of Carey, Marshman, and Ward: The Serampore Missionaries* [London: Strahan and Company, 1873], 250). Latourette writes, "At Serampore a printing press was set up, preaching to non-Christians was undertaken, and a school was opened for the children of Europeans" (Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity, Volume VI: The Great Century in Northern Africa and Asia, A.D. 1800–A.D. 1914* [New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1944], 106). For other affirmations of this threefold strategy, see Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope, 1991), 173; Terry G. Carter, "A Fresh Look at Missions Through the Correspondence of William Carey," a paper presented for the Evangelical Theological Society, November 1999, 17; Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 130.

⁸ The nomenclature of "logocentric" is borrowed from Gregg Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 103, 110–17.

⁹ Carter writes, "Carey was a missionary, not a theologian" (Terry G. Carter, "The Calvinism of William Carey and Its Effect on His Mission Work," in *William Carey: Theologian-Linguist-Social Reformer*, ed. Thomas Schirmacher [Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2013], 32). He continues, "Perhaps Carey did not want to muddle the mission goal with ... theological discussions" (29). Nicholls states that Carey was left "no time for theological reflection," and that "[his] gifts lay in linguistics and administration and not in theological formulations" (Bruce Nicholls, "The Theology of William Carey," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 17.3 [1993]: 369).

¹⁰ In *An Enquiry*, Carey writes that missionaries should be "of undoubted orthodoxy in their sentiments" (William Carey, "An Enquiry into the Obligations

Carey's words—indirectly spoken—concerning the church. While Carey never directly addressed the doctrine of the church, he did set forth basic ecclesiological principles in which he believed. Throughout this article, the reader will see how important the local church was to Carey and, as well, how important the task of church planting was to his strategy.

William Carey: The Pastor Turned Missionary-Pastor-Church Planter

For the sake of space, even a succinct biography of Carey's life before his work in the pastorate will not be provided. Other works provide a sufficient presentation of this part of his life.¹¹ Rather, I will focus on Carey's two pastorates, the first at Moulton (1785–1789) and the second at Harvey Lane, Leicester (1789–1793). After detailing these first two pastorates, I will note Carey's love for pastoral ministry and his congregants, his view of the church's importance, and the "turn" toward missions, though Carey never truly let go of pastoral ministry, as evidenced in his ongoing pastoral work and the priority of church planting in his strategy.

Carey's pastoral ministry at Moulton began on a trial basis in 1785. Interestingly, Carey's trial sermon did not go well. George notes the reaction of Carey's hearers: "Their response was that of the doubtful Athenians to the Apostle Paul, 'We will hear thee again of this matter' (Acts 17:32)."¹² The church resolved to allow Carey to pastor and preach for their congregation "for sometime before us, in order that further trial may be made of [Carey's] ministerial Gifts."¹³ As the historical account shows, Carey did sufficiently prove himself as a pastor. This progression is somewhat unsurprising, as the Olney church book reported of Carey: "He is occasionally engaged with acceptance in various places in speaking the word. He bears a very good moral character. He is desirous of being sent

of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens," in *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, by Daniel Webber [Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005], 92–93). One writer even states that Carey "built his mission work on ... Baptist ecclesiology" (See Tom Hicks, "The Glorious Impact of Calvinism upon Local Baptist Churches," in *Whomever He Wills: A Surprising Display of Sovereign Mercy*, ed. Matthew Barrett and Thomas J. Nettles [Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2012], 379).

¹¹ For some examples, see George, *Faithful Witness*, 1–34; Marshman, *Life and Labours*, 1–10; Mary Drewery, *William Carey: A Biography* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 7–24; Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792–1992* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 6–9.

¹² George, *Faithful Witness*, 17.

¹³ F. Deaville Walker, *William Carey: Missionary Pioneer and Statesman* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1960), 47.

out from some reputable [and] orderly church of Christ, into the work of the Ministry.”¹⁴ Thus, not long after his ministry at Moulton began, the church book stated that:

[It] has pleased God, since our present Minister came among us, to awaken a considerable Number of Persons to a serious Concern for the Salvation of their Souls; and to incline many others to attend upon the Preaching of the Gospel; so that for two Years past we have not had Room sufficient to contain them, and we have Reason to believe that Numbers more would attend if we could accommodate them when they come.¹⁵

Carey’s ministry led to his ordination at the Moulton church in August of 1787. At his ordination, Carey reported that he was required to present his confession of faith and answer “the usual questions” of the church.¹⁶ Following this, “Brother Ryland prayed the ordination prayer, with laying on of hands.” Carey was, thus, officially ordained as a pastor.

Carey’s pastorate at Moulton was a rather difficult one. He was poorly paid, so much so that, “Sometimes the Careys ate meatless meals for weeks at a time.”¹⁷ Not to mention, the congregants proved difficult to pastor. Carey’s sister wrote, “Mr. Sutcliff said once to us, that the difficulties he met there would have discouraged the spirits of almost any man besides him; but he set his shoulder to the work, and steadily persevered till it was accomplished, and soon had the pleasure to reap the fruits of his steady perseverance.”¹⁸ There were many instances at the church wherein Carey had to enforce church discipline.¹⁹ Nonetheless, he still wrote favorably of them: “Poor Moulton people, destitute and forlorn. I still love that people much, and hope God will provide for them.”²⁰ More significantly, Brian Stanley notes that it was during this pastorate that Carey’s “distinctive and exceptionally informed global vision took shape.”²¹ However, it would take its fullest shape at his next pastorate, from which Carey was sent to India.

Two years after his formal ordination at Moulton, Carey was invited

¹⁴ Taylor, *Biographical and Literary Notices*, 1.

¹⁵ Taylor, *Biographical and Literary Notices*, 3–4.

¹⁶ William Carey, “Ordinations in 1791—Rev. William Carey,” *The Baptist Annual Register* (1790–1793): 519.

¹⁷ George, *Faithful Witness*, 19.

¹⁸ Mary Carey, in Eustace Carey, *Memoir of William Carey, D.D.: Late Missionary to Bengal; Professor of Oriental Languages in the College of Fort William, Calcutta* (Boston: Gould, Kendall and Lincoln, 1836), 23.

¹⁹ George, *Faithful Witness*, 20.

²⁰ William Carey, in George, *Faithful Witness*, 20.

²¹ Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, 8.

to pastor the Baptist church at Harvey Lane, Leicester. The minutes for the Moulton church book note that the congregation was actively in prayer—every Monday—for their pastor, for they knew the invitation had been given.²² Carey was torn over this potential move, for even with the insurmountable difficulties at Moulton, he loved the people very much. He eventually made the decision for his family to move to Leicester, where he would pastor yet another difficult congregation. Still, he deeply loved his flock.

Issues of church discipline seemed to be even more serious at his second church. Carey worked diligently in writing a church covenant to which his congregants could agree.²³ The creation of this covenant signaled “a radical proposal.”²⁴ Carey basically had the church start over, dissolving the church relationship already established, requiring any member who wanted to remain to sign the new covenantal charter. Though this was hard for Carey, it resulted in the betterment of his church. Supposedly, the church eventually grew so much that Carey had to answer accusations of “stealing sheep” from other churches. He bluntly responded: “I would rather win to Christ the poorest scavengers in Leicester than draw off to ‘Harvey Lane’ the richest members of your flock.”²⁵ Andrew Fuller wrote of Carey’s ministry there: “His zeal and unremitting labour in preaching the Word, not only in Leicester, but in the villages near it, endeared him to the friends of religion.”²⁶ Carey, almost twenty years after leaving this church, wrote to the church’s new pastor, Robert Hall:

You are, I find, pastor of the church at Leicester, a place I always think of with pleasure, and a people whose best concerns I feel a deep interest. Every account, therefore, which respects that people, will be highly gratifying to me, and calls up some of the tenderest feelings of my heart.²⁷

He never forgot these people whom he loved dearly. The church, likewise, wrote of him as “our former worthy pastor . . . whom we resigned to the

²² Taylor, *Biographical and Literary Notices*, 3.

²³ S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey: D.D.* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1923), 59.

²⁴ George, *Faithful Witness*, 27.

²⁵ S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 62.

²⁶ Andrew Fuller, in Marshman, *Life and Labours*, 10; Eustace Carey, *Memoir*, 48.

²⁷ William Carey to Robert Hall, Apr 9, 1812, in Eustace Carey, *Memoir*, 355.

mission in Hindostan in Asia.”²⁸

Carey loved pastoral ministry, and as much as he loved the nations and wanted them to hear the gospel, his love for the nations made it no less difficult for him to leave his people behind. Not long after his initial arrival in India, Carey wrote home: “My sincerest Love to all the Ministers and Congregations of the Lord Jesus especially your friends of whom I rejoice to hear.”²⁹ One of the reasons for Carey’s early experiences of loneliness in India was that he missed his local church and wanted so desperately to “taste the sweets of Social religion which [he had] given up.”³⁰ He “sorely” felt “the Loss of those Publick [sic] opportunities which [he had] enjoyed in England.”³¹ Unfortunately, most Sabbath days were dreadful times for Carey, for they were the days he most remembered the fellowship he so enjoyed in England.

Surely, the local church was important to Carey, not only in England but also in India. This truth is set over and against the view—of some—that Carey and the rest of the Serampore Trio did not put enough focus on planting churches. Richard Hibbert writes, “William Carey and the many non-denominational missionary societies arising from his example ... saw mission primarily as the conversion of individuals, and thus they attached little importance to outward and organizational forms of church life.”³² From even a cursory perusal of Carey’s writing, almost nothing

²⁸ Myers, *The Centenary Celebration*, 120. Andrew Fuller could, thus, say, “[Neither] was [Carey] unhappy with his people, nor they with him” (Andrew Fuller, in Eustace Carey, *Memoir*, 49).

²⁹ William Carey to Ryland, Dec 26, 1793, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 145.

³⁰ William Carey’s Journal, Jan 13, 1794, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 8.

³¹ William Carey’s Journal, Mar 23, 1794, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 20.

³² Richard Yates Hibbert, “The Place of Church Planting in Mission: Towards a Theological Framework,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 33.4 (2009): 318. Hibbert also states that this “is not to say that church planting was entirely missing from the agenda of those early Protestant missionaries” (319). Rather, he says, “The felt need to establish churches for the majority of missionaries ... grew out of the immediate question of what to do with converts rather than as part of a deliberate focus” (319). However, Hibbert fails to address the fact that before a church can be planted, individuals must be converted, which is likely why there was so great a focus on reaching individuals for Christ; converts were needed for the establishment of an indigenous church. Hesselgrave also seems to imply that Carey and others “were not always clear as to their objectives,” focusing on too

could be further from the truth.

Carey wanted to plant churches.³³ Upon his arrival in India, Carey’s desire was to “furnish a Congregation immediately,” and that “God [would] grant ... [that it] not only be large but effectual.”³⁴ Stanley notes that, “The first ‘gathered’ church in Bengal was constituted by Carey and Dr. John Thomas at Mudnabati in 1795.”³⁵ Three years into his mission, Carey stated that their model of mission stations³⁶ was only to suffice until “God had so blessed us to raise up Churches in other parts where it would be proper for missionaries to reside near them.”³⁷ Upon his move to

many things, instead of evangelism and church planting specifically (David Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: North America and Beyond*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000], 25).

³³ Carey once summarized his missional purpose: “May I but be useful in laying the foundation of the Church of Christ in India, I desire no greater reward, and can receive no higher honour” (John Brown Myers, *William Carey: The Shoemaker Who Became ‘The Father and Founder of Modern Missions’* [New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1887], 160). Brian Stanley writes, “[There] was no doubt in the minds of the first BMS missionaries that their calling was to establish gathered churches of baptized believers which would be capable of self-sustaining life” (“Planting Self-governing Churches: British Baptist Ecclesiology in the Missionary Context,” *Baptist Quarterly* 34 [1992]: 379).

³⁴ William Carey’s Journal, June 28, 1794, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 35.

³⁵ Stanley, “Planting Self-governing Churches,” 126. The missionaries, only then, took the Lord’s Supper. From the church book of Leicester, one finds the following on this event: “[We] were informed that a small church was formed at Mudnabatty; and [that Carey] wished a dismissal from us to it, that he might become a member, and also have an opportunity of becoming its pastor” (Myers, *The Centenary Celebration*, 120). Moreover, the church was happy to hear of “the planting of a gospel church in Asia.”

³⁶ Marshman writes that the Serampore Trio stated “that the planting of the gospel in any heathen country required three distinct agencies—the formation of *missionary stations*, where ‘the standard of the cross shall be erected, and the gospel preached to the people, and from whence *ultimately spring churches*; the translation of the Scriptures; and the instruction of the youth in the truths of the Bible, and the literature suited to the wants of the country” (*Life and Labours*, 256 [emphasis added]). Though the church was essential, “Carey desired a missions structure that would ... ensure the ... spread of the Gospel in India and the neighboring countries. He initially envisioned a central mission station with sub-stations that would report to and draw support from the main base” (Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 136).

³⁷ William Carey to Society, Dec 28, 1796, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 138.

Serampore with Ward and Marshman, “Carey was given the most prominent building in the city for the church in which he preached for the next thirty-four years.”³⁸ The baptism of their first convert took place within the context of a church: “Sunday, December 28, 1800. After our English service, at which I preached on baptism, we went to the riverside, immediately opposite our gate when the Governor, a number of Europeans and Portuguese, and many Hindus and Mohammedans attended.”³⁹ They sang a hymn together and baptized two men: Felix Carey (William Carey’s son) and Krishna Pal, a local Hindu.

Furthermore, in Carey’s many later letters to his son, Jabez, he regularly encouraged him—more than anything else—to plant churches. Not only did he implore Jabez to “form [converts] into Gospel churches,” but he also told him to “baptize and administer the Lord’s Supper according to [Jabez’s] own discretion when there is proper occasion for it.”⁴⁰ Two years after this, he continued his correspondence: “Labour . . . to do your utmost to communicate the saving knowledge of the Gospel to all the Malays and to collect them into churches of the living God formed on the Scripture model.”⁴¹ Likewise, at the end of that year, Carey wrote: “Collect a church of true believers as soon as God gives you proper materials and nourish that church in the words of faith and sound holiness.”⁴²

In summary, though Carey made a primary move from pastor to missionary, he never truly gave up pastoral responsibilities, even assuming the pastorate of local missionary churches in India, as he consistently labored to plant indigenous ones. As well, the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), which was co-founded by Pastor Carey and other pastors, is the organization that sent him *to preach the gospel for conversions and to establish biblical churches*.⁴³ And so, in June of 1793, William Carey—among several others—left his English homeland for the shores of India, to which he

³⁸ George Ella, “William Carey Using God’s Means to Convert the People of India,” in *William Carey: Theologian-Linguist-Social Reformer*, ed. Thomas Schirrmacher (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2013), 62. Nicholls writes, “It is significant that with the arrival of new missionaries in Serampore early in the year 1800, Carey and his colleagues immediately constituted themselves as the local Baptist Church and elected Carey as pastor” (“Theology of William Carey,” 372–73).

³⁹ William Carey, in George, *Faithful Witness*, 131.

⁴⁰ William Carey to Jabez, Mar 31, 1814, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 131.

⁴¹ William Carey to Jabez, Feb 7, 1816, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 253.

⁴² William Carey to Jabez, Nov 23, 1816, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 190.

⁴³ Hicks, “The Glorious Impact,” 382.

would arrive in November of that same year. In India, Carey would labor for some forty years to *evangelize* India’s masses, *translate* Scripture into their vernacular, and *educate* them for the primary purpose of discipling converts so the indigenous church could spread; and it was Carey’s view of the church as missional, logocentric, and didactic that moved him to implement such a strategy.

The Missional Church and Strategic Evangelism

In a more functional than ontological sense, William Carey believed the church was missional. By “functional,” it is meant that Carey at least thought it was a major responsibility and role of the local church to participate in missions, namely toward the fulfillment of the Great Commission as stated in Matt 28:18–20. However, one cannot deduce from the material available if Carey believed the church was ontologically missional, and, thus, the reason the church was to participate in missions.

Daniel Webber writes, “William Carey is rightly credited with putting world mission at the heart of the church’s concern for a fallen world.”⁴⁴ This reality is perhaps no better examined than in the account of Carey’s words at a local, associational gathering of Baptist ministers. At this meeting, Carey proposed for discussion “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.”⁴⁵ At this point in the life of English Particular Baptists, many pastors and theologians taught that with the cessation of the apostolic office, so the responsibility of the Great Commission had ceased as binding upon the church, since it was a commandment given directly to the apostles. Unsurprisingly, then, it is typically reported that the “gruff old Calvinist, John Ryland, Sr., rebuked Carey.”⁴⁶ Ryland is often said to have responded: “Young man, sit down. You’re an enthusiast. When God pleases to convert the heathen, he will do it without consulting you or me.”⁴⁷ This remark—if it happened—appears to be of a hyper-Calvinist

⁴⁴ Daniel Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), ix.

⁴⁵ H. Leon McBeth, “The Legacy of the Baptist Missionary Society,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 27.3 (1992): 5–6.

⁴⁶ McBeth, “The Legacy of the Baptist Missionary Society,” 5–6.

⁴⁷ John Ryland Sr., in McBeth, “The Legacy of the Baptist Missionary Society,” 6. This same quote can also be found in S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 50; Drewery, *William Carey*, 31; Timothy George, “William Carey (1761–1834),” in

nature, but there is reason to believe that Ryland did not say this. Thomas Nettles argues that Ryland's argument was likely more focused on the necessity of a "latter-day glory" or a new Pentecost-like event that should precede any furtherance of the Great Commission.⁴⁸ Either way, Carey used his missiological treatise, *An Enquiry*, to prove the Great Commission was binding upon the local church; that is, local churches were responsible to "make disciples of all nations." So, churches had to send their members away.

In his work *An Enquiry*, there is much evidence that Carey believed the church was missional, for this book is a treatise that calls the church to own the task of fulfilling the Great Commission given to all of God's people—not solely the apostles. It was the church who had to take responsibility for the "heathens" far away who had never heard of God and would never hear of him until some were sent and went. Carey primarily deals with this matter in the first section. Stanley notes that, in this section, Carey says the church's "failure to take the gospel to the world was ... comparable to the inability of natural man to believe in Christ ... [in that

The British Particular Baptists 1638–1910, vol. 2, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2000), 149; J. Herbert Kane, *A Global View of Christian Missions: From Pentecost to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972), 85; Marshman, *Life and Labours*, 8. Brian Stanley believes there is a small chance this statement from Ryland Sr. did not happen, saying, "[I]here must be some doubt about its authenticity" (*The History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, 7). This is because, "Our knowledge of this celebrated episode is solely dependent on one first-hand source, J. W. Morris's life of Fuller, published in 1816" (6). What is more, even William Carey, himself, "subsequently questioned [Morris's recollection of the event]" (7). However, at an earlier date than the above event, Carey "recalled the incident," and so, Eustace Carey, in his biography of William Carey, "[accepted] its authenticity" (7).

⁴⁸ Nettles writes, "[I]he content of the rebuke concerned not the duty of calling sinners to repentance and faith, but the means by which the conversions of the latter days would be initiated" (Thomas J. Nettles, "Baptist and the Great Commission," in *The Great Commission: Evangelicals and the History of World Missions*, ed. Martin I. Klauber and Scott M. Manetsch [Nashville: B&H, 2008], 91). For Nettles's full argument, see pp. 89–95. Ryland's son, John Ryland Jr., "gave no credence to the anecdote of his father's gruff response to young Carey" (90). Perhaps his father's comment was "that nothing could be done before another Pentecost, when an effusion of miraculous gifts, including the gift of tongues, would give effect to the commission of Christ as at first; and that he [Carey] was a most miserable enthusiast for asking such a question" (J. W. Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* [Boston: Lincoln and Edmands, 1830], 84–85).

it] should be attributed, not to natural circumstances beyond human control, but to a culpable refusal on the part of the human will."⁴⁹ In *An Enquiry*, Carey wrote the following thesis: "I shall enquire whether the commission given by our Lord to his disciples be not still binding on us [i.e., the church] ... the duty of Christians in general in this matter."⁵⁰ Carey believed ministers had a "commission" to sufficiently call Christians "to venture all, and, like the primitive Christians, go everywhere preaching the gospel."⁵¹ He believed "Christians are a body whose truest interest lies in the exaltation of the Messiah's kingdom."⁵² In one section, Carey statistically details the great need for the gospel in the world and writes, "All these things are loud calls to Christians, and especially to ministers, to exert themselves to the utmost in their several spheres of action, and to try to enlarge them as much as possible."⁵³ *An Enquiry* had a great effect upon its readers, as it later led to the establishment of the BMS.

Carey also believed the church was to be missional both near and far. Evangelistic activity did not begin once Carey was overseas. George reports that in many places surrounding Harvey Lane (the location of his second pastorate), Carey "conducted regular preaching missions and witnessed many conversions," for his concern "for the unevangelized heathen in distant lands did not slacken his zeal to share the good news of Jesus Christ with sinners at home."⁵⁴ The missional responsibility of the church was an essential doctrine for Carey, for he believed "that local churches are founded and expanded only [through] preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and God's sovereign salvation of sinners."⁵⁵ As noted earlier, Fuller stated that Carey regularly preached "not only in Leicester, but in the villages near it, wherever he could have access." He also preached this truth *to* and prayed for its reality *before* his own congregations, hoping they would take ownership for the lost around them.⁵⁶ As their primary

⁴⁹ Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, 12.

⁵⁰ Carey, "An Enquiry," 21.

⁵¹ Carey, "An Enquiry," 26.

⁵² Carey, "An Enquiry," 97.

⁵³ Carey, "An Enquiry," 87 (emphasis added).

⁵⁴ George, *Faithful Witness*, 28.

⁵⁵ Hicks, "The Glorious Impact," 379.

⁵⁶ Webber writes, "[Carey] preached about [missions] to his little flock and echoes of the same concern were to be found in his public prayers" (*William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 15). George notes that, "Slowly, steadily Carey was rousing his congregation, his family, his fellow ministers to the urgency that he felt like a fire burning within his bones" (*Faithful Witness*, 22). George likewise says,

example, Carey preached and prayed so that his congregants would preach and pray too.

Last, it is important to remember that the BMS was established with pastors at the helm, and the establishment of this very society is often noted as the beginning of the modern missions era. Along with *An Enquiry*, Carey's "deathless sermon"⁵⁷ on Isa 54:2–3 was foundational to the establishment of the BMS; it was preached "to seventeen pastors of the Northamptonshire Association of Baptist churches on the 31st May 1792," for Carey knew pastors needed to own the church's missional responsibility.⁵⁸ Carey "at once urged that the ministers present resolve to form a missionary society."⁵⁹ Thus, from the future minutes of the BMS' first meeting, one reads the following: "That the *Revs.* John Ryland, Reynold Hogg, William Carey, John Sutcliff, and Andrew Fuller be appointed a Committee, three of whom shall be empowered to act in carrying into effect the purposes of this society."⁶⁰ The modern missions era had officially begun.

Understandably, then, the first subsection of Carey's strategy—and the most important of the three—was evangelism. From the outset, Carey made evangelism a part of his everyday life. Less than a year into his work, he writes, "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."⁶¹ He soon after accounts for his weekly work: "I preach every day to the Natives, and twice on the Lord's Day constantly, besides other itinerant labors, and I try to speak of Jesus Christ and him

"Carey was increasingly preoccupied with the urgency of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with those who had never heard his name or received his gospel. This was the constant theme of his sermons, conversations, and even his efforts to teach the village school children their elementary lessons" ("William Carey," 145). On the subject of prayer, Eustace Carey writes, "I have been often told by his sisters, and by the deacon of his church at Leicester, that for several years he never engaged in prayer, to the best of their remembrance, without interceding for the conversion of the heathen, and for the abolition of the slave-trade" (*Memoir*, 33).

⁵⁷ Carey's two sermon points were: (1) Expect great things [from God]; and (2) Attempt great things [for God]. For a detailed account of this sermon, see S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 79–86. Andrew Fuller said of it: "The discourse was very animated and impressive" (Carey, *Memoir*, 50).

⁵⁸ Nicholls, "Theology of William Carey," 370.

⁵⁹ Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 20.

⁶⁰ Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 33 (emphasis added).

⁶¹ William Carey's Journal, Mar 29, 1794, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 21.

crucified, and of him alone."⁶² Carey does this in the midst of seven years of fruitless labor, trusting God would one day bring fruit as only he could.

The Serampore Trio eventually created⁶³ the Serampore Form of Agreement (SFA) of 1805, as a document to be "read publicly three times a year."⁶⁴ This document served as a way of renewing their missional vows to one another; in some ways, it was their mission's covenant, stating clearly what they—as *missionaries*—were to do. A few of the eleven principles set forth in this document show the importance of evangelism. For example, they were to: (1) set an infinite value on men's souls; (3) abstain from whatever deepens India's prejudice against the gospel; and (5) preach "Christ crucified" as the grand means of conversions.⁶⁵

As for his method, Carey regularly speaks of "preaching" to gathered "congregations." While this may—at face value—seem like an ecclesiological context, it is not. These "congregations" were often gathered in the middle of town, and by "preaching," Carey meant that he would share the gospel with this crowd of people, as much as they would convene and listen.⁶⁶ That is, by "preaching," Carey means "evangelism." In this methodology, the missionaries were able to reach a greater number of people at one time than if they had focused solely on individual conversations. The purpose of this evangelism, though, was to lead to explicit ecclesiological contexts, namely indigenous churches. In *An Enquiry*, Carey wrote that the mission was to serve the "increase of the church" through "the

⁶² William Carey to Sisters, Apr 10, 1796, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 85. For other accounts, see William Carey, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*: 11 (Journal, Jan 23, 1794); 21 (Journal, Mar 29, 1794); 55 (Journal, Mar 1, 1795); 57 (Journal, Mar 23 and 29, 1795); 58 (Journal, Apr 13 and 19, 1795, and May 9, 1795).

⁶³ Though each signee had a hand in its creation, William Ward actually wrote the document.

⁶⁴ George, *Faithful Witness*, 123.

⁶⁵ George, *Faithful Witness*, 123. Moreover, the Trio believed, "The doctrine of Christ's expiatory death and all-sufficient merits has been, and must ever remain, the grand means of conversion. This doctrine and others immediately connected with it have constantly nourished and sanctified the Church" (Myers, *William Carey*, 66–67).

⁶⁶ For example, see William Carey, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 58 (Journal, May 9, 1795); 152 (Letter to Sutcliffe, Aug 18, 1812). Terry Carter writes that, "Early on, Carey traveled to the rural areas and gathered congregations wherever possible" (129). Oussoren writes, "Of course the preaching of the Word is not the preaching from the Pulpit. It should be done in a very tactful way. By means of missionary conversation" (A. H. Oussoren, *William Carey: Especially His Missionary Principles* [Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff's Uitgeversmaatschappij N.V., 1945], 266).

spread of the gospel.”⁶⁷ Carey wrote in 1803 that he baptized three natives, bringing their overall number up to twenty-five, and each of these converts brought the “whole number of church members [to] thirty-nine.”⁶⁸ As stated previously, Carey wanted churches to be planted. So, he prioritized evangelism, for it was through evangelistic efforts that local churches in India could be planted and, thus, grow.

In spite of his great emphasis on evangelism, Carey’s evangelistic methodology was not without flaws. Foremost, Carey’s personal evangelistic method was heavily polemical, and space does not begin to allow a full presentation of the evidence. By “polemical,” it is meant that rather than focusing solely on presenting the gospel to Indians, Carey spent a great deal of his time arguing against the natives’ religion, hoping to prove the foolishness of their ways so they might, more readily, come to Christ.⁶⁹ Carter describes Carey’s method as one of “dialogue and argumentation.”⁷⁰ Carey believed he was merely using “fair argument and persuasion” in his evangelism, but history shows otherwise.⁷¹ In a letter written to his father and mother before he ever went to India, he shows his attitude toward the lost: “How *stupid* are those who neglect [Christian doctrines]!”⁷² Carey “found it easy to confound [the natives’] arguments—but their Hearts still remain[ed] the same.”⁷³ He once “spent the Evening in a long Dispute with [his] friendly Host ... [and] argued that [he] was no more uncharitable than the Bible.” He felt “pleasure in being Valiant for the truth.”⁷⁴ He even notes that, one day, he taught the natives for

⁶⁷ Carey, “An Enquiry,” 88.

⁶⁸ William Carey, in Hervey, *The Story of Baptist Missions*, 18.

⁶⁹ For more on the polemical model and other approaches to adherents of various world religions, see Martin Accad, “Christian Attitudes toward Islam and Muslims: A Kerygmatic Approach,” in *Toward Respectful Understanding and Witness Among Muslims*, ed. Evelyne A. Reisacher (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2012). Accad summarizes the polemical model as “seek and destroy” (33). See also Sam Schlorff’s discussion of the “imperial model” in *Missiological Models in Ministry to Muslims* (Upper Darby, PA: Middle East Resources, 2006), 10–11.

⁷⁰ Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 144.

⁷¹ William Carey, in Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries*, 184.

⁷² William Carey to his father and mother, Mar 3, 1787, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 248 (emphasis added).

⁷³ William Carey to Ryland, Dec 26, 1793, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 144.

⁷⁴ William Carey’s Journal, Apr 7, 1794, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 22–23.

nearly an hour, telling them that “all [their religious activities are] ... disgusting to [God] and contrary to his will.”⁷⁵ Though Carey shared the gospel in all this, his polemic came at a cost; he had no converts for his first seven years, and as much as God is sovereign over the salvation of the lost, Carey’s method was likely a stumbling block to the Indians.⁷⁶ William Ward once noted that “Carey was more successful in keeping the attention of his audience when he switched from attacking Hinduism or Islam to relating the story of the death and resurrection of Christ.”⁷⁷ Thankfully, as noted in the SFA, the Trio eventually moved away from the polemical method. They agreed: “[Let] us be continually fearful lest one unguarded word, or one unnecessary display of the difference betwixt us, in manners, etc., should set the natives at a greater distance from us.”⁷⁸

A few other flaws are worth briefly noting. First, Carey and others regularly required European Christians to accompany native converts on evangelistic journeys, displaying an ongoing worry for the evangelistic methodology of their native converts, which was against their hope for an indigenous mission and church.⁷⁹ Second, Carey had little direct involvement with evangelism later in his life, primarily because of his almost singular focus on translating the Bible, which will be further documented

⁷⁵ William Carey to Ryland, Aug 17, 1800, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 148.

⁷⁶ For more on Carey’s polemical method, see Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries*, 37–38, 93, 183–84; Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, 44–46.

⁷⁷ Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries*, 37.

⁷⁸ William Carey, Joshua Marshman, William Ward, et al., “The Serampore Form of Agreement,” *Baptist Quarterly* 12.5 (1947): 131.

⁷⁹ On this, the SFA reads: “At least for the present, Indian evangelists would be ‘under the eye of an [sic] European brother’” (Stanley, “Planting Self-governing Churches,” 381). The SFA also stated that a “missionary of the district” would “constantly superintend their affairs, give them advice in cases of order and discipline, and correct any errors into which they may fall” (Carey, Marshman, Ward, et al., “Serampore Form of Agreement,” 135). Carey even once wrote that, “Compared with Europeans ... [Indians] are a larger sort of children” (William Carey, in S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 237). Moreover, even with their “good gifts for making known the Gospel,” Carey thought it “desirable” for natives to be “under the eye of a European” (William Carey to Fuller, Dec 10, 1805, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 139). Carey believed natives were “far below Europeans in religious knowledge ... energy of mind, and ... other ... requirements” (William Carey to Pearce, Jan 15, 1812, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 176).

in the next section.⁸⁰ Third, some question the sincerity of many of the Trio's converts, noting that they often did not perform their due diligence.⁸¹

The Logocentric Church and Strategic Translation

Unlike the missional function of the church, Carey believed the church was ontologically logocentric: centered on the Word of God.⁸² In its very nature, the local church is to be centered on the Bible. In one way, Carey's view of the church as functionally missional came as a result of his view that the church is ontologically logocentric.⁸³ The Word of God was so

⁸⁰ This was so severe, that in an 1822 letter to his father, Carey noted: "It is more I think, *than 12 years* that I have been laboring here, but alas not one brought to the truth through my instrumentality" (William Carey, in Sen Gupta, *Christian Missionaries in Bengal*, 165 [emphasis added]).

⁸¹ For example, when William Moore examined a church planted in north Bengal, "[He] had found the 'converts had been admitted too soon' and six months later doubted whether the one or two that remained in 'that neighbourhood [sic] had a grain of sincerity in them'" (Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries*, 43). Speaking of the BMS and the London Missionary Society, Sen Gupta believes that "those Indians who embraced Christianity did so primarily for material gains rather than for spiritual regeneration" (Sen Gupta, *Christian Missionaries in Bengal*, 150).

⁸² Gregg Allison's reference to the "logocentric" church has a double meaning (see Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 110–17). He refers to both the *Christ-centeredness* of the church and the *Word-centeredness* of the church. For the sake of this essay, by "logocentric," I am referring only to the latter meaning, which Allison defines as the church "centered on Scripture, the inspired Word" (112). He continues: "Specifically, canonical Scripture is inspired, sufficient, necessary, truthful (or inerrant), clear, authoritative, and productive." Moreover, he writes, "With God as its divine author, Scripture as the Word of God possesses divine authority to command what Christians are to believe, do, and be, and to prohibit what they are to avoid.... The church is to be centered on this inspired, sufficient, necessary, truthful, clear, authoritative, and productive Word of God" (114).

⁸³ One might think that—for Baptists—the functional missional of the church comes by way of ontological missional. However, Toivo Pilli writes on this: "[B]aptists have frequently emphasised [sic] the importance of mission from functional rather than ontological perspective. With a little exaggeration: for us, Baptists, mission is often important because we do it, not because it defines us as a church or because we derive the missional meaning from the movement of the Trinity" (Toivo Pilli, "Where Do We Go from Here? Some Challenges for European Baptist Ecclesiology," *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 15.2 [2015]: 11–12).

essential to all that Carey did and believed regarding the church;⁸⁴ because he believed the Bible set forth a clear, missional mandate, he believed churches needed to follow it.

At an early age, Carey became very interested in languages other than English. Not long after this interest took root, Carey discovered the intricacies and beauty of the Bible's original languages. A great portion of his life would be given to study of the Bible in both Greek and Hebrew, as Carey would later translate the Bible into at least thirty-six different languages.⁸⁵ This fact alone behooves current readers to consider just how much time Carey spent in the Word of God. He found the utmost pleasure "in drawing near to God; and a peculiar sweetness in His Holy Word." He found the Bible "more [and] more to be a very precious treasure."⁸⁶ Certainly, the Bible was a dear friend of his, in times where he had almost no other companion.⁸⁷

Carey thought the Bible was essential for the well-being of a local church and the well-being of mankind. He once warned his son, Jabez, to not associate with National Churches overseas because they were "unknown in the word of God," and this sad reality meant they were not true churches.⁸⁸ During his second pastorate, he wrote to his sister, Mary: "[We] have a more sure word of prophecy whereunto we do well that we take heed," showing his dependence on 2 Pet 1:19–21.⁸⁹ Carey once communicated his idea for pastoral ministry in this way: "The Word of God! What need to pray much and study closely, to give ourselves wholly to those great things, that we may not speak falsely of God. The word of

⁸⁴ Before leaving for India, Carey clearly communicated this: "Consider that the Bible is our rule and if we would fetch our evidence from that we should do well" (William Carey to Mary Carey, Dec 14, 1789, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 265).

⁸⁵ Though some estimate he translated the Bible into forty languages (which is possible), the more likely number is thirty-five or thirty-six. John Taylor notes these translations in great detail (*Biographical and Literary Notices*, 89). Stanley also says Carey was only responsible for translating the Bible into six languages fully and another twenty-nine partially (*History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, 38, 49). See also Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 39.

⁸⁶ William Carey's Journal, Aug 27, 1794, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 39.

⁸⁷ He writes after his first year gone, a year fraught with suffering: "Well I have God, and his Word is sure" (William Carey's Journal, Apr 19, 1794, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 26).

⁸⁸ William Carey to Jabez, Nov 23, 1816, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 190.

⁸⁹ William Carey to Mary Carey, Dec 14, 1789, Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 265.

truth!”⁹⁰ In *An Enquiry*, Carey writes of the great travesty of the unreached; in many countries, inhabitants had “no written language,” and “consequently no Bible.”⁹¹

Carey’s becoming a dissenter Baptist is owed to his study of God’s Word. Furthermore, because of the biblical teaching of believer’s baptism, Carey decided to be baptized in October of 1783 and baptized his wife four years later. He also moved away from the Particular Baptist leaning toward hyper-Calvinism “because he believed so strongly in the Word [and] that’s what it showed him.”⁹² Instead, he embraced a warm, evangelical, and biblical Calvinism.

As well, Carey exemplified his adherence to Scripture in his method of preaching. In both England and India, his sermons were filled with the Bible. As already mentioned, Carey’s “deathless sermon” in 1792 shows that he “followed the expository model of the Baptist preachers of Northamptonshire,” for that sermon was an exposition of Isa 54:2–3.⁹³ Carey’s messages are often noted as a distribution and communication of “only the Word,” for the Word was “the fountain of eternal truth, and the Message of Salvation to men.”⁹⁴ John Ryland Jr. said after “twice hearing [Carey preach]” one year, he “had a . . . deep sense of [the] truth.”⁹⁵ Eustace Carey says William Carey’s study of the Bible was so intensive that he “never *wrote* a sermon in his life. He had gone through the sacred books so often, and with so much critical attention, and in so many languages, that there was scarcely a passage with . . . which he was not familiar.”⁹⁶

Carey’s dependence on God’s Word—especially as it pertained to the local church—led to an almost singular focus on translating it for those without it. He was “convinced that the availability of the Scriptures would pave the way for a strong and indigenous church.”⁹⁷ He, Marshman, and Ward, per the SFA, agreed “to labour [sic] incessantly in biblical translation.”⁹⁸ Carey’s strategy consisted of working with locals to produce as readable a translation as possible. His ultimate goal was to provide a book for common people to use. Though he used locals, translations were fully dependent on his examination. He once wrote, “There is not a sentence,

⁹⁰ William Carey, in Taylor, *Biographical and Literary Notices*, 2.

⁹¹ Carey, “An Enquiry,” 85.

⁹² George, *Faithful Witness*, 137.

⁹³ Nicholls, “Theology of William Carey,” 370.

⁹⁴ For examples, see Oussoren, *William Carey*, 198–201, 204–5, 244–46, 265–67.

⁹⁵ John Ryland Jr., in S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 47.

⁹⁶ Eustace Carey, in Drewery, *William Carey*, 139.

⁹⁷ Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 39.

⁹⁸ George, *Faithful Witness*, 123.

or a word, in these six versions which I do not compare with several versions; I translate the New Testament immediately from the Greek, and every sentence of the Old Testament is constantly compared with the Hebrew.”⁹⁹ Every translation went through his hands, save the Burman and Chinese Bibles. His belief in translation was so strong that he knew some “would become Christians,” not just because of the opportunities it provided for a more thorough evangelism, but also by the natives “merely . . . reading the Bible.”¹⁰⁰ That is, Carey believed the Bible to be so sufficient that if more natives could simply read its words in their own language, they might come to see, understand, and thus believe in the gospel for salvation.

Because Carey held to the logocentricity of the church so adamantly, it is surprising to find the many weaknesses of Carey’s translations. His shortcomings are twofold. First, his translations were poor and only satisfactory for a short amount of time. Both he and others attest to this. Relatedly, it is one thing to assess the worth of completing so many poor translations of the Bible and another to assess Carey’s own belief that his translations did not have to be perfect. Second, Carey devoted so much time to translations—again, translations that did not prove useful in the long run—that he, later in life, spent little to no time actually evangelizing.

Carey went against his notion that his commitment was to “providing the people with the best text of Scripture possible,”¹⁰¹ in that he explicitly stated, “It would be the height of folly to say that any of our translations are perfect.”¹⁰² He noted that they do “the best [they] can,” yet his translations knowingly included “mistakes” in need of rectification and “inaccuracies” in need of correction.¹⁰³ Likely, Carey’s main problem became his desire to “translate the Bible into as many languages of the common people as possible so that all might hear and believe the gospel.”¹⁰⁴ Yet, this position purports that one needs an inaccurate and misleading translation of the Bible to actually believe. Would it have not been better to

⁹⁹ William Carey to his father, May 4, 1808, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 160.

¹⁰⁰ Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries*, 82. On at least one occasion, Carey notes that this “impossibility” actually happened (William Carey to Fuller, Mar 25, 1813, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 163).

¹⁰¹ Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 77.

¹⁰² William Carey to an unknown recipient, Feb 7, 1819, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 165.

¹⁰³ William Carey to Ryland, Mar 30, 1819, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 166.

¹⁰⁴ Nicholls, “Theology of William Carey,” 371.

focus on accurately preaching the gospel while working on less translations that were more accurate? Potts notes that one of Carey's translations was so bad that, "A little leaven leaventh the whole lump' ... became 'A little crocodile crocodilith the whole lump.'"105 Some scholars have stated that Carey's translations were "too literal," and so, he never truly "achieved a 'readable translation in Bengali of the New Testament.'"106 While one can ponder the possibility of Carey's ministry if he had done otherwise, one cannot neglect that—even with his many but poor translations—he deserves "the right to be described as a great man," for he at least provided "tools ... for later scholars to reap a harvest for God."107 Carey knew that his translations were only a start, and his ultimate hope was that scholars following him would produce better work; and they did.

Secondly, Carey spent so much time translating Scripture that he spent hardly any time evangelizing. He once spoke of "doing so little," his main excuse being that "translation leaves us not Time."108 Translating Scripture literally took all of his time, time that could have been spent doing what one might call true missionary work. Even so, Carey's work in translation was done "to reap a harvest for God."109 Though it was not direct evangelism, it was directly affecting this cause; this is why translation was of the utmost importance. Though evangelism was a priority, if it was to be successful, it had to be joined to God's Word. Carey believed that—among the Serampore Trio—he had both the desire and the gifts for such a needed task.

The Didactic Church and Strategic Education

The local church is "didactic" in the sense that its mature members—while being disciplined and sanctified themselves—must seek to teach other members for the sake of their discipleship and sanctification. Like the missional functionality of the church, the church as didactic is based on the ontological logocentricity of the church.¹¹⁰ Because Carey believed God's Word was central to the church, he believed the church—pastors

¹⁰⁵ Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries*, 84. For more translation issues, see pp. 82–89.

¹⁰⁶ Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries*, 86–87.

¹⁰⁷ Drewery, *William Carey*, 156–57, 202.

¹⁰⁸ William Carey to Burls, Feb 22, 1814, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 153.

¹⁰⁹ Drewery, *William Carey*, 202.

¹¹⁰ For example, Carey agreed with Luther, who wrote: "The Scripture cannot be understood without the language, Luther had argued, 'and the languages can be learned only in school'" (George, *Faithful Witness*, 143). The church was to educate, so that the Scriptures could be upheld within it.

especially—needed to teach well, for this is what God commanded in the Great Commission. Furthermore, since Carey believed the local church was responsible for the Great Commission, he concluded that the church was responsible for "teaching [Christians] to observe all ... [Christ] commanded."

Carey's belief in the didactic church is seen not only in his ministry in India, but also in his pastoral work at both Moulton and Leicester. Early into his short stint at the Moulton church, Carey noted to John Sutcliff that his desire was to "settle the church upon evangelical principles."¹¹¹ How was he to do such a thing? A little over a year after writing of this desire, Carey deals with the teaching responsibility of local churches:

Paul informs us that a bishop should be "*apt to teach.*" *Teaching* in the pulpit, though one great part of his work, yet is not all. He should keep up the *character of a teacher*, an overlooker, at all times; and in the chimney corner, as well as the pulpit... May we [as pastors] reprove, rebuke, exhort, be diligent, in season and out of season, always abounding in the work of the Lord.¹¹²

Writing to his father in 1790, Carey noted that his regular schedule included teaching a lecture for one year's time on the book of Revelation every Wednesday night.¹¹³ Six months later, Carey wrote to his father again: "Several young people appear under concern of soul; and at a village about three miles off, an amazing alteration has taken place; and hence I opened a lecture there about nine months since; several have been converted, in all probability."¹¹⁴ Moreover, to solve the numerous, disciplinary problems of the church at Leicester, Carey resolved to make a "new covenantal charter."¹¹⁵ That is, his pastoral solution was leading his church into a more confessional understanding of the Christian faith. For Carey, the teaching of sound doctrine was essential for a pastor if that pastor's desire was to faithfully shepherd the flock.

Carey's belief in the didactic church did not change once he moved to India. If anything, he realized even more the need for the church to advocate sound teaching. Not even two years into his ministry there, Carey noted that, "One Lord's Day [twenty-six] persons came to [his] house for

¹¹¹ William Carey to Sutcliff, Dec 30, 1785, in Taylor, *Biographical and Literary Notices*, 36.

¹¹² William Carey to Mr. J. Stranger, Feb 13, 1787, in Taylor, *Biographical and Literary Notices*, 81–82 (emphasis added).

¹¹³ William Carey to his father, Nov 12, 1790, in Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 17.

¹¹⁴ William Carey to his father, May 5, 1791, in Eustace Carey, *Memoir*, 39.

¹¹⁵ George, *Faithful Witness*, 28.

instruction in the things of God.”¹¹⁶ The missionaries’ teaching ministry was expedited once Ward and Marshman arrived. They soon established a “Caste class,” of which Carey once said: “I must say that the knowledge which [the natives] had acquired in a little time, very far surpassed my expectations.”¹¹⁷ Carey notes, “[We] have a Lecture at Church at eight o’clock on Wednesday evenings by Bros Brown or Buchanan, both of whom are evangelical clergymen.”¹¹⁸ In 1806, Carey made sure to preach in Bengali every evening at five o’clock.¹¹⁹ Though the Trio would establish many schools for the sake of education, Carey believed education was a responsibility of the local church. He once wrote to Fuller: “I trust the Lord to raise up in this church as sufficient here of spiritual gifts, to convey the knowledge of the truth through this, and perhaps some of the neighboring countries.”¹²⁰ Writing to Jabez, Carey made sure he knew the importance of teaching. He told his son to consider himself a “spiritual instructor of the people,” looking to “introduce among them sound doctrine and genuine piety.”¹²¹ He wanted his son to “instruct them in the great thing ... [the] Gospel.”¹²² Jabez was implored to “teach the people publickly [sic] and from house to house holding out to them the free tidings of Salvation through the Redeemer’s blood and teaching them to observe all things which he has commanded them.”¹²³ A true churchman, Carey believed he—as a *pastor-missionary-church planter*—was to make sure the natives were being well taught to follow Christian doctrine.

In terms of strategy, though education took place in the context of the local church, the Trio thought it wise to establish formal schools throughout India. They were so diligent in this, that by 1818, “[Several] thousand were regularly attending classes and services.”¹²⁴ According to Carey,

¹¹⁶ William Carey’s Journal, Mar 18, 1795, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 145.

¹¹⁷ William Carey to Ryland, June 29–30, 1802, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 167.

¹¹⁸ William Carey to his father, Dec 1, 1802, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 87.

¹¹⁹ William Carey to Ryland, June 12, 1806, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 89.

¹²⁰ William Carey to Fuller, Mar 27, 1809, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 174.

¹²¹ William Carey to Jabez, Jan 24, 1814, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 131.

¹²² William Carey to Jabez, Mar 31, 1814, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 135.

¹²³ William Carey to Jabez, Nov 23, 1816, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 190.

¹²⁴ Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 39.

these “classes” consisted of three sub-classes: one for teaching Bengali reading and writing; one for teaching English, writing, and arithmetic; and one for teaching Science, for disputing against Hinduism, and explaining the principles of Christianity.¹²⁵ Though their system of education was holistic, their primary educational purpose was never detached from their main work, evangelism. Carey considered schools “as one of the most effectual means of spreading the light of the Gospel through[out] the world.”¹²⁶ Schools, like Serampore College, were eventually established for the sake of not only teaching lost Indians the gospel, but also training saved Indians to preach the gospel to their own people, thus creating an indigenous ministry. This purpose is stated most clearly in the SFA. In the eighth principle of this document, the Trio states: “The establishment of native free schools is also an object highly important to the future conquests of the gospel,”¹²⁷ for if the gospel was to spread liberally, it was to come through “forming our native brethren to usefulness, fostering every kind of genius, and cherishing every gift and grace in them.”¹²⁸

There is perhaps no better case study for the verification of this than Krishna Pal, the Trio’s first convert. In 1803, Carey wrote of Krishna: “[We] derive increasing pleasure from [Krishna]; he appears to make solid advances in the knowledge of the gospel; and making it known to his perishing fellow countrymen seems [to be] his beloved employment.”¹²⁹ Krishna, for more than twenty years, devoted himself to a life of

faithfully [warning his fellow countrymen] that if they [continued] to sin, they would go to hell, where the mercy of God would never reach them: but he showed them how the mercy of God was united with justice in the death of Christ, and entreated them to be reconciled to God.¹³⁰

If any weakness must be pointed out in Carey’s educational strategy, it is its Westernized nature. In *An Enquiry*, Carey made his understanding of the “heathen” clear. He believed they were “without government, without laws, and without arts, and sciences.”¹³¹ So, he thought Christians

¹²⁵ William Carey to Fuller, Nov 1800, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 167.

¹²⁶ William Carey to Jabez, Jan 12, 1815, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 167.

¹²⁷ Carey, Marshman, Ward, et al., “The Serampore Form of Agreement,” 136.

¹²⁸ SFA, in Myers, *William Carey: The Shoemaker*, 68.

¹²⁹ William Carey, in *The First Hindoo Convert: A Memoir of Krishna Pal* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1852), 47.

¹³⁰ *The First Hindoo Convert*, 57.

¹³¹ Carey, “An Enquiry,” 24.

should “exert [themselves] to introduce among them the sentiments of men, and of Christians.” Carey thought the “heathen” not only needed spiritual transformation, but that he also needed civilization—the civilization he and other Westerners already had. Melody Maxwell purports that “many nineteenth-century missionaries conflated the goals of Christianisation [sic] and ‘civilisation’ [sic] in their ministries.”¹³² As David Bosch notes, many missionaries “confused their middle-class ideals and values with the tenets of Christianity.”¹³³

Others have more supportively stated that Carey and others did not import Western culture on the native Indians. Tucker says Carey “had a respect for the Indian culture, and he never tried to import Western substitutes as so many missionaries who came after him would seek to do.”¹³⁴ William Ward once wrote that he, Marshman, and Carey “carefully [avoided] whatever might Anglicise [sic] ... students and converts,” though his defense was that their primary educational purpose was “to make India evangelise [sic] herself.”¹³⁵ It should also be noted that the education imparted by the Trio was mainly done in the vernacular language of each school’s attendees.

Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that William Carey is still remembered—even among today’s Indians—as one who modernized India, namely through education.¹³⁶ Though this may have been a form of “Western imperialism,” the reality is that this label “significantly overestimates the power and reach of the missions movement to influence overseas societies, and accords to the missionary project an interest in colonial

¹³² Melody Maxwell, “Baptists and Modern Missions: Historical Movement and Contemporary Reflections,” *Baptist Theologies* 10.1 (2018): 26.

¹³³ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 20th Anniversary Edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 301. Bosch believes Carey bracketed together the “spread of the gospel” and “civilization” (303). Relatedly, Ferris suggests the need for great care that missionaries do not impose a Westernized education. See Robert Ferris, “Leadership Development in Missions Settings,” in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, 2nd ed., ed. John Mark Terry (Nashville: B&H, 2015).

¹³⁴ Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 130.

¹³⁵ Ward, in Marina Ngursangzeli Behera, “William Carey and Early 19th Century Society in Bengal,” *Bangalore Theological Forum* 39.2 (2007): 45.

¹³⁶ See Ashish K. Massey and June Hedlund, “William Carey and the Making of Modern India,” *Indian Church History Review* 27.1 (1993): 7–18; Vishal and Ruth Mangalwadi, “Who (Really) Was William Carey,” in *Perspectives of the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph Winter (Pasadena: William Carey, 2009).

dominion that both missionaries and imperial officials discredited.”¹³⁷ Not to mention, this educational focus—among other things—brought “benefits [to India] lasting into the twenty-first century.” What is more, many Indians speak favorably of Carey’s innovations. These “correlations demonstrate the lasting positive impact of the modern missionary movement, although contemporary observers should not discount its negative legacy of cultural insensitivity and paternalism.”¹³⁸ All in all, though Carey and others could have been more diligent in creating an indigenous educational format, the Westernized educational format they implemented was—nevertheless—for the overall welfare of the Indian natives.

Conclusion

Again, William Carey’s threefold strategy for mission—(1) evangelism, (2) translation, and (3) education—was implemented in India as a result of Carey’s basic ecclesiological framework, which can be succinctly summarized as a belief that the church is (1) missional, (2) logocentric, and (3) didactic. His work, though flawed, should not soon be forgotten by the church, for as Hervey observes:

[Carey helped produce] 212,000 copies of the Sacred Scriptures, in forty different languages—the vernacular tongues of about 330,000,000 ... immortal souls, of whom more than 100,000,000 were British subjects. He lived till he had seen expended upon the grand object for which the first small offering at Kettering (of £13:2:6) was presented, a sum a little short of \$500,000.¹³⁹

Christians, today, owe much to William Carey, for he helped the Protestant church see its responsibility to evangelize the world’s lost masses, using the biblical text and teaching them as they were converted and progressively sanctified into the image of Christ.

In a more applicational sense, from the work of this essay—especially the mentioned strengths and weaknesses of Carey’s theology and methodology—modern missionaries can be served in two ways. First, they should remember that ecclesiological beliefs are essential to missiological practice, for theology informs missiological method and strategy (or lack thereof). Second, even if one’s missiological practices come from ecclesiological beliefs, missionaries should continuously weigh their methods

¹³⁷ Kelly R. Elliot, “‘Chosen Race’: Baptist Missions and Mission Churches in the East and West Indies, 1795–1875” (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2010), 222.

¹³⁸ Maxwell, “Baptists and Modern Missions,” 27 (thought influenced by J. Dudley Woodberry).

¹³⁹ Hervey, *The Story of Baptist Missions*, 41.

against the litmus test of Scripture and remain ever careful of the ethnocentricity that may potentially exist in their own worldviews. Finally, in all of the church's missional labors, the desire is simple: as Carey himself wrote in his last journal entry: "O Lord send now Prosperity."¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ William Carey's Journal, June 14, 1795, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 59.