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Abstract of ThesisSee over for
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completionAuthor (full names) JONATHAN ELLIOTT BROOKE.....Title of thesis 'We may have read — but the reality!': Narrating.......... Baptist Missions in Bengal, 1800-1855.....Degree Ph.D......

This project examines the ways in which missionary periodicals served as a vehicle for ideas about India in the first half of the nineteenth century. Focusing on Baptist missions in Bengal, it traces the parallel themes of 'the family' and 'the heathen' in published missionaries' accounts and explores how they served pragmatic and rhetorical functions throughout the period. By reconstructing these narratives and following these themes over time, we can get a better sense of the role they played in developing the connections between missionaries and converts, metropole and periphery. Beginning with the establishment of the Serampore mission in 1800, I utilize the parallel stories of the 'Serampore mission family' and two families of converts to show how these concepts underpinned the structure and organization of the mission and were incorporated into the missionaries' narratives. As the years progressed, these themes—often closely interrelated—assumed more rhetorical value as missionaries became more conscious of the role of their own narratives in generating support among their home audiences, especially women and children. From Serampore I broaden the perspective from individuals to communities. With the establishment of 'Christian villages' for converts and the development of what I call 'spotlight' mission stations, many missionaries became keenly aware of the central role of their narratives in the maintenance and extension of missions. From communities I shift to institutions, examining the increasingly rhetorical nature of these themes in connection with the Baptists' schools in Calcutta. The study ends with the 1855 conference of Baptist missionaries in Bengal, which represented a turning point in both management and narration as both became more centralized, and as these themes had fully evolved from structural to rhetorical.

University of London
School of Oriental and African Studies

**'We may have read—but the reality!':
Narrating Baptist Missions in Bengal, 1800-1855**

A Thesis
by
Jonathan Brooke

Submitted for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

2

I hereby declare that the work included here is my own.

Jonathan Brooke

Abstract

This project examines the ways in which missionary periodicals served as a vehicle for ideas about India in the first half of the nineteenth century. Focusing on Baptist missions in Bengal, it traces the parallel themes of ‘the family’ and ‘the heathen’ in published missionaries’ accounts and explores how they served pragmatic and rhetorical functions throughout the period. By reconstructing these narratives and following these themes over time, we can get a better sense of the role they played in developing the connections between missionaries and converts, metropole and periphery. Beginning with the establishment of the Serampore mission in 1800, I utilize the parallel stories of the ‘Serampore mission family’ and two families of converts to show how these concepts underpinned the structure and organization of the mission and were incorporated into the missionaries’ narratives. As the years progressed, these themes—often closely interrelated—assumed more rhetorical value as missionaries became more conscious of the role of their own narratives in generating support among their home audiences, especially women and children. From Serampore I broaden the perspective from individuals to communities. With the establishment of ‘Christian villages’ for converts and the development of what I call ‘spotlight’ mission stations, many missionaries became keenly aware of the central role of their narratives in the maintenance and extension of missions. From communities I shift to institutions, examining the increasingly rhetorical nature of these themes in connection with the Baptists’ schools in Calcutta. The study ends with the 1855 conference of Baptist missionaries in Bengal, which represented a turning point in both management and narration as both became more centralized, and as these themes had fully evolved from structural to rhetorical.

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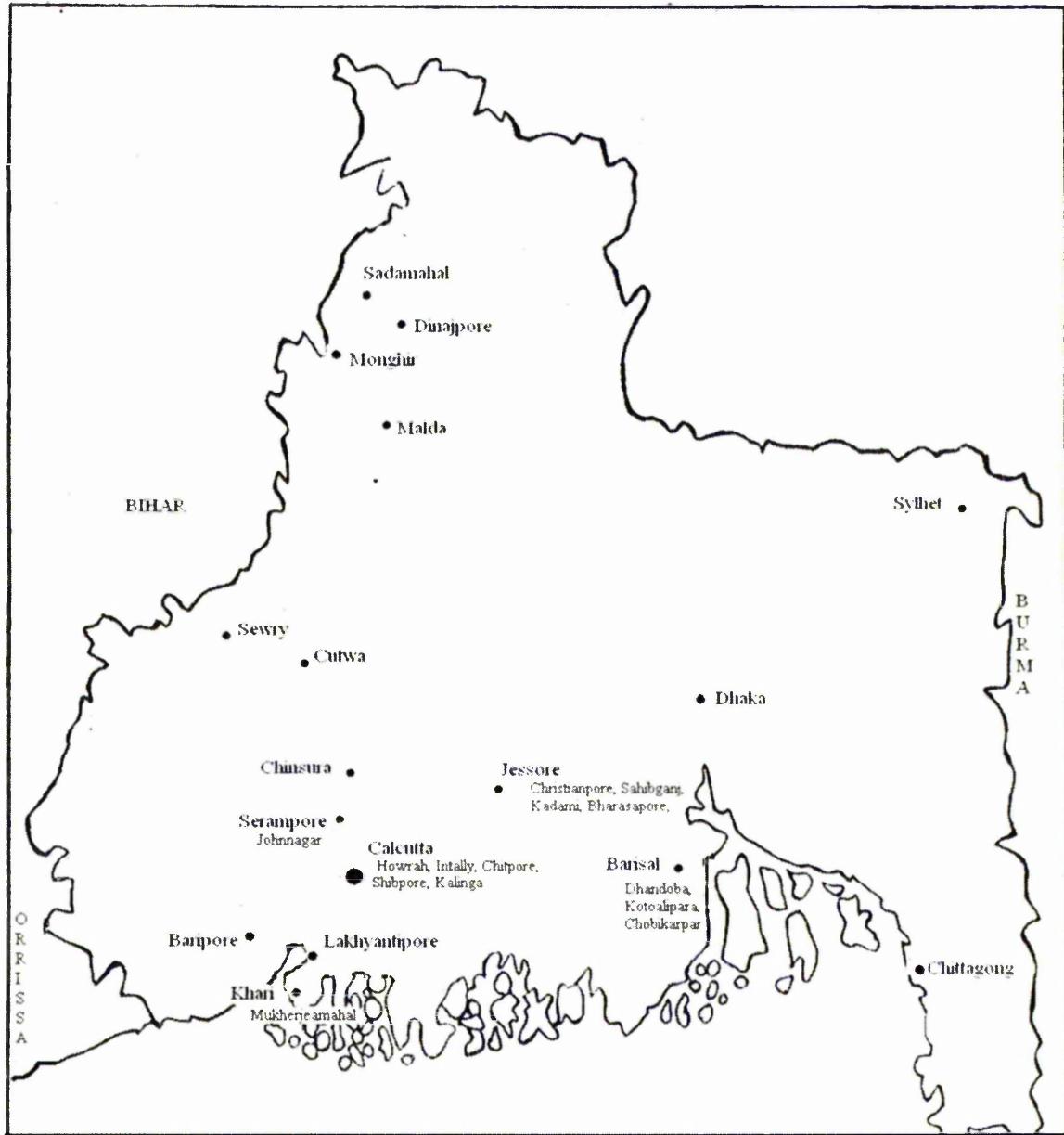
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Abbreviations

<i>BCM</i>	<i>Baptist Children's Magazine</i>
<i>BM</i>	<i>Baptist Magazine</i>
<i>BMS</i>	Baptist Missionary Society
<i>CMS</i>	Church Missionary Society
<i>EM</i>	<i>Evangelical Magazine</i>
<i>FOI</i>	<i>Friend of India</i>
<i>JMH</i>	<i>Juvenile Missionary Herald</i>
<i>JMM</i>	<i>Juvenile Missionary Magazine</i>
<i>LMS</i>	London Missionary Society
<i>MC</i>	<i>Missionary Chronicle</i>
<i>MM</i>	<i>Missionary Magazine</i>
<i>MH</i>	<i>Missionary Herald</i>
<i>PA</i>	<i>Periodical Accounts of the Baptist Missionary Society</i>
<i>SPA</i>	<i>Serampore Periodical Accounts</i>
<i>SPG</i>	Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts



**Figure 1—Principal Baptist Missionary Society Stations
and Christian Villages in Bengal, ca. 1800-1854.**

Adapted from K.P. Sen Gupta, *The Christian Missionaries in Bengal*, 1971.

Introduction

Especially in their early days, the missionary societies in Britain faced great logistical challenges in spreading awareness of their cause and work and in garnering support for it. Organized for the most part along denominational lines, societies organized their support networks through a series of local associations and by means of quarterly and annual meetings and conferences. Finding significant support initially in the industrial north and the suburban southeast of England, ‘the missionary movement’ became ‘increasingly a London based movement in both inspiration and growth’.¹ This did not preclude, however, the desire for and necessity of a reliance on a broad-based demographic of support throughout the country. The central challenge, however, to appealing to such a wide audience was creating ‘a sympathy that did not naturally exist precisely because their objects were so far removed from local concerns’.² To that end, the missionary magazine was created. ‘Missionary intelligence’ provided a direct connection from the periphery to the metropole, though ‘direct’ is a bit misleading. The journals and letters of missionaries, periodically sent to the committees of their parent societies, were edited, excerpted, and annotated to reflect the societies’ views and to achieve their desired responses. The Baptist Missionary Society, for example, utilized a General Committee of around fifty people to manage and disseminate all such material and to promote the Society’s interests throughout Britain.³ The periphery was therefore refracted through missionaries and their societies, but was not always distorted so much that it did not reflect something of the metropole. All the larger mission societies as well as many of the smaller organizations had their own periodical newsletters and magazines, through which ‘missionary intelligence’ was circulated and discussed, and—just as importantly—financial support encouraged and reported. One has only to browse the ‘Contributions’

¹ Stephen Mintz, *A Prison of Expectations: The Family in Victorian Culture* (New York, 1983), 22-28.

² Steven Maughan, ‘Mighty England do Good’: the major English denominations and organization for the support of foreign missions in the nineteenth century’ in Robert Bickers and Rosemary Seton, eds., *Missionary Encounters: Sources and Issues* (Surrey, 1996), 11-37.

³ In 1826 this number was increased to eighty. Brian Stanley, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society* (Edinburgh, 1992), Chapter VII, ‘Domestic Life and General Policy of the Society, 1817-1906’, 208. See also E.A. Payne, *The Great Succession: Leaders of the Baptist Missionary Society During the Nineteenth Century*. (London, 1938).

pages in these magazines to get a sense of the breadth and variety—as well as the make-up—of missionary and education associations and other philanthropic outlets among evangelicals.

By the middle of the nineteenth century circulation of religious periodicals was ‘vigorous and healthy’ and held ‘an immense power for good’, which depended largely on its readers’ willingness and ability to increase that circulation and consumption.⁴ To some there was a kind of freemasonry associated with the value of such periodicals. ‘Such as have never had [them] to read, cannot be expected to appreciate them aright’, explained one article, ‘but he who is a constant reader of such publications, knows full well their value to himself and to the world’.⁵ Readers of religious periodicals were esteemed ‘the most intelligent, benevolent, high-minded, and the most active in every good word and work’ and were ‘conversant with the state of religion throughout the world’. Indeed, the same article asserted, religious periodicals were the vessels by which ‘pure and undefiled religion’ would be spread and ‘the instruments, in the hands of God, of preaching the Gospel...to the inhabitants of every quarter of the globe’. They and their supporters were if nothing else ambitious. They were seen as not only edifying pastimes, but the best means of widely disseminating beliefs, ideas, and opinions among the evangelical populace.⁶ As Bernard Porter has reminded us, missionary publications were ‘a prime source of information’ about the wider world and its people, and

if any middling Victorian, therefore, was ignorant about Indian religion[,] African society, the quaint and thrilling customs of the South Sea islanders...then he or she had only him- or herself to blame. The information (of a kind) was there.⁷

⁴ ‘Our Periodical Literature’, *Evangelical Magazine*, volume 25, 1847, 630-1.

⁵ ‘On Religious Periodicals’ (excerpted from the *Boston Christian Watchman*), *Baptist Magazine*, volume 33, 1841, 555.

⁶ Between 1780 and 1820 over a hundred new religious periodicals were established. Often these were the main vehicles of literacy and culture available to people. See Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes, Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago, 1987), 75. One pamphlet on ‘Periodical Literature’, published in India, explained that the success of periodicals, compared to books, lay in their incorporation of ‘the very age and body of the time’ and argued that the growth of periodical literature had been almost organic. ‘England required it; England favoured it accordingly; and under the maternal auspices of Britannia, the child has grown strong and lusty.’ *Periodical Literature: English and Anglo-Indian, In Two Lectures* (Serampore, 1859), 4-6.

⁷ Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford, 2004), 86. This echoes Ian Bradley’s assessment of two decades earlier: ‘When the British people thought about Africa and India they thought in missionary terms’, he writes, ‘as was only natural when it was the activities of missionaries which had given them an interest in these areas of the world in the first place’. *The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians* (New York, 1976), 80. For an excellent survey of these missionary magazines, see Terry Barringer, ‘What Mrs. Jellyby might have read: Missionary Periodicals: a neglected source’, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 37/4, 2004, 46-74.

This study relies on materials like these in an attempt to trace several of their most central and significant themes. By following and reconstructing missionaries' serialized reports and accounts published in religious and mission-oriented journals and periodicals, we can develop a clearer idea of their activities, their ideologies, and just as importantly the ways they affected those people at home who followed their progress and contributed to their ongoing labours.

Pity, Pence, and Participation

In their efforts to capture the attention (and funds) of individuals, congregations, and the public, missionaries and other writers often composed highly stylized and formulaic accounts and studies of 'heathen' cultures and practices to emphasize the spiritual darkness whose only remedy was the light of Christianity. They provided vivid images of 'gross idolatry', human sacrifice, sati, infanticide, and other 'depraved practices'—often exaggerated—that were intended to excite their readers' emotions, and as Ian Bradley says, 'their exploits had all the romance and excitement of good adventure stories'.⁸ Yet for early missionaries in India, social critique was only one part of understanding and describing their new surroundings and 'subjects', and 'reflected a diverse range of assumptions and influences'.⁹ In his essay 'Missionaries as Social Commentators: The Indian Case', Geoffrey Oddie places 'missionary social comment' into three classes according to nature and purpose: *general commentary, informative research, and specific appeals*, the three of which often overlapped. Citing William Ward's watershed *View of the History, Literature, and Mythology of the Hindoos*, Oddie explains that even 'much of the general comment' on India and its people available to readers of the time came from missionary sources and was 'specifically designed to influence the European public and to encourage greater support for Christian missions', rather than to simply inform or educate.¹⁰

⁸ As Frederick Downs has pointed out, much of missionaries' writing was designed to show, on the one hand, 'how great the need for missionary work in India was', and on the other its successes 'or, at least, how signs of an imminent breakthrough were everywhere to be seen'. *Essays on Christianity in North-East India*. (New Delhi, 1994), 2; I. Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness*, 77-9.

⁹ Nicholas Thomas, 'Colonial Conversions: difference, hierarchy, and history in early 20th century evangelical propaganda', in Catherine Hall, ed., *Cultures of Empire: A Reader* (New York, 2000), 315.

¹⁰ Geoffrey Oddie, 'Missionaries as Social Commentators: The Indian Case' in Bickers and Seton, eds., *Missionary Encounters: Sources and Issues*, 201-5. William Ward, *A View of the History, Literature, and*

In narrating various aspects of their labours and attempting to describe and explain the complex world within which they lived and operated, missionaries provided intimate glimpses into their own lives and those of their converts. At the same time they also were (often painfully) aware of their dependence on the liberality—and participation—of their countrymen and fellow Christians for the continuation of their work. While the cry to ‘*Come over and help us!*’ resonated through letters, reports, speeches and sermons alike, it was with that awareness, and in many cases millenarian anxiety, that many missionaries and other supporters of the enterprise began to develop more sophisticated approaches to narration. While *narrative* primarily served to engage home audiences and allow them to follow and feel a part of the missions, missionaries’ reports began to include more *rhetorical* content as the century progressed. More efficient means of communication and transportation meant that wider audiences could be reached (and reached out to) and that appeals for money and manpower could enjoy better chances of success.

Fund-raising was certainly a significant purpose of missionary literature, and it would be a simple thing to reduce its authors’ motives to money. The regular appearance of such essays as ‘An appeal to rich Christians on behalf of the Heathen’ would suggest that were so, but many contemporaries were adamant that such literature—and publicizing missions in general—was about much more.¹¹ ‘When I see Missionary affairs taken up as a sort of religious entertainment, in lieu of those polluting amusements which our principles forbid us to resort to’, railed J.A. James, ‘[and] when I hear it said that money money money, is the lifeblood of the missionary cause—I cannot but believe there is still much to be done at home’.¹² Similarly, the editor of the Baptist Missionary Society’s *Periodical Accounts* clarified that the aim of publications like his was

not that of merely drawing forth the pecuniary aid of those who need them. This were a low and sordid aim, and quite unworthy of the cause itself. But should they excite the faith, should they animate the hope, and above all, so affect the heart towards the perishing heathen, as to secure the supplications of the people of God, the highest end is gained.¹³

Mythology of the Hindoos: Including a Minute Description of their Manners and Customs, and Translations of Their Principal Works, 2 vols. (Serampore, 1815, 1818).

¹¹ *EM*, new series volume 23, 1845, 513.

¹² J.A. James, *Juvenile Advantages and Obligations in Reference to the Cause of Christian Missions Stated and Enforced* (London, 1828), 28.

¹³ *Periodical Accounts of the Baptist Missionary Society*, European Series, 1827-1834, iv. As early as 1802, Andrew Fuller, the Secretary of the BMS, noted that ‘the *Periodical Accounts* have had a great effect in

One of the goals of this study is to explore how missionary narratives were constructed and presented to generate feelings of sympathy, encourage giving, and inspire others to become missionaries themselves. I have summed up these anticipated responses into what I call ‘the three P’s’: *pity, pence, and participation*. A small tract by the American missionary John Scudder, entitled *The Christian’s Duty to the Heathen* laid out these expectations.¹⁴ Scudder challenged readers to become aware of their own feelings, to tap into the emotions of religious jealousy and compassion toward the ‘wretchedness and degradation’ of the heathen, and to channel that emotion first into prayer, then into more material responses. Readers were urged to calculate both their ‘ability and obligation’ to contribute to missions—to consider their circumstances, their ‘influence’, even their property—but were sternly reminded that ‘ability’ and possibility were not to be correlated with convenience.¹⁵ An article in the *Evangelical Magazine* in 1852 likewise reminded pious supporters of missions that the sympathy sought by missionary literature was not ‘that romantic or sentimental feeling which is dissolved in tears and breathed in sighs, without dictating one effort to assist or encourage’, but lay instead in ‘practical effort and prayerful zeal’.¹⁶

Within this discourse women and children played a significant role—both as subjects and as audiences—engaging them in what Patricia Hill calls ‘a special and limited mission’.¹⁷ At the turn of the nineteenth century British women were already becoming

stirring up the minds of some to contribute, and others to offer themselves as missionaries’. Fuller to J. Marshman, 26 November 1802, BMS MSS H2, Home Office Correspondence A, Andrew Fuller, Correspondence.

¹⁴ John Scudder, *The Christian’s Duty to the Heathen* (Philadelphia, n.d.). See also *Dr. Scudder’s tales for little readers, about the heathen* (New York, 1849). Scudder (1793–1855) was an American medical missionary to Ceylon and Madras from 1820 until his death, and was known especially for his numerous essays, tracts and pamphlets, many of which were published or excerpted in the *Missionary Herald* and other journals.

¹⁵ Stuart Piggin points out that the view of India presented in missionary literature not only influenced readers to contribute their ‘pence and prayers’, but also influenced men and women to offer themselves as missionary candidates. *Making Evangelical Missionaries 1789–1858: The Social Background, Motives and Training of British Protestant Missionaries to India*. Evangelicals and Society 2 (Oxford, 1984), Introduction I.2. As Bradley adds, ‘Those people whose compassion and converting zeal were fired by the terrible stories of native superstition and suffering brought home by the missionaries, often took it upon themselves to organize schemes of relief and betterment. *The Call to Seriousness*, 77. See also Allan K. Davidson, *Evangelicals and Attitudes Toward India 1786–1893* (Oxford, 1990), Chapter 5.

¹⁶ ‘The Claims of the Missionary on the Sympathy of British Christians’, *Evangelical Magazine*, volume 30, 1852, 248.

¹⁷ Patricia Hill, *The World Their Household: The American Woman’s Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870–1920* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1985), 2–5. Though Davidoff has repeatedly warned against ‘the unspoken assumption that the family is about women and children’ in the case of

the objects of that ‘high esteem’ and ‘influence’ which came to characterize the Victorian period, and they were placed as models for their ‘heathen’ counterparts. Almost immediately there began to emerge essays, books, even entire journals and associations directed especially at involving them in the greater mission effort.¹⁸ General appeals for missionaries and mission funding had usually been made with men in mind: they were the major monetary contributors to the family, and thus to missions. But for all of their publicity and clamoring, it was woman, in her role as guardian of the home (and purse), who could devote the ‘time and quiet energy’ required to make a definite contribution to the support of missions—and mission publicists were well aware of this.¹⁹ As wives and pursers, they often held sway over the finances required to maintain and expand the mission enterprise; as mothers, they were the guardians and teachers of a coming generation of potential missionaries.

The emphasis on the character and position of women was central to the emergence of a collective evangelical identity at the turn of the nineteenth century, and as affirmation of British women’s ‘influence’ became popularized the mission press were not lacking in their own efforts to take advantage of the movement. This emphasis played a key function in missionary ideology and practice, especially in directing women’s considerable ‘influence’ toward the mission enterprise. As one woman noted, ‘Our reverend fathers and brethren may embrace in their comprehensive view the gigantic work of evangelizing the whole world, but our more limited gaze and our deepest sympathies may be concentrated upon the helpless daughters of the East’.²⁰ Mary Pearce, the wife of a Calcutta missionary and a passionate publicist of the cause of Indian women, appealed in 1846 for her ‘beloved sisters’ in England to pray fervently for their ‘degraded sisters’ in India. ‘But though we begin with prayer’, she added, ‘we must combine with practice: there is much to be done which females can do—they have an influence which they can and must exert’.²¹ Women were praised for being precisely the opposite of men, and it

missionary literature—especially of the early nineteenth century—this is precisely the case. *The Family Story, Blood, Contract and Intimacy, 1830-1960* (London, 1999), 5.

¹⁸ Hill, *The World Their Household*, 62.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 25.

²⁰ *Female Agency Among the Heathen. As recorded in the History and Correspondence of the Society for Promoting Female Education in the East. (Founded 1834).* Introduction by Rev. Baptist Noel. (London, 1850), 4-5.

²¹ ‘An Appeal to the Women of England for the Women of India’, *Missionary Magazine*, August 1846.

was because of their very nature that women thus became a significant audience for religious and missionary-oriented material, and much of it became oriented toward them. Literature directed at women emphasized a particularly emotional reaction to encourage support for missions. Patricia Hill has explained that women 'responded to graphic portrayals of concrete dilemmas more readily than to abstract argumentation', and appeals to their hearts, rather than their minds, were thought to be the most useful.²² 'Who but a woman can understand the heart of a woman', Baptist Noel explained in his introduction to the 1850 volume *Female Agency Among the Heathen*, 'and bestow the tender consideration and the appropriate direction she requires?'.²³ Indeed, the *Baptist Magazine* in 1844 called upon 'British Christian females of the nineteenth century' to resort to the 'finer feelings of the female sex' to become involved in various means of supporting missions, where they could be 'extensively useful in perfect accordance with [their] tender and sensitive character'.²⁴ These means, the LMS's *Missionary Magazine* clearly spelt out, included 'affectionate sympathy, fervent and united prayer, liberal funds [and] efficient agents'.²⁵

At the same time, childhood was increasingly recognized as a distinct part of life, and children and young people were increasingly catered to by writers and publishers as influential in their own right. Just as images of the strong Christian mother and wife were contrasted with the idle or degraded Hindu woman, so were evangelical children confronted with their own identities vis-à-vis 'heathen' children. 'Heathen' children were to be pitied and prayed for, and in many ways represented the most practical hope for the Christianization of India. 'The Missionary Cause will soon be in your lap', warned one author, reminding his young readers that missionaries everywhere echoed the cry, 'Come over and help us!' 'War, commerce, and science' recruited 'agents' with little effort—

²² Hill also emphasizes that missionary literature 'played on women's fear and guilt' to elicit responses from them. *The World Their Household*, 66. In the second of a series of essays on 'Heathen Female Education', J.C. Thompson, an LMS missionary in South India, resolved to 'not say much; and if that little is not *felt*, I cannot urge weightier claims, how many words so ever I might add'. *MM*, March 1837.

²³ 'Who can read the descriptions drawn by eye-witnesses...without the deepest commiseration' the author continued, 'and what English-woman but must gratefully acknowledge and adore the wondrous goodness which has made her to differ?' *Female Agency Among the Heathen*, 3; 6.

²⁴ 'The Special Duty of Females to Promote the Advancement of Messiah's Reign', *BM*, volume 36, 1844, 607. The author also gave special attention to the 'home heathen' in the 'rural and manufacturing districts' as well as the Irish and negroes. Patricia Hill explains that women were not only 'pinching pennies and arranging fundraisers' for missions, but they also provided 'emotional' and 'spiritual' support for the enterprise. *The World Their Household*, 62.

²⁵ 'Heathen Female Education, part IV', *MM*, May 1837, 186.

why not missions? It was thus all that more important for the mission press to reach out and secure the support of ‘the rising generation’.²⁶

Even before periodicals geared specifically toward ‘juveniles’ and missions emerged, the major evangelical magazines featured regular content designated for younger audiences as well as including material indirectly related to them, like ‘intelligence’ from missionary schools and similar institutions. Though children may not have represented a substantial economic demographic, they certainly were the key to the future expansion and continuation of the missionary enterprise itself. By the time the Baptist Missionary Society and its counterparts turned toward children as a new audience—and source of funds—the work of establishing and legitimating foreign missions had been accomplished a generation before, and children and young people had ‘only to support that which others had set up...to maintain in public esteem that which is already a favorite’.²⁷ Beginning in 1827 with the *Baptist Children’s Magazine and Sabbath Scholar’s Reward*²⁸, a host of evangelical juvenile periodicals emerged in the second quarter of the nineteenth-century, peaking in the mid 1840s, most with a decidedly missionary bent.²⁹ It seemed that the key to drawing funds from children, especially where periodicals were concerned, was volume. The editor of the LMS’s *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* reminded its readers that ‘the power of the Magazine lies not in size or cost, but in readership’, and that

²⁶ James, *Juvenile Advantages and Obligations*, 36; *Baptist Children’s Magazine and Sabbath School Repository*, January 1827.

²⁷ James, *Juvenile Advantages and Obligations*, 34.

²⁸ As one review put it, the *BCM* was ‘well adapted for the moral and religious instruction of children, and are pleasingly diversified by anecdote, tale, and dialogue, so as to keep up the interest of the work, and secure the attention of the infantile mind...We are informed...that it will be a decidedly a Baptist publication. We hope it will be successful’. *BM*, volume 19, 1827, 22. Ten years on, another review reminded readers of the *BM* that ‘the numerous woodcuts, anecdotes, and pieces of simple poetry in this little volume, are highly calculated to interest and delight the junior members of our families, and at the same time to produce the best impressions on their minds.’ *BM*, volume 29, 1837, 43. Likewise, the *Baptist Missionary Reward Books*, a series of eight eight-page booklets by one of the BMS Committee members, were ‘adapted to promote attachment to that institution among the young’, though the Committee itself was ‘not in any way responsible’ for their publication. These booklets also included woodcuts illustrating ‘specimens of missionary work’, and as one reviewer noted, ‘embellishments [are] of the highest importance’ in reaching their target audience. Reviewed in *BM*, volume 36, 1844, 520. The *BCM* was changed to the *Baptist Youth’s Magazine and Missionary Intelligencer* in 1859 and subsequently absorbed after 1861 into the *Baptist Reporter*.

²⁹ Each of the major denominations featured at least one periodical devoted to young audiences, often under the auspices of the various mission societies, and like their ‘adult’ counterparts, all borrowed liberally from each other and other periodicals, including American and Continental ones, contributing to the creation and maintenance of a pervasive evangelical sense of identity and purpose. Andrew Thompson’s recent *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Harlow, England, 2005) briefly touches on juvenile missionary periodicals in his discussion of women and children’s involvement in the imperial project.

impressionable young minds would moreover be ‘trained to future usefulness by these means’. ‘Thousands of subscribers are lost’, he added elsewhere, ‘because they are not sought after—thousands of pounds, because they are not collected’.³⁰ Despite the best efforts of the missionary societies and the publishers, however, juvenile missionary magazines themselves hardly cleared any profits. When an 1855 investigation by the BMS into the *JMH*’s popularity revealed a mediocre reception, they offered ‘some new improvements in the new year’ like a coloured wrapper and more illustrations.³¹

Much like the material directed at women, this juvenile literature also utilized simple themes and a regular stock of imagery as well as appeals for monetary aid. The use of poems and hymns was more widespread than for women, particularly because of their use in Sunday Schools and mission-oriented clubs and societies for young people.³² These were especially significant for their regular and repetitive content, intended to ‘indoctrinate’ children into the mindset of missions. This new genre of juvenile missionary literature maintained the goals of eliciting the three-fold responses—pity, pence, and participation—from its readers, as ‘such accounts as these are calculated to awaken the tenderest feelings in your heart for the poor Hindoos’ while encouraging children to feel compassion for ‘their wretched condition’ and to obey God’s command to spread the Gospel.³³ Works like William Brodie Gurney’s *Lecture to Children and Youth on the History and Character of Heathen Idolatry* more often than not rested on various descriptions of the ‘heathen’ world and its inhabitants, only afterwards adjoining descriptions of missionary work itself.³⁴ Besides being ‘interesting’, one reviewer pointed out, Gurney’s lecture had ‘also been the means of producing permanent impressions of

³⁰ *JMM*, volume 1, 1849, 64-67; 44-45.

³¹ What more could readers expect for a mere half-penny, the editor of the *Baptist Magazine* wondered, pointing out that the Society had actually been steadily losing money on the magazine. *BM*, December 1855.

³² One editor noted the influence of the genre in reviewing a collection of *Missionary Hymns* for the *Evangelical Magazine* in 1847. ‘These hymns’, he pointed out, ‘have made their appearance very opportunely, at a time when the attention of young people is happily drawn, by a variety of methods, to the missionary cause’. Review of *Missionary Hymns, for the use of children* (London, 1847), *EM*, new series volume 25, 1847, 427.

³³ *Baptist Children’s Magazine and Sabbath Scholar’s Reward*, January 1827; *MM*, July 1837. From this ‘juvenile’ periodical literature also sprang a secondary literature of books and pamphlets on missions.

³⁴ Gurney’s title continued ‘with some references to the Effect of Christian Missions’ and advertised ‘thirty wood engravings’ (London, 1848), 48.

the most salutary character in numerous instances' and had illustrated the influence of the press drawing not only young people, but the British public in general, toward missions.³⁵

Idealised Visions: The Heathen and the Family in Missionary Writing

Missionary depictions and discussions of the non-Christian world were neither complicated nor particularly sophisticated, and simple categories and tropes were quickly developed and relied on to create a view of a world full of darkness in need of the light of the Christian Gospel. Early writers needed but to turn to Scripture to define their 'Others'. According to the apostle Paul, in his *Epistle to the Romans*, 'the heathen' were

filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, malice; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiseful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable [and] unmerciful.³⁶

Holy Scripture defined them thusly, and thus they were, and what had been sufficient descriptors for the 'heathen' of eras past could just as easily be applied to the modern world—they were the opposites of Christians themselves. This list of negative qualities mirrored those positive qualities supposed to be the marks of true Christians, and were therefore applied wholesale to non-Christians around the world and even at home in Britain.³⁷ Just as the passage in the *Book of Psalms*, 'The dark places of the earth are the habitations of cruelty' became a catch-all for describing the non-Christian world and its inhabitants, Paul's definition became a simple rubric by which 'the heathen' and their cultures, societies, and religions could be formulaically explained away with relative ease.³⁸ The contrast between 'heathen' and 'Christian' behaviours and identities is one of the central themes in missionary narratives, and though Anna Johnston argues that this approach was part of 'an attempt to "know" and thus "manage" the colonial heathen', it

³⁵ The reviewer also included a gentle reminder—to parents—that all the profits from the sale of Gurney's book would go to BMS-supported schools abroad, for those children who 'still sit in darkness'. *BM*, volume 40, 1848, 288.

³⁶ Romans 1: 29-32 (KJV).

³⁷ British Christians had been for some time in the habit of styling their forebears—as well as their contemporaries—as *heathens*, and the image of 'the home heathen' became a powerful incentive to social reform and missionary rhetoric around the middle of the nineteenth century.

³⁸ Psalms 74:20 (KJV).

was also a rubric by which missionaries could evaluate their converts—and, indeed, themselves.³⁹

Much of this kind of rhetoric rested on the concept of textual identities—that is, idealized notions that may or may not have had any bearing on reality, but nevertheless wielded great power and influence over readers—and their purses. Often, however, the identities built up around ‘the heathen’ were qualified with caveats. As one LMS missionary explained,

Paul did not mean to say that all the heathens were guilty of all the crimes there named, but that their general character was such as he described, and that all these wicked things do take place among them... Truly the heathen have changed very little since the time of Paul.⁴⁰

But even these occasional qualifications often merely served to ‘refresh’ the rhetorical value of such broad definitions. Indeed, rather than looking for exceptions in the discourse on ‘the heathen’ (which naturally do appear, and serve their own purpose), in this study I rely on the continuity of descriptions and imagery to build a sense of the scale, nature, and purpose of missionary rhetoric and ‘propaganda’ based around the identity of ‘the heathen’. Missionary narratives have been criticized as shallow and bigoted propaganda, with no basis of accuracy or truth, but as texts their descriptions of ‘the heathen’ offer more than just benchmarks of Eurocentrism. The topics they revolve around first reveal much about the authors’ own values, and perhaps more importantly their visions for the nature of the Christian mission. They are important markers of developing and shifting identities, both in Britain and in India, and reveal much about the early development of mission strategy.

A second theme central to missionary narrative and rhetoric—and to the missionary enterprise itself—was that of the family. Throughout the nineteenth century, the home was the site of much attention from evangelicals at home and missionaries alike, and it occupied a significant proportion of their discourse on ‘the heathen’, especially in India. Thus, by 1899, we find in James Dennis’ well-known *Christian Missions and Social*

³⁹ Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800-1860* (Cambridge, 2003), 31-2. Johnston cites Thomas Richards’ thesis that ‘the nineteenth-century imperial imagination was obsessed with collating and controlling information about the colonies’. See Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London, 1993).

⁴⁰ ‘L.B., Seroor, 20 July 1859’. *Juvenile Missionary Magazine*, volume 18, 1861, 212-214.

Progress passages like ‘In India...the utter neglect of family training seems to be the feature most to be noted’; ‘The “joint family system”...is a dangerous one to family peace, and attended with practical disadvantages which are objectionable from many points of view’; and ‘The Orient under the culture of Christianity will someday be a paradise of homes’.⁴¹ But such language and imagery had appeared even before the first British missionaries had made their way to India, and it would be over the next decades that ideas about ‘the heathen’ and about ‘the family’ would combine to contribute to such specific ideology. Familial imagery was crucial to missionaries’ own identity as well as their understanding of India and its people, and missionary texts themselves presented criticisms of every aspect of the Indian family in order to make it diametrically opposed to the Christian family; thus Indian parents were either unloving or indulgent, and their children were ignorant, willful, and disrespectful. Other, less specific ‘criticisms’ of their families involved their tendency toward quarreling and the general ‘lack of unity found within them’:

There is no bond of union among them...In this country sin seems to have given the fullest sample of its disuniting and debilitating power. The children are opposed to their parents, and the parents to the children; brother totally disregards brother’.⁴²

Antony Copley suggests that such criticisms did not function solely as rhetoric, but also reflected something of missionaries’ own social anxieties and ideals.⁴³ On the one hand, asking *why* the Indian family featured so prominently in missionary discourse is certainly valid, and the motives of authors, editors, publishers, and readers are rather straightforward to evaluate. But on the other hand, the question of *how* such themes came to prominence—and remained there—reveals just as much about those motives and

⁴¹ Volume 1 (New York, 1899), 127-8; 270.

⁴² Joshua Marshman, quoted in Andrew Fuller, *An Apology for the Late Christian Mission to India* (London, 1808), 26.

⁴³ In response to F.M.L. Thompson’s theory of a Victorian ‘crisis of the family’, Antony Copley has questioned whether that thesis explains ‘that almost pathological missionary critique of the extended Indian family so different from their own’ asserting that ‘missionaries surely projected onto Indian society [their] anxieties about shoring up social structures’. *Religions in Conflict: Ideology, Cultural Contact, and Conversion in Late-Colonial India* (Delhi, 1997), 10. F.M.L. Thompson. *The Rise of Respectable Society*. Fontana Social History of Britain Series (London, 1988), 85-89; 164. See also Mintz, *A Prison of Expectations*, 29-30; 196: ‘Victorians...emphasized the stabilizing influence of the family as an antidote to individualistic and democratizing pressures’. Janaki Nair suggests that the ‘idealized family...served as a means not only to critique the colonized but emerged as a response to the ‘threats’ to the English family posed by the women’s movement. ‘Uncovering the zenana: visions of Indian womanhood in Englishwomen’s writings, 1813-1940’, in Catherine Hall, ed., *Cultures of Empire: A Reader. Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York, 2000), 225.

methods, and sheds light on the broader picture of the missionary movement. The qualities attributed to ‘heathen’ families by evangelical missionaries in their writings served a number of rhetorical purposes, but also revealed much about their own concepts of the family and its roles. Order and hierarchy were the cornerstones not only of missionaries’ own domestic ideals, but of their mission practices and relationships with converts as well. As Sally Gallagher writes, ‘arguing about what the family should be’ allows us to ‘take the temperature of our larger society’, and as we shall see, for missionaries and other evangelicals this ‘discourse of domesticity’ served just that purpose.⁴⁴ Moreover, their perceptions of ‘heathen’ families largely influenced the ways missionaries interacted with converts and attempted to structure convert communities. At the same time as missionaries were describing the ‘evils’ of Indian families to a home audience, the realities of the mission field were forcing them to re-examine their own conceptions of family in order to provide a model for their converts, who in turn had to synthesize ideas of the family in order to fit into such a model. But how long did such ‘modeling’ last in the field? Though Leslie Flemming argues—quite rightly—that ‘the examples of their own domestic arrangements...were powerful civilizing forces’, how far did those examples actually go in effecting converts’ lives?⁴⁵ As Margaret Jolly counters, any ideas missionaries may have had about replacing or rearranging those ‘native’ family structures more often than not reflected ‘idealised visions rather than realistic memories’ of their own familial structures and mores, especially in representing them to audiences back home.⁴⁶ ‘Family’ then, functioned as an element within missions (and missionary narratives) through which we can approach various aspects of the subject: not only logistical, but ideological and rhetorical as well. This study attempts in part to frame evangelical ideas of—and rhetoric about—the family against a more specific context of missionary motives and an expanding worldview in which many of those ideas and identities were still being defined. As we shall see throughout this study, these ‘idealised visions’ were significant indicators and influences on missionary strategy and rhetoric, even if they were never wholly realized in practice.

⁴⁴ Sally K. Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Family Life* (New Jersey, 2003), 3.

⁴⁵ Leslie A. Flemming, ed., *Women’s Work for Women: Missionaries and Social Change in Asia* (Boulder, Colorado, 1989), 3.

⁴⁶ Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre, *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact* (New York, 1989), 9. Quoted in Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire*, 53.

Methodology and Sources

The stories of various missions and missionaries had to engage home audiences and hold their attention for years, sometimes even decades. Beginning with the establishment of the Serampore Mission in 1800, I follow in turn the development of several mission stations, Christian villages, and schools in Bengal in order to provide a clearer sense of the ways in which their narratives and descriptions developed over time. This has relied on a combination of two forms of primary sources: missionary periodicals and the correspondence, journals, and reports from which their material was drawn.

While a number of scholars have acknowledged the value of missionary periodicals as ‘primary sources’, relying on them in that way does present a number of potential pitfalls, not least of which was the loose hand with which editors sometimes approached their source material, freely excerpting and annotating. As discussed above, much of the content of these periodicals was edited, annotated, and often presented with little regard to either chronology or provenance. When compared with the original manuscripts of missionaries’ letters and reports, published accounts sometimes presented glaring dissimilarities and replacements and omitted seemingly pertinent and significant information.⁴⁷ This was more the case with more informative and formulaic material than with more straightforward narratives and appeals, but it nevertheless raises the crucial question of the criteria of interest that authors, committee members and editors used to determine what would be published.

The character of missionaries’ reports and narratives, in both manuscript and published forms, reflected shifting criteria of interest while holding fast to several key central themes, images, and approaches. Besides provenance and reliability, maintaining consistency in missionaries’ narratives is complicated by the irregularity of reports, either from time lag or as a result of those shifting interests. Inconsistencies with names, of both people and places, by missionaries and editors alike also detract from the sense of connection and continuity intended to maintain readers’ attention. Throughout this study I attempt to reconstruct this complex and sometimes confusing series of narratives from the pages of the important Baptist missionary journals and periodicals in order to more

⁴⁷ See Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire*, 33.

clearly analyse those central themes, images, and approaches and form conclusions about the nature of missionary ideology and publicity.

The *Periodical Accounts of the Baptist Missionary Society*, begun in 1800, provided information on the activities of the BMS and other mission societies in various parts of the world, and was the primary outlet for such information until 1819, when the *Missionary Herald* was introduced. Distributed by itself to subscribers, but often also attached to the *Baptist Magazine*, the *Herald* was devoted almost solely to Baptist missions.⁴⁸ Content for the journals was drawn from the official reports and the correspondence of missionaries abroad, which was collected and collated by the BMS's General Committee (mentioned above), then passed along to the editors to be cut down, annotated, clarified, or otherwise prepared for printing.

As publicizing missions was their primary aim, such magazines presented material from other missionary societies as well—news from LMS missionaries appeared in Baptist journals; CMS activities were noted in LMS papers, and so on. In many ways this sort of quasi-ecumenicalism, whether or not in actual practice in the field, at least provided much-needed material illustrating the spread and successes of missionaries around the world—and moreover reinforced the imagery being constructed about that world. In time the main outlets like the *Missionary Herald* (and its counterparts) were supplemented by a number of different periodicals and journals in both Britain and India. The Calcutta Baptists' own *Missionary Herald* and the *Oriental Baptist*, for example, were aimed at a local audience and were focused almost solely on 'local' missionary work.⁴⁹ Another development, which I discuss more at length in Chapter Five, was the introduction of missionary magazines for children and young people, which contained anecdotes and stories of exotic locales, 'heathen superstitions', and encouragements to fundraising for the societies.

Missionary periodicals were also supplemented by an emerging 'secondary literature' that built on the same themes and images. Initially represented by poetry and hymns inserted into periodicals, this secondary literature utilized the same rhetorical devices and

⁴⁸ *Periodical Accounts Relative to the Baptist Missionary Society, Volumes I,II.* (Clipstone, 1800, 1801); *Volume III* (Dunstable, 1806); *Volume IV* (London, 1810); *Volume V* (Kettering, 1813); *Baptist Magazine* (London, 1809-1904). The BMS shifted to selling the *Missionary Herald* in 1840.

⁴⁹ The Baptist Mission Press in Calcutta published its own *Missionary Herald* from 1822 until 1847, when it was absorbed into the new *Oriental Herald*, which ran until 1879

themes, and often attempted to echo or imitate some missionary's experience or else some 'heathen's' perspective. It also consisted of essays and letters intended to draw the attention of readers to specific mission-related issues and needs—besides the standard calls for funding and personnel. Such 'external perspectives' on missionary rhetoric provide a fascinating example of the effects of ideas transmitted from India and the rest of the mission world. Though many of these were directed specifically at men, a much greater proportion of them drew on the growing attention in Britain being given to the role and influence of women, while yet other writings were specifically directed at children and youth. Soon this 'secondary literature' of mission rhetoric developed into sub-genre of their own, separate from periodicals but just as successful—in both circulation and effect.

All of this, however, contributes to the overall sense of *constructed* narratives, that is, that the contents of these periodicals were selected and shaped towards particular ends, and towards presenting a mission field only in a certain light, regardless of contrary 'facts' or 'truth'. As discussed above, the correspondents, authors, and editors of missionary periodicals manipulated at some level or another much of the information they presented for a variety of reasons—its narrative or rhetorical value—often resulting in obscured (or non-existent) sources and skewed facts, and thus we can safely assume that the elements and themes discussed here were not accidental, nor casually inserted, but part of a systematic effort to shape the worldviews of evangelical readers.

Was this, then, as John MacKenzie and Bernard Porter have debated, a form of propaganda?⁵⁰ MacKenzie defines propaganda as 'conscious and deliberate', and to this I would add two further key elements: simplicity and repetition, especially for younger audiences.⁵¹ Simple descriptions or dialogues, for example, enabled the reception of information and ideas and reinforced important concepts, while a handful of stock phrases and images ensured the continuity of the missionary message. In their discussions of imperialism, however, MacKenzie and Porter have also questioned how far people really

⁵⁰ John MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960*. (Manchester, 1984); Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford, 2004).

⁵¹ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 2-3. Geoffrey Oddie also identifies simple and direct imagery and language as key elements of missionary 'propaganda', especially in periodical literature, in his *Imagined Hinduism: British Protestant Missionary Constructions of Hinduism, 1793-1900* (New Delhi, 2006). See 179-80 and 207.

needed to be convinced of its existence and effect.⁵² While MacKenzie asserts that the very nature of imperialism fed and required constant reference, description, and reinforcement, Porter counters that such sustained propaganda must have been completely useless, if its creators had to keep using it. That, or nobody was listening.⁵³ I would argue that their question applies just as well to the parallel case of British missions, though in this case the missionary enterprise certainly had explicit, stated goals attached to its rhetoric.

So, did people need to be constantly confronted with the ‘darkness’ of ‘the heathen’ in order to feel compassion for them and contribute to their uplift? Did people need to be constantly bombarded with pleas for funding from missionary societies and their agents afield? In a word, yes. Direct appeals for aid were complemented and balanced by the very nature of such material itself—by eliciting the emotional and intellectual responses intended. But there is another possible explanation for this, especially regarding missionary publication and ‘propaganda’. A steady turnover (and expansion) in readership, especially over longer periods, meant that accounts had to at once maintain some stylistic continuity while presenting newer and more interesting content. Simply put, mission publicists had early on found a formula that served their purposes, and for over a century utilized it to attract and sustain their audiences. Additionally, missionaries themselves perhaps found some comfort and security in being able to turn to the work of their predecessors and to reiterate the challenges that remained for them—fulfilling them and legitimating their position in the mission field. This combination of powerful cultural imagery on the one hand, and sophisticated rhetoric and appeals on the other, made missionary periodicals a particularly influential tool of mission societies and agents on the ground. Such material served at the very least to condition the evangelical public to images and ideologies that were convenient and effective for the missionary cause, and missionary periodicals proved an able vehicle for them.

Geoffrey Oddie has given special attention to the role of missionary writing and publication in constructing popular images and conceptions for the evangelical public. In

⁵² Bearing in mind the various parallel ‘societies’ Porter suggests existed in the nineteenth century, ‘each with its own value system and characteristic discourse’, the analytical structures and concepts applied to imperialism find ready usage in parallel ‘discourses’. *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 23.

⁵³ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 2-3. Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 6.

his recent study *Imagined Hinduism: British Protestant Constructions of Hinduism, 1793-1900* he discusses the work of early evangelical commentators like Grant, Buchanan, Carey and Ward, much of which he identifies as the roots of a long-running and extensive ‘propaganda campaign’.⁵⁴ Oddie devotes particular attention to the role of missionary periodicals (and especially their editors) in ‘creating and cultivating ideas and images’ of India for British audiences, and points out the lack of attention that historians have given to the process by which this material made it to Britain from places like India and ‘was edited, repackaged, and presented’ to those audiences.⁵⁵ While Oddie focuses on ‘Hinduism’ itself as a discreet—but increasingly broad and inclusive—subject, it is plain that the same mechanisms were ‘creating and cultivating’ other ideas and images of India and Indians.

Beyond the wealth of recent historical writing on propaganda and the nature of spreading ideas, a wide range of secondary writing on missions history has influenced and contributed to the direction and methodology of this thesis. Among the many surveys of mission history in India, Stephen Neill’s classic *History of Christianity in India* and *History of Missions* both provide an excellent background to a study such as this, introducing many of the actors as well as significant themes and debates surrounding them and their work.⁵⁶ The three major histories of the Baptist Missionary Society, Francis Cox’s 1842 two-volume study, John Brown Meyers’ centenary history, and Brian Stanley’s 1992 bicentennial account provide a background for both the domestic and overseas activities of the Society as well as its organization, policies and, just as importantly, personalities.⁵⁷

Apart from the broad surveys, biographies and institutional histories that many associate with missions history, though, there is a growing body of critical and insightful research into aspects of the missionary enterprise and experience beyond evangelism and ‘soul-winning’. Much of the ‘new’ historiography of missions has recently drawn

⁵⁴ See especially Chapters 2 and 3, 67-113, and Chapter 5, 135-183; 203.

⁵⁵ Oddie, *Imagined Hinduism*, 203. See Chapter 7, 203-230, and especially 215-17 on the role of editors in this process.

⁵⁶ (New York, 1985); (Harmondsworth, 1964).

⁵⁷ F.A. Cox, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society, from 1792 to 1842: to which is added a Sketch of the General Baptist Mission*. 2 vols. (London, 1842); John Brown Myers, ed., *The Centenary volume of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1892* (London, 1892); Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792-1992* (Edinburgh, 1992).

attention away from issues of organization, evangelization and conversion to examine the backgrounds and motives of missionaries themselves, especially in connection with imperialism.⁵⁸ In an attempt to reassess the starting point for looking at missions, Antony Copley's *Religions in Conflict* suggests that historians 'define the missionary endeavour as a discrete set of values'.⁵⁹ Copley hopes to not only identify those values, but to trace the ways they are put into action and transmitted, and to follow their development over time. Instead of analyzing what they did and what effects they had, Copley works backward to analyze why missionaries did those things, and how that affected their results.

Similarly, Frederick Downs's concern in his *Essays on Christianity in North-East India* is that mission accounts and missionary writings are too often still taken at face value by supporters and detractors alike, an approach he believes is historically tricky because missionaries often 'were not really conscious of from where they were coming' and did not understand what he calls their own 'ideological luggage'.⁶⁰ Constantly challenged by the circumstances of the mission field, missionaries were forced to adjust their perceptions—and sometimes their beliefs—in attempts to balance them with their expectations. Downs' challenge to mission historians, then, is to put this 'luggage' into context by paying more attention to missionaries' own social backgrounds and surroundings, and one of the most significant aspects of this was the centrality of their theology to their experience and worldview.⁶¹ Downs argues that in 'taking their sources seriously', historians of all camps have made the mistake of relying on a 'superficial' understanding of their subjects' theology, that is, that they were driven solely by 'a desire to pluck brands from the burning, to save individual souls from hell'.⁶² Rather, by examining the ways in which missionaries explained their world through the lenses of

⁵⁸ See, for example, Norman Etherington, ed., *Missions and Empire*. Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series (Oxford, 2005).

⁵⁹ Antony Copley, *Religions in Conflict: Ideology, Cultural Contact, and Conversion in Late-Colonial India* (Delhi, 1997), 6.

⁶⁰ Downs, *Essays on Christianity in North-East India*. See also Duncan B. Forrester, *Caste and Christianity: Attitudes and Policies of Anglo Saxon Protestant Missions in India*, regarding the role of such 'ideological luggage' in forming missionaries' approaches to their work and especially toward caste. (London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1980).

⁶¹ See R.H. Martin, *Evangelicals United: Ecumenical Stirrings in Pre-Victorian England, 1795-1830* (London, 1983); E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1968); and F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*.

⁶² Downs, *Essays on Christianity in North-East India*, 66-70.

their theological and religious convictions we can develop a clearer idea of their perceptions, their responses, and their experiences.

Andrew Porter has recently reminded us that mission societies and missionaries ‘took their theology and religion seriously and applied them to considerable practical effect’ in both domestic and foreign issues.⁶³ Rather than ignoring it or dismissing it outright, Porter insists, historians must recognize ‘the reality...of missionaries’ faith [and] their belief and trust in Providence’ as motives and sustaining drives.⁶⁴ In his *History of the Baptist Missionary Society* Brian Stanley points out the ‘unshakeable’ convictions of the Gospel’s transformative power held by the early missionaries to India.⁶⁵ His *The Bible and the Flag* has gone a great distance in addressing the connections between missionaries’ backgrounds and their actions, arguing for example that the ‘fundamental theological conviction that Christianity would exert a standardizing influence on other people was in practice modified...by the impact of actual experience of other societies’.⁶⁶

Three other closely related works, Michael Laird’s *Missionaries and Education in Bengal 1793-1837*, Stuart Piggin’s *Making Evangelical Missionaries 1789-1858*, and Allan K. Davidson’s *Evangelicals and Attitudes Toward India 1786-1893*, are concerned with precisely the kind of ‘luggage’ that Downs refers to.⁶⁷ Laird closely examines the social and educational backgrounds of missionaries to India to better interpret their own educational activities there. In covering the recruitment, selection, and training of missionaries, Piggin explains how their backgrounds brought them to mission and how their training further shaped their ideas about it, in the process identifying thirteen general motives from various missionary-candidate applications, ranging from utilitarianism to pity of ‘heathens’ to denominational competition. Allan K. Davidson’s work rounds out the trio by treating various forms of what he calls ‘missionary publicity’. Revolving around the works of Cladius Buchanan, the Anglican chaplain, it nonetheless encompasses a wide variety of missionary papers, journals, and other publications designed for consumption in Britain. While Davidson’s main concern is with the ways

⁶³ Andrew Porter, *Religion vs. Empire? British Protestant missionaries and overseas expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester, 2004), 10; Brian Stanley, ed., *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment* (London, 2001), 169.

⁶⁴ Porter, *Religion vs. Empire?*, 99.

⁶⁵ Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1992*. (Edinburgh, 1992), 36.

⁶⁶ *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester, 1990), 157-8.

⁶⁷ Michael Laird, *Missionaries and Education in Bengal 1793-1837* (Oxford, 1972).

missionary publicity spread, he also touches on the influences these writings had on prospective missionaries as well as congregations and the general public.

Along these lines, one of ‘the most interesting and least expected direction[s] mission studies have taken’, as Robert Bickers and Rosemary Seton have discussed in their volume on missionary history, ‘is the use of the mission prism to examine the metropolitan societies which sent them out’.⁶⁸ Certainly much can be learnt about Britain from examining its missionaries and their backgrounds, as Downs’ and Davidson’s work has shown, but studies like Catherine Hall’s *Civilising Subjects* and Susan Thorne’s *Congregational Missions* stand out by questioning the influence missionary perceptions came to have over ‘home’ perspectives.⁶⁹ Though in many senses they seem to exaggerate the influence missions wielded over British society, Hall and Thorne nevertheless have opened up new directions in analyzing the relationship between missions and the British metropole. This study itself borrows something of their approach—that is, in questioning the role missions played in shaping British perceptions of the rest of the world while simultaneously reflecting them. Rather than focusing on the various ‘visible’ influences in Britain, however, it examines the interplay of ideas that connected missionaries with their supporters back home and informed their conceptions of the mission field and the wider world.

Those connections between British ideology and the mission field are perhaps nowhere better demonstrated than in the growing body of research on missionary women and families, though these are not without their own shortcomings. Though many historians have addressed the question of women’s roles in missions and have closely analyzed the identities of women all along the spectrum of representation, from missionary wives and single missionary women to converts and ‘resistant’ figures, there still remains much to be discerned from a discussion of the ways in which missionary literature developed in such a way as to take advantage of concurrent social and religious

⁶⁸ Bickers and Seton, eds., *Missionary Encounters*, 8-9.

⁶⁹ Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago, 2002); Susan Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth-Century England* (Stanford, 1999).

trends in addressing women and urging them to take on various active roles in the missionary enterprise.⁷⁰

There is a running debate, for example, over female presence in ‘the missionary narrative’. While some, like Maina Chandra Singh, forward the feminist agenda of ‘recovering’ the presences and roles of missionary wives in particular, Clare Midgley pointedly rejects such interpretations, arguing that there is indeed no need to recover them at all, as their presences and roles were clearly active ones as well-documented. Indeed, much of this scholarship exists almost wholly within the realm of feminist history and theology, and with very few exceptions, the mission family as an entity and a concept has furthermore only been given attention from the middle of the nineteenth century, as a reflection of the Victorian ‘cult of domesticity’ and Victorian imperial ideals.

Naturally missionaries’ voices are not the only ones that resound in their narratives and reports, and the role of ‘heathens’ and converts alike in their creation and makeup must not be underestimated. The actual process of conversion and the transition to Christianity was a topic of much observation, description, speculation and debate. As we shall see throughout this study, the outward behaviors and lifestyles of converts and ‘native Christians’ remained a central focus of missionary commentary, but through such writing much of their genuine experience also comes through. Complex issues of personal and corporate identity, especially among family and community, became topics of missionary comment and public interest. The internal and external struggles and challenges faced by converts and native Christians lent themselves to dramatic narratives, often contrasting hopeful tales of conversion and joy with cautionary examples of backsliding or even persecution.

Here again the work of Geoffrey Oddie has influenced the perspective and approach of this study. His various studies of group conversions and mass conversion movements in India provide an interesting look into the personal and group dynamics of conversion and Christian life in the area and period under review.⁷¹ Oddie draws from the work of the

⁷⁰ Maina C. Singh, *Gender, Religion, and ‘Heathen Lands’: American Missionary Women in South Asia, 1860s-1940s* (New York, 1999), Chapter 2, 77-103; Clare Midgley, ed., *Gender and Imperialism* (Manchester, 1998), 1-20.

⁷¹ See especially *Hindu and Christian in South-East India: Aspects of Religious Continuity and Change, 1800-1900*. London Studies on South Asia, Number 6. (London, 1991); ‘Old Wine in New Bottles? Kartabhaja (Vaishnava) Converts to Evangelical Christianity in Bengal, 1835-1845’. *Indian Economic &*

anthropologist Robin Horton, who argues the importance of converts' ability to adapt and modify their own beliefs and to maintain various levels of identity in their local circumstances. Horton's theories of conversion in the African context, especially from 'primitive religions' to Christianity and Islam rest on the concept of a tiered cosmology, consisting of the 'microcosm' of the individual, the home and the immediate community, and the 'macrocosm' of the broader 'outside world'.⁷² Social and environmental change on both levels often demanded a reassessment and shift in cosmology and belief, and Horton's theories focus on 'the intellectual and emotional process' of conversion and the role of pre-existing beliefs in streamlining such a shift.⁷³ These theories have found ready application to the Indian context, and the various narratives throughout this study bear out the significance of the process of balancing and transitioning beliefs and lifestyles between the 'heathen' and 'Christian' social orders missionaries envisioned and converts experienced.

Horton and Oddie's theories take on an extra dimension of depth, however, when connected to missionaries' representations of conversion and social transformation. Missionaries' satisfaction with—and even astonishment at—inquirers and converts was surely genuine, but it is doubtful that many of them considered all of the variables involved in converts' decisions. External conditions, like persecution or immediate need, were often cited (just as often raising questions over the validity of such conversions), but missionaries' understanding of personal and internal factors seem in their accounts to be limited to—and connected to—the inherent spiritual insufficiency of 'heathenism' and the power of Biblical authority and the Holy Spirit. This made for 'conversion accounts' that were at once encouraging and familiar to home audiences. Horton and Oddie have thus provided an interesting framework with which to examine the ways missionaries' perspectives took their converts' lives and experiences into account and utilised them to their own ends.

Social History Review 32 (1995), 327-343; and (ed.) *Religious Conversion Movements in South Asia: Continuities and Change, 1800-1900*. Religion & Society in South Asia series (Richmond, Surrey, 1997).

⁷² See especially 'African Conversion,' *Africa* 41, 1971, 85-108 and 'On the Rationality of Conversion', Parts I and II, *Africa* 45, 1975, 219-235; 373-399.

⁷³ George Oommen, 'Re-creating Tribal and Dalit Conversion Movements: The Case of the Malayarayans and Pulayas of Kerala'. Available online at <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1120>. Accessed 13 July 2007.

Chapters

This thesis explores the various ways in which these themes were employed in narrating missions in Bengal in the first half of the nineteenth century, with the goal of providing clearer insights into the construction, transmission, and reception of missionary ideas. But I am also interested not only in what was said, and why, but how. How did these categories serve as markers of both ‘the other’ and ‘the self’? How did missionaries and other writers conceive of and construct them according to their own ideologies, experiences, and agendas? I explore how missionaries, converts, and the British audience negotiated what exactly it meant to be ‘heathen’, and how Christianity stood in juxtaposition to it. How did missionaries, ‘heathens’, and converts negotiate the identities and expectations built up for and by the home audience, and how in turn did their narrations of their experiences further (or in some instances defy) them? How did converts receive missionaries’ ideas and criticisms? How were they ‘translated’, adopted, and adapted? How did they understand or even reflect the ‘model Christian family’? But most importantly, how were their stories told?

The chapters of this thesis trace the evolution of these core themes within missionary literature throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. Chapter One establishes the connection between the growing emphasis on the family and domesticity among evangelicals in Britain and the emergence of the missions movement in the late eighteenth century, then explains the roots and categories of writing on ‘heathen’ families. The practice of ‘family religion’ and ‘family worship’, while long a feature of Christian ideology, enjoyed a revival as evangelicalism began to exercise a broader influence, and many sought out parallels—or the complete absence of the practice altogether—among the peoples and religions missionaries were encountering around the globe. So, too, did the growing emphasis on the ‘favoured’ position and role of British Christian women as both instruments of instruction and guardians of the ‘domestic sphere’ anticipate a focus on women elsewhere in the world, and especially on their ‘degraded’ or inferior circumstances. These were among the various ways British

evangelicals were beginning to look *outward* in an attempt to create and reinforce an identity for themselves.

Chapter Two shifts the focus to India, where the establishment of the Serampore mission in 1800 reflected the significance of such thinking to early Baptist missionaries (as well as the BMS committee itself) and served as a foundation for publicizing missions ‘back home’ in Britain. In forming what came to be known as the ‘Serampore Mission Family’, the missionaries there amalgamated current evangelical thought with the development of mission theory and practice, especially regarding their relationships with each other and with native Christians. Chapter Three introduces the story of two convert families at the Serampore mission, which reveals how both domestic ideology and the concept of ‘the heathen’ were combined in the early days of the mission and utilised structurally and narratively. In the ways missionaries narrated their experiences with these families and other native Christians, audiences at home were informed of their expectations as well as their perceptions, further developing the public consciousness of what it meant to be ‘heathen’ and ‘Christian’.

As Serampore’s primacy in the mission field dwindled, however, other stations and missions naturally took its place in the public eye. Chapter Four expands the perspective of the study from individuals to communities, reconstructing the accounts of several of these stations and villages in Bengal from the pages of the *Missionary Herald* and other journals in order to reveal how the ups-and-downs of missionaries’ and converts’ experiences were presented for their best effects, attracting and maintaining audiences and their sympathies. In addition, this also shows how the central themes of identity, expectation, and perception remained integral to the structure of convert communities and mission stations as well as to an emerging missionary (meta-) narrative on India and Indian Christians. Chapter Five similarly examines the portrayals of the Baptists’ major schools in Calcutta, and connects those narratives with the growing attention to women and children as new and significant audiences. Themes that had been primarily structural and descriptive, like family structure, domestic roles, and characterizations of ‘the heathen’, were becoming by the 1840s almost completely rhetorical—employed directly toward target audiences for specific ends. Missionaries’ narratives, too, were including

more and more direct references to their audience, especially appealing for support, and this was just one marker of a subtle but steady shift in policy and strategy. Chapter Six discusses the two Calcutta missionary conferences in the late summer of 1855, which represented a turning point in both the organization and the narration of missions in Bengal. I then conclude by suggesting a number of explanations as to why and how the themes of the study remained so central to the narrative as well as posing a number of questions about the nature of that narrative itself and its uses.

Chapter One: Defining The Family and The Heathen in the Early Nineteenth Century

*Dear children, in your happy homes,
With parents' tender care,
Shown forth in many an act of love,
And many an earnest prayer,
Forget not that in heathen lands
Such homes are never found,
Save where a few have heard, and then
Welcomed the Gospel's sound.*

This first verse of a song entitled ‘Do Not Forget the Heathen’, published in the London Missionary Society’s *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* in 1855 summed up half a century of missionary rhetoric on ‘the heathen’ and their homes. The turn of the nineteenth century and the transition into the Victorian era had witnessed simultaneously an introspective emphasis on the family as the cornerstone of society and a turning outward in the rise of the missionary movement. It was therefore only natural that the two ideological ‘trends’ should intersect and borrow from each other. The missionary home was often intended to provide a model for ‘the heathen’ and for converts—as the home was the centre of evangelical Christianity, so must it become the centre of the evangelisation and Christianisation of the world.¹ At the Baptist Missionary Society’s annual meeting in April 1854, Rev. Baptist Noel, a renowned pastor and lecturer, summed up the prevailing evangelical attitude toward India:

‘Let but the gospel penetrate the homes and hearts of the population, and they would be raised as much as the negroes of Jamaica have been raised in the scale of human existence; their homes would be rendered peaceful and happy; their women would be honoured and respected, their children well-trained, and India would be worthy of England, as its ally and sister’.²

¹ Missionary domesticity has been a popular topic for some time, centering around a number of debates. For example, see Flemming’s introduction to her volume on women missionaries, *Women’s Work for Women: Missionaries and Social Change in Asia*, where she claims that their domestic examples—in conjugal marriage, ‘attention to domestic hygiene’, and basic home economics—‘were powerful civilizing forces’, 3. See also Jolly and Macintyre’s discussion of missionary domesticity in the South Pacific, in which they identified many missionaries’ values as ‘idealised visions rather than realistic memories of the dominant modes of domesticity at home’. *Family and Gender in the Pacific*, 9.

² BM, volume 46, 1854, 390.

The Gospel, carried to India by missionaries (supported by pious families and individuals at home), would civilize the heathen, uplifting them by correcting the wrongs sin had wrought in their homes, women, and children.³

The growing prominence of evangelicalism in Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century brought with it a public attention to ‘evangelical’—often interchangeable with ‘middle-class’—values which had to be defined and codified if they were to represent the ‘heart’ of the nation. The ‘cultural and ideological unity’ this evangelical worldview represented, enabled ideas and movements to spread from one section to another with remarkable rapidity.⁴ Increasingly affordable printing enabled such information to be circulated quickly and thoroughly, and soon everything from pamphlets and tracts to magazines, instructional handbooks, and Bibles emerged to cater to the development of that identity and character. Central to this was the family and the home.

This focus was neither novel nor revolutionary, but was instead something of a periodic resurgence of collective awareness and agency—albeit with several new factors. ‘Family religion’ and ‘family worship’, for instance, had always been a central figure of British Protestantism, reinforcing at once the ties of faith and kinship and social hierarchies. When those came under apparent threat from sources like ‘libertarianism’ and ‘republicanism’, their supporters rallied to reinforce the family as the defining element of their identity, ‘the Eden of a fallen world’—a refuge from the onslaughts of modern life and an earthly paradise where ‘all holy affections centre’ and ‘all ennobling influences emanate’.⁵ When the missionary movement emerged, presenting societies and families with different structures and different priorities, British evangelicals found in them yet another way of defining themselves. By

³ As a result of mission activity, William Carey wrote to the editor of the *American Baptist Magazine* in 1816, in India ‘civilization and salvation walk arm in arm together’. *BM*, volume 10, 1818, 193.

⁴ Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, 57. See also Martin, *Evangelicals United*, 14. Thorne, borrowing a phrase from Olive Anderson, reminds us that ‘Victorian public opinion was “educated from the pulpit”’, and that even the ‘unchurched remainder had been exposed to religious influences...in Britain’s massively popular Sunday schools’. *Congregational Missions*, 5-6.

⁵ *The Baptist Children’s Magazine*, new series volume 2, February 1852, 29. See also Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 180-184, for their discussion of Sarah Ellis, ‘probably the best known ideologue of domesticity’. Facing the ‘political and social unrest’ of the 1830s and 40s, Ellis and her contemporaries ‘propagandized for the family as a repository of stability and firm values’. See also Stephen Mintz, *A Prison of Expectations: The Family in Victorian Culture*, 196. Naomi Tadmor’s *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage* (New York, 2001) provides an excellent introductory survey to the historiography of the family and its debates, and Mary Abbott’s *Family Ties: English Families 1540–1920* (London, 1993) similarly presents the development of a specific historiography of the family, and stresses continuity and hierarchy over disruption and individualism.⁵

defining Christianity (and themselves) vis-à-vis the Christian home, evangelical Victorians were thereby also defining their ‘others’.

The creation of foreign mission societies in the last decade of the eighteenth century provided a wealth of opportunities for pious Christians to effect change in the wider world, and introduced a comparative (and perhaps competitive) shift in the perspective of such discourses.⁶ Not only was the family now at the center of evangelical self-definition, it also served as a hallmark of civilization. In the earliest years of evangelical missions this emphasis—and its expressions in family religion—served a dual purpose: structure and narration. The belief in the sanctity and purpose of the family structure, including its separate spheres and duties, was a key organizational tool for missionaries’ work, but also conveniently provided a ready-made and effective set of imagery and rhetoric that was quickly adopted by mission supporters and missionaries themselves.⁷ Having been exposed to such ideas—and their theological roots and analogues—all of their lives, the first generations of missionaries to India sought to incorporate and apply them to their missions.

As this chapter will show, not only were missionaries and their converts influenced by their own conceptions of ‘family’ and the prevailing ideas about it, but they also contributed to an ongoing discourse on the subject within the evangelical periodical literature of their day. In these periodicals, essays and book reviews provided perspectives on the developing emphasis on the family, meaning that missionaries must not be ideologically isolated and could adopt and incorporate current thinking on the subject at will.

Besides structural value, however, family themes also took on a descriptive value for early missionaries in India. The narration and description of mission activities in ‘familial’ terms was a central characteristic of their ideas about India to the West. These themes and images were *familiar* and *comfortable* to both the authors and their audiences, especially in light of contemporary trends, and for several decades dominated the descriptions of India in texts designed for consumption by British readers. The ongoing activities of the mission, its figures, its successes and failures, made good press, and aimed to ensure continued support for the endeavour. Indeed, Dana Robert has argued that the Christian home was so central to

⁶ As Thorne points out, it was their ‘missionary spirit’ that truly marked the Victorians’ ‘religious piety’. *Congregational Missions*, 5.

⁷ ‘Family’, Johnston writes, ‘in its many senses, was a fundamental way in which missionaries made sense of their world, and particularly when located in what seemed to them to be the moral vacuum of newly colonised places’. *Missionary Writing and Empire*, 52.

missionary ideology because it reflected the functions and goals of missions ‘while simultaneously justifying the movement’s existence to the supporting constituency.⁸ It is my goal here to explore the connections between the ‘family’ movement and missions, especially in the ways that missions were presented to evangelical audiences ‘back home’.

Evangelical families: defining the Self

‘Domestic Piety is the source of missionary zeal’⁹

The latter years of the eighteenth century saw a renewed emphasis on the centrality of the family to British social and religious thought, especially among evangelical Anglicans and Nonconformists. This was due in large part to their emphasis on personal religious experience and on the relationship of the Christian to the outside world. Personal piety reflected ‘true religion’, and was to exert a moral and social influence on the community. These responsibilities began in the home, operating hand in hand with Christian concepts of hierarchy and order that had been underscored by the Enlightenment, and came full-circle in locating it as the centre of evangelical identity. It is within this context that ‘family religion’ began to gain new influence in Britain. As the nineteenth century dawned ideas about the family took on more specific forms and impetus. Besides the supposedly intrinsic value of the family unit to stability and moral influence, specific domestic roles and hierarchies—and their attendant responsibilities—were emphasized and popularized. Literature of the period—both fiction and non-fiction—presented a now-archetypal version of the Victorian British family: evangelical, middle-class, with strong, industrious father, a pious, economical, and dutiful mother, and well-behaved and devoted children.¹⁰ Historians and sociologists have argued that the Victorian period in Britain saw a distinct shift in values and attitudes toward the family as the middle class grew in size and influence, but how distinct was this shift?

⁸ Dana Robert, ‘The “Christian Home” as Cornerstone of Anglo-American Missionary Thought and Practice’. NAMP Position Paper #98 (Cambridge: North Atlantic Missiology Project, 1998).

⁹ James, *Juvenile Advantages and Obligations*, 38.

¹⁰ See Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, 175: ‘Domesticity and the cult of the home as the centerpiece of family life were the hallmarks of this lifestyle; the separation of work from home, non-working and thoroughly domesticated womenfolk, intensely private and self-contained nuclear families, and strict and all-pervading morality, were its principal means of expression. It was a way of life which had its beginnings in the late eighteenth century as the teachings of evangelicalism started to exert their influence, and flowered in the early Victorian years, when morals, manners, and respectability all pointed to this as the domestic ideal’.

'Family religion', generally associated with the practices of collective family prayer and worship, held in the home, had its roots in Puritan ideology of the sixteenth century. Not limited simply to these practices, however, it encompassed a mode of living which stressed the hierarchy and order—as well as the community—of the Christian family. As religious, political, and familial sentiments shifted over the next few centuries, family religion enjoyed rather erratic popularity. Lawrence Stone, in his *Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, connects the 'formal ritual of regular, daily collective family prayers' not only with 'religious enthusiasm', but with what he calls 'patriarchalism', whose roots also lay in the sixteenth century but enjoyed a revival in the nineteenth century in the archetypical 'patriarchal family'.¹¹ Sally Gallagher, in her survey of the roots of evangelicalism's familial emphases, similarly attributes the 'decline in family prayers' in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to a 'general decline in religious enthusiasm' and a rejection of everything associated with everything Puritan after the Restoration. This decline had 'carried away with it the role of the husband and father as the religious head of the household, symbolized by the regular assembly of all members, often twice a day, to hear him lead the family in prayer and obtain his blessing'.¹²

Nor were contemporaries unaware of these shifts, as two of Gallagher's examples show. In 1778 James Boswell lamented 'there is no appearance of family religion today, not even the reading of chapters. How different from what was the usage in my grandfather's day, or my mother's time'.¹³ Even then however, according to Benjamin Wadsworth in 1712, 'the neglect of family religion, instruction and government' were to blame for society's ills.¹⁴ By Boswell's time it seemed religion had become for many a minor issue. Among the upper classes especially, the backlash against Puritanism had led to laxity in 'beliefs and morals

¹¹ Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800*. Abridged edition (London, 1979), Chapter 6, 'The Growth of Affective Individualism', 168-9.

¹² Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Family Life*, 19. John Wolffe attributes this thesis instead to the Victorians themselves, who 'created an enduring caricature of their grandparents as characterized by moral corruption, theological skepticism and spiritual torpor'. He argues that the eighteenth century was 'not so much irreligious as religious in a different way'. *Religion in Victorian Britain, Volume 5: Culture and Empire* (Manchester and New York, 1997), 5.

¹³ Quoted in Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Family Life*, 20.

¹⁴ Benjamin Wadsworth, *The Well-Ordered Family* (London, 1712). Quoted in Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Family Life*, 19.

alike'; thus in much of the country 'the emotional temperature [of religion] was low', as was 'the level of commitment required'.¹⁵

The evangelical movement, however, provided an impetus for change; among Methodists and other Nonconformists, as well as Dissenters within the Anglican Church, religious 'enthusiasm' was rekindled and 'family worship' found renewed support.¹⁶ Essentially a working- and middle-class phenomenon, evangelicalism in its various forms included a broad section of the British population, and by the early nineteenth century had gained considerable social and political influence. As Ian Bradley has pointed out in his *Call to Seriousness*, it was evangelicalism that had come to most powerfully shape the Victorians' 'attitudes and customs'. Evangelicalism was, for Eric Stokes, 'the rock upon which the character of the Nineteenth-Century Englishman was founded'.¹⁷ The rock upon which evangelicalism was founded, Bradley continues, was the home, and 'at the centre of life in all Evangelical households stood the institution of family prayers'.¹⁸

Family prayer was, in 'pious' families, a daily ritual in which 'the whole family, including servants' was gathered together for Bible-reading, prayer, and singing hymns.¹⁹ Held in the morning, and sometimes in the evening as well—generally when it was most convenient, especially for the father—these assemblies were not merely devotional, they at once cemented the bonds of the family and the household and reinforced its underlying hierarchies. As Leonore Davidoff has pointed out, family worship symbolized an ordered household and an ordered society.²⁰ One of the intended results of an attention to family worship was 'domestic concord and happiness', which came to be a defining—and prescriptive—

¹⁵ Leonore Davidoff, 'The Family in Britain' in F.M.L. Thompson, ed., *Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950, Volume 2: People and their Environment* (Cambridge, 1993), 75; H. McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London, 1984), 17.

¹⁶ James Obelkevich, 'Religion' in F.M.L. Thompson, ed., *Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950, Volume 3: Social Agencies and Institutions* (Cambridge: 1990), 321.

¹⁷ Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford, 1963), xii. Quoted in Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness*, 14-5. See also Obelkevich, 'Religion', 339, and Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1982), 324-26.

¹⁸ Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness*, 179-80; Davidoff and Hall, too, note that 'The shift to family worship across all denominations...marked the growing prominence given to the family'. *Family Fortunes*, 78.

¹⁹ As we shall see later in this chapter, this inclusiveness was to play an important role in the households of missionaries and converts alike, but also stands in contrast to William Ward's assessment of Hinduism, which precluded families from worshipping together.

²⁰ Davidoff, 'The Family in Britain', 80. As Bradley adds, 'It is not difficult to see why family prayers had become so popular...it strengthened family bonds and reinforced the position of the head of the household'. *The Call to Seriousness*, 179-80. Mintz also argues that beyond becoming refuges from the outside world, the family and the home began to replace other social controls that were perceived to be slipping. Thus in the face of 'individualistic and democratizing pressures', they buttressed the fundamental 'concepts of order, stability, and Christian morality'. *A Prison of Expectations*, 28;196.

characteristic of Christian families in the mission field as well as at home in Britain.²¹ Indeed, the home was to act ‘the part of a lens’ by concentrating a pious man’s efforts on the salvation of his family, producing ‘scenes of *unity, concord, and love*, rarely to be met with’.²²

As family prayer and worship entered the mainstream of evangelical practice, writers took up the cause, producing volumes of essays, tracts, and instruction manuals on the subject. James Beans’s *Family Worship*, first published in 1796, declared that family prayers and devotions should be pleasant, short, convenient, and orderly if they are to serve their intended purpose.²³ These ideal qualities reflected the more overarching goals of family worship itself: to promote domestic harmony, efficiency, and order. A letter in the *Baptist Magazine* in 1824 exhorted parents and masters to gather their children and servants ‘morning and evening, (were it only for seven or ten minutes)’ for prayer, and those who had never practiced it challenged to try it for a year, and to judge from the results its value.²⁴

Even by 1845 an essay in the *Evangelical Magazine* entitled ‘Home Piety’ argued the essential nature of family religion to the ‘home’, and by extension to the church and the community. ‘The aggregate piety of the church’, the author claimed, was ‘but the aggregate amount of family religion’. Each member of the family possessed a particular influence and responsibilities—heads of families must exercise ‘a hearty and loving unity’ between them and ‘occupy that place only which God has assigned them’; children were to be ‘governed’ closely and reminded of their own contribution to ‘the religious harmony of a whole family’: servants were to be ‘submissive, and diligent, and upright, and cleanly, and orderly, and cheerful’, and to ‘facilitate’ family religion by retaining the place set for them in God’s hierarchy.²⁵

²¹ Review of *Family Union: A Sermon on Psalms Cxxxiii*, by J. Churchill, in *EM*, volume 26, 1818, 520. According to an essay in the aptly named *Family Magazine*, family worship ‘perfected’ affection and unity as well as ‘peace, amity, and love’. Volume 2, 1799, 8-10.

²² Review of *A Monitor to Families*, in the *New Baptist Magazine*, volume 1, 1825, 141.

²³ The second edition (London, 1800) was reprinted for several decades afterwards. See also Bean’s *Discourse on Family Religion* (Boston, 1823). The *Family Magazine* essay above (n.21) added that family worship was ‘a most solemn engagement’ and ‘deeply serious’, thus not to be hurried or casual. An 1846 essay in the *Baptist Magazine* declared it should be ‘lively and interesting’ and create ‘a church in the house’. *BM*, volume 38, 1846, 115.

²⁴ ‘Family Worship’, *BM*, volume 16, 1824, 329-30. A similar essay, ‘Family Religion’, appeared in *BM*, volume 4, 1812, 288.

²⁵ *EM*, new series volume 23, 1845, 122-127. See also Mintz, *A Prison of Expectations*, 23.

Even with the flood of sermons, manuals, and essays on the subject, some were led to reflect that ‘family worship is criminally neglected, or very carelessly performed, in the present day’.²⁶ ‘By disregarding family worship, according to the above letter from the *Baptist Magazine* in 1824, heads of households indicated ‘great negligence relative to the spiritual concerns of those under their protection [‘the inmates of their dwelling’], and who are...the most likely to be influenced by their example’.²⁷ This threat of fading family religion continued to echo throughout the century despite the fact that it had been a recognized factor of British evangelicalism for over three centuries, and had in its latest incarnation enjoyed at least fifty years of continuous promotion and publication.²⁸ This uninterrupted flow of such works led some, by mid-century, to exclaim, ‘How many tracts on this subject we have read!’ though in this case it was immediately qualified with, ‘all of them worthy of perusal, and especially adapted to the times and circumstances in which they were written’.²⁹

Perhaps the sense of society-in-crisis that many have cited as the cause of the insular direction of Victorian domestic ideals, as discussed above, was particularly on the mind of publishers and critics alike. Titles like *A Preliminary Dissertation on Family Religion*³⁰, *Domestic Worship*³¹, *The Christian Master’s Present to his Household*³², *The Altar of the*

²⁶ James, *Juvenile Advantages and Obligations*, 38.

²⁷ ‘Family Worship’, *BM*, volume 16, 1824, 329.

²⁸ With the wide catalogue of books and tracts on family religion and prayer, it is interesting to note the actual variety in their content, especially along denominational lines. Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness*, 179-80. ‘Indeed’, Bradley says, ‘the use of Henry Thornton’s *Family Prayers* was considered a distinctive sign of Evangelicalism’. He also points out that many reviewers found collections of prayers and ‘forms’ for family worship to be ‘stilted and unoriginal’, and of little use to ‘the truly pious’. ‘If the head of the family possess real piety and moderate ability to express his thoughts in intelligible phrases’, one editor wrote, ‘his own words will have a better influence than the use of any book of forms’. Review of *Family Prayers for every Morning and Evening throughout the Year*, by John Morison, DD., in *BM*, volume 32, 1840, 648. This was sometimes tempered, especially in earlier years, by a more liberal attitude. An 1829 review in the *Baptist Magazine* of a volume entitled *Cottage Prayers*, by Rev. C. Dacy, was found to be ‘liturgical’ and thus was not ‘supported’, but ‘recommended...for persons who, from timid feelings and the want of habit, cannot (at least they think so) conduct prayers in their families...[For] such persons...we think set forms may be necessary and helpful’. *BM*, volume 21, 1829, 73.

²⁹ Review of W. Davis, *Family Religion, especially as exemplified in Family Prayer* in *EM*, new series volume 25, 1847, 133. The first exclamation was printed in all capital letters.

³⁰ Review of *Family Prayers for every Morning and Evening throughout the Year*, by John Morison, DD., in *BM*, volume 32, 1840, 648.

³¹ J.H. Merle D’Aubigne, translated from the French by B. E. Macaulay (London, 1846). The *Evangelical Magazine* noted its timely appearance, declaring ‘there is no subject to be urged upon the attitude of Christians in the present day, than that of a really effective domestic worship’. New series volume 24, 1846, 531. See also *BM*, volume 38, 1846, 624. Numerous translations and editions of D’Aubigne’s sermon *Culte Domestique* circulated among evangelicals throughout Europe after its delivery in Brussels in 1827.

³² 5th edition (London, 1848). Noted in *EM*, new series volume 26, 1848, 363.

*Household*³³ regularly appeared in the ‘New Publications’ and ‘Reviews’ pages of popular evangelical periodicals. Other periodicals, too, like *The Family Treasury* (‘the very best publication in its class’)³⁴ and *The Patriarch*³⁵ often received a nod in their pages. Not all were so well received, however. As one reviewer put it,

We have often been puzzled to know why many authors and editors of volumes of sermons should connect their titles with the family circle. We have an almost endless variety of ‘Sermons for Families’, ‘Domestic Discourses’, ‘Parlour Preachers’, and here we have the ‘Domestic Preacher’. Now really, we cannot see any particular adaptation of the great majority of these publications to the purpose for which they are professedly published...[These] are no more fit for family reading than many of their predecessors.³⁶

From the pervasive and lasting nature of the literature on family religion in the first half of the century, it must be said that the movement had both momentum and staying power among evangelicals. The history of family worship as a particular characteristic of British Protestant and evangelical history and identity lent it the influence and imagery required to create a revival, as it were, among the growing portion of the populace who would be most attracted and receptive to its imagery and methodology. Family worship represented a theological, moral, and intellectual framework for the social movements at work among middle class Britons, and thus operated in many of the same ways missions did. It is no wonder the two ‘movements’ maintained parallel courses throughout the nineteenth century.

Women’s Influence

‘A subject of such vital interest to the well-being of the community’³⁷

Part of that framework was the increasingly central role women came to occupy in the scheme of the evangelical family. There is a general idea that the British obsession with idyllic images of women, motherhood, and the home somehow spontaneously emerged at

³³ ‘*A Series of Services for Domestic Worship*’, by John Harris, DD. ‘This manual of Family Devotion will...have a very wide circulation, at home and in the colonies’. Noted in *EM*, new series volume 32, 1854, 150. See also Harris’ *Patriarchy; or, The Family: its Constitution and Probation* (London, 1855), which one reviewer lauded as ‘no commonplace production of this scribbling age’ (before inserting a three-page excerpt). *EM*, new series volume 33, 1855, 649.

³⁴ ‘This admirable periodical still holds its ground’. Noted in *BM*, volume 52, 1860, 643.

³⁵ *The Patriarch, or Family Library Magazine*. ‘Designed to define and enforce the doctrines of Nature and Revelation which designate the family, 1. As the Great Social Organization; 2. As a Primary School of Education; 3. As a Religious Institution’. No. 1, March 1841, in *American Publications* (London, 1841). Noted in *BM*, volume 33, 1841, 64.

³⁶ Review of *The Domestic Preacher*, by J. W. Norris, in *BM*, volume 18, 1826, 142.

³⁷ Review of *Sermons to Young Women, I-V*. *EM*, new series volume 30, 1852, 530.

some point in the middle of the nineteenth century, and remained popular well into the early twentieth century, when other, perhaps more ‘modern’, themes came into vogue. But this imagery can be traced, unhindered and unfading, right back through the nineteenth century and farther, in close connection with the ‘family’ movement. What better place, then, than evangelical literature, to begin looking for such imagery? Indeed, it is in connection with such publications that the people of Britain became—and remained—familiar with the ideas they would hold most dear. As evangelical influence spread, so did its values and ideals. Bound up in this literature were not only the spiritual qualities and duties expected of their readers, but also an emerging tone of national identity. Long an undertone of domestic literature, images of the *English* wife and mother caught up with those of the *Christian* wife and mother (and sister and daughter). The cornerstone of the Christian home would become the cornerstone of the Christian nation, and as that nation spread its influence around the globe with commerce and with missions it is only natural that such imagery would become the cornerstone of its thought—and rhetoric.

The concept of ‘separate spheres’ and the personal characteristics associated with men and women further defined both identities and roles in within the family and the home (at least among the middle classes). Men became associated with the outside world of work and wage earning, whilst women were relegated to the home, to manage and nurture ‘the Eden of a fallen world’. In spite of, or perhaps because of, the resultant ‘feminizing’ and ‘domestication’ of religion, the family and home remained central and organizing factors in evangelical faith.³⁸ As Davidoff and Hall have discussed, this type of language and imagery was by the 1830s ‘increasingly secular and the belief in the natural differences and complementary roles of men and women which had been particularly linked to evangelicalism, had become the common sense of the English middle class’.³⁹

³⁸ Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Family Life*, 24–31. In 1833 an American pastor, Dr. G. Bedell, posed ‘Three Important Questions’ on the point in his *Is it Well?*, published by the Religious Tract Society. He encouraged women to be ‘under an impression of the great responsibility and influence, in a religious point of view, which their station and circumstances in life give them over those to whom they are so tenderly related’. He explained that there were ‘so many more females who were pious’ than men because God had appointed them ‘for the purpose of keeping alive the spirit of family religion’ and to be the instruments of salvation for ‘those to whom they are so closely allied—their husbands and children’. Reviewed in *BM*, volume 25. 1833, 604.

³⁹ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 149. Judith Walsh, too, considers this ‘a secular discourse’, based on Enlightenment themes of order, reason, and science, informed by the principles of natural law and intensified by Christian traditions, and Mintz attributes much of it to the intellectual influences of John Locke and other eighteenth-century moral philosophers. *Domesticity in Colonial India: What Women Learned When Men Gave Them Advice* (Lanham, Maryland, 2004), 12; *A Prison of Expectations*, 28.

Just as significant to the context of missionary discourse was the ‘feminization’ and ‘domestication’ of religion in the period: though the father remained the spiritual head of the household, it became the mother’s responsibility to teach and guide her children in matters of faith—embodied in the concept of ‘*a woman’s or mother’s influence*’, which would extend over not only her own family, but collectively around the world as well.⁴⁰ It was from that ‘influence’ that the Christian family received its cohesiveness, its youth their piety and good instruction, and its head the support he required to face the world; to it was ascribed the success of British men and the British nation itself.⁴¹

Heathen families: defining the Other

It was not only family religion and the elevation of women that were being touted as the defining characteristics of evangelical families; authors were also looking outwards, to a world of new peoples, customs, and identities against which they could compare Christendom and themselves. Accounts by merchants, officials and travelers all contributed to the expanding discourse on the peoples of the world, and supporters of missions were quick to add their own voices and form their own opinions. Andrew Porter has emphasized this secular influence on the emergence of the missions movement, arguing that evangelicals’ interests reflected a wider awareness of the world that had come through ‘new knowledge and heightened curiosity’ about it.⁴² The evangelical worldview that was developing as the missions movement emerged at the turn of the nineteenth century not only provided the basis for an effective rhetorical structure but also left room for further growth and development. Thus there existed channels for evangelicals to examine themselves against a world of ‘others’. I earlier introduced the Biblical formula for ‘the heathen’ that evangelicals relied on as a general rubric, but here I would like to examine some of the more detailed and specific ‘characteristics’ they supposedly possessed that so clearly differentiated them from

⁴⁰ See Catherine Hall, ‘The Early Formation of Victorian Domestic Ideology,’ in Sandra Burman, ed., *Fit Work for Women* (New York, 1979), 15.

⁴¹ See ‘Pious Mothers’ in *Baptist Children’s Magazine*, new series volume 1, 1839, 302-4, which entreated mothers to ‘sanctify your tenderness and your influence. How much depends on your gentle and early instruction!’. The *Family Magazine* considered ‘Female Influence’ ‘a woman’s exclusive gift; it is the foundation of all her virtues—the mainspring of all her usefulness’. Volume 4, 1801, 375.

⁴² Porter, *Religion and Empire?*, 39-52 *passim*.

British Christians. A number of early works in particular lent great authority and precedence to later ‘missionary social comment’ on India and its people.

Charles Grant’s *Observations on the State of Society Among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain particularly with Respect to Morals and on the Means of Improving it*, written in 1792 and printed in 1813 during the debate over the renewal of the East India Company’s charter, provided many of what would become common—even proverbial—descriptions of ‘the heathen’ in India.⁴³ Admittedly calculated ‘to engage compassion’ in readers, the final chapters of Grant’s *Observations* surveyed various aspects of Hindu life and society, presenting them in the darkest way possible.⁴⁴ Similarly William Ward presented his *View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos* as a thorough and unbiased analysis of every aspect of Indian culture and religion, and it came to be relied on as a standard text for comment and anecdote. Grant and Ward both were certainly aware of the effect such material could have over audiences, and the role it could play in the growth of the mission movement.

Selfishness and greed ranked high in Grant’s catalogue of the Hindu character. The Bengalis were ‘unrestrained by principle’ and guided only in their desire for money, which ‘may be called the supreme idol of the Hindoos’. Lacking ‘political power’ and the ‘boldness of spirit’ that characterised many of their neighbours, Grant found the Bengalis ‘formed for business, artful, frugal, and persevering’ and ‘absorbed in schemes for the gratification of avarice’.⁴⁵ William Adam of Calcutta found himself disgusted with the ‘venal character of the Hindu’ after one native claimed he could bring him one hundred Christians for ten rupees, and a thousand for one hundred rupees!⁴⁶

Closely connected with this was the belief that Bengalis were particularly deceitful and untrustworthy. Nathaniel Halhed, the renowned Orientalist and contemporary of Grant, considered them marked by their treachery and ‘utter strangers to the idea of common faith

⁴³ British Library, MSS. Eur. E. 93, Parliamentary Papers, volume 10, 1812-13, number 282; (London, 1813). For an extended analysis of Grant’s role in influencing British conceptions of India and Hinduism see Oddie, *Imagined Hinduism*, Chapter 2, 67-94.

⁴⁴ After reading Grant’s *Observations*, one Baptist missionary suggested to a friend, ‘A man who wishes to devote his life to the welfare of the Hindoos, will find many sound and important ideas on their state, and the means of improving it, in this [book]’. ‘Cursory remarks in letters to friends during a journey to Chittagong’, 19 February 1818. *Friend of India*, volume 2, May-December 1818, 69.

⁴⁵ Grant, *Observations*, 27. According to the LMS’s George Gogerly, ‘A low selfishness...is the peculiar feature on their character’. ‘Miscellaneous Intelligence—Asia—Calcutta’, *Friend of India*, volume 1, 14.

⁴⁶ Adam, 8 April 1819, *MH*, May 1820.

and honesty'.⁴⁷ Decades later, the same rhetoric regularly appeared in mission periodicals. An article in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1841 suggested that Bengalis were 'feeble even to effeminacy' and their minds 'weak even to helplessness'. 'What the horns are to the buffalo [and] the claws to the tiger', the essay continued, 'deceit is to the Bengalee'.⁴⁸ 'Fraud, lying, impurity seem the natural habits of the population', observed one article in the *Baptist Magazine* in 1853, and it was thus 'no wonder that many, intimately acquainted with native society, refuse to believe that from the unclean that which is clean can come'.⁴⁹

Despite their supposed predilection to scheming and deception, indolence and laziness were also held to be the hallmarks of Indian adults and children alike—in contrast to the industrious nature and 'Protestant work-ethic' of evangelicals. George Gogerly, LMS missionary at Calcutta regarded 'the character and habits of the lower orders of Hindus in Bengal' as marked by 'apathy, indolence, and the want of all generous feeling...are beyond description'.⁵⁰ William Yates at Calcutta noted that 'the natives of Bengal are noted for making excuses, even to a proverb', alluding to a passage in the Gospel of Luke.⁵¹ The Rev. James Traill, however, consolidated all of this in 1820, declaring that 'the Hindoo character presents so many anomalies, and is made up of qualities so contradictory and incongruous, that nothing but experience would lead one to give credit to a faithful description of it'.⁵²

Such generalisations about Indians—and Bengalis in particular—presented a number of issues for the Serampore missionaries and others in the area. Many descriptions of Indian character had originally been circulated in Britain for the very purpose of encouraging and stimulating the creation of the mission societies and inspiring individuals to carry the Gospel to people so obviously in need of it, and such imagery and ideas might operate powerfully on

⁴⁷ Quoted in 'Christianity in India' in *EM*, volume 21, 1813, 161-178.

⁴⁸ October 1841, 172-3. Quoted in Cox, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, Volume 1, 34. Contrast this to missionaries' assessments of other groups, especially 'tribal' peoples. J. Peacock, at Chittagong, found that the 'Mugs' were superior to the Bengalis in 'their apparent honesty and manliness'. 'They come to my house like children', he continued, 'and sit round me with loving freedom, and this without any sort of contemptuous familiarity'. *BM*, volume 11, 1819, 357.

⁴⁹ 'Character of Native Converts in Bengal', *MH*, September 1853. 'Don't trust this pleasing person', read an essay entitled 'The Oriental' in the *BM* in 1849. 'His maxim is, that it would be no sin whatever to deceive you; the only sin is in doing it so sloppily as to be found out', 489-90. Philip Doddridge's seminal *Family Expositor*, the Bible commentary that was a staple for generations of evangelicals, provided the background for many such statements. In the Book of Titus (1:12) for example, the Cretans were 'always liars, pernicious savage beasts', to which Doddridge added that among the Greeks 'to talk like a Cretan' was proverbial for lying. (London, 1861).

⁵⁰ *Friend Of India* (weekly), volume 1, 14 (1835), 101.

⁵¹ *MH*, March 1823; Luke 14:18 (KJV).

⁵² Rev. James Traill, 'The Hindoo Character', reprinted from the *Missionary Register, Missionary Chronicle*, March 1820.

the public imagination if further repeated and reinforced with ‘actual’ examples from the mission field. Hence, there emerged a struggle on the part of missionaries in simultaneously looking for the good and expecting the worst from those they sought to save. This was not only a social or cultural challenge, however, but a theological and practical one as well. Would the ‘heathen’ nature of Indians be too great for the Gospel to overcome or even affect? As we shall see in the next chapters, this was particularly relevant to the way the earliest evangelical missionaries would initially react to and represent their contacts with prospective converts and native Christians.

‘Such a tale of woe was never before addressed to the hearts of British mothers’⁵³

No images of the heathen, however, were more prevalent than those of women, and these quickly became powerful tools for affecting an already broad and influential audience. Indian women’s textual identity was built up and reinforced in the same ways that British women’s was.⁵⁴ As discussed above, these images often maintained simple dialectics—where the British lady was industrious, the ‘heathen’ woman was idle; where the British wife was a friend and companion, the ‘heathen’ wife was a slave; where the British mother was loving and prayerful, the ‘heathen’ mother was either indifferent or indulgent. These images and themes were replayed constantly in mission literature to construct a reality in which British women were empowered to realize their own virtue and value and to apply themselves to correcting those deficiencies in their ‘heathen sisters’. William Ward himself is credited with one of the earliest appeals to British women on their behalf, addressing ‘the Ladies of Liverpool’ during his 1820 fundraising trip for the Serampore Mission. Subsequently published in the *Evangelical Magazine* and elsewhere, Ward recited his standard catalogue of the evils affecting Indian women, and asked, ‘O ye British mothers—ye British widows, to whom shall these desolate beings look? In whose eyes shall these tens of thousands of

⁵³ William Ward, ‘An Address to the Ladies of Great Britain’, *Missionary Chronicle*, October 1820.

⁵⁴ The discourse on Indian women was by no means a one-sided one. One of series of articles in 1854 in the *Hindoo Patriot* vigorously defended their character and circumstances in terms familiar to British readers. ‘A Hindu woman’, the editor, Grish Ghosh explained, ‘stands very high in the social scale’. Her apparent lowly position in the home was hierarchical, rather than a sign of ‘a deficiency in female influence’: ‘The domestic influence of women is not in the slightest measure inferior to what it is in other civilized countries. The greater prominence of women in Europe is ascribed to the peculiar influence exercised over the conduct and habits of men by the public appearance of women’.

orphans cry, if not to you?⁵⁵ ‘Ladies of England’, BMS Secretary Joshua Russell later challenged, ‘will you not assert yourselves in this your own cause?’⁵⁶

The plight of the Indian woman had early on become a popular topic. An 1824 article in the monthly newspaper *Friend of India* considered that ‘only a small part of their misery has been recorded’:

Not only are they prejudiced, but exceedingly ignorant, and deplorably sunk in carelessness and vice. Their system is quite sufficient to contaminate the heart, and enslave the moral feelings...they are without mental cultivation, and liable to the wildest sallies of interpersonal passion, [under] the unreasonable yoke of a degrading religion.⁵⁷

Descriptions of Indian women’s ‘degradation’ ran the gamut from sympathetic to antagonistic. John Scudder’s popular tract *An Appeal to Christian Mothers on Behalf of the Heathen* devoted an entire chapter to ‘the degradation of heathen females’.⁵⁸ Couched in biblical phraseology and allusion, Scudder’s descriptions were colorful, if not original. Indian women were notoriously foul-mouthed and quarrelsome. Their regular practice of infanticide and abortion revealed their unfeeling natures. Particularly prominent, according to Scudder, was their predilection toward plotting and vengeance, often in response to beatings administered by their ‘despotic’ husbands. All of this was in response to their ‘degraded’ circumstances, as ‘from before their birth to the hour of their death their life is a life of shame, and contempt, and sorrowful treatment, enough to break the heart of a Christian mother’.

J. Bentley’s essay ‘On the State of Female Society in India’, which drew extensively from William Ward’s *Hindoos* and presented the ubiquitous images of infanticide, self-sacrifice and sati, culminated in a frank appeal to British women’s own exalted position, ‘Is it not manifest, that the ladies in Britain are the natural guardians of these unhappy widows and orphans in British India?’⁵⁹ They were the guardians not only of *their* homes, but of those

⁵⁵ ‘Is it possible’, Ward continued, ‘that our fair country women...can, after knowing the facts contained in this circular, continue unmoved by the cries issuing from these fires, and from the thousands of orphans which surround them?’ ‘Address to the Ladies of Great Britain’, *Missionary Chronicle*, October 1820.

⁵⁶ Joshua Russell, ‘Thoughts on Mission Work in India’ (Calcutta, 1851), 20. Reprinted as the Preface to *The Minutes and Reports of a Conference of the Baptist Missionaries of Bengal, Calcutta, August 22-September 12, 1855* (Calcutta, 1855).

⁵⁷ *FOI*, Monthly Series, December 1824, 159-60.

⁵⁸ John Scudder, *An Appeal to Christian Mothers on Behalf of the Heathen* (Philadelphia, 1840), 36-39.

⁵⁹ J. Bentley, *Essays Relative to the Habits, Character, and Moral Improvement of the Hindoos* (London, 1823), Essay VII, ‘On the State of Female Society in India’, 163-184. Originally published as serialized essays in *Friend of India*, Quarterly Series, volume II; Ward, ‘An Address to the Ladies of Great Britain’, *Missionary Chronicle*, October 1820.

homes whose own wives, mothers, and daughters were incapable of guarding them. Compassionate by nature and organized by duty, the ideal British Christian woman was ‘particularly fitted for the task’ of recognizing and aiding ‘heathen’ women in transforming their lives.⁶⁰ ‘Those who best know heathenism in all its errors and in all its horrors’, wrote an anonymous essayist in the *Missionary Magazine* in 1837, ‘dwell on female ignorance, degradation, and licentiousness as paramount hindrances to the spread of the Gospel’. British females, on the other hand, were ‘perhaps the most honoured females in the world’ and thus ‘rendered thereby the more responsible’.⁶¹ When William Ward addressed ‘the Ladies of Liverpool’ during his fundraising trip to the United States and Britain in 1820, he focused much of his attention on the state of Indian women. After reciting his standard catalogue of the evils affecting them, Ward brought his point home:

How deplorable the condition of your sex when superstition...extinguishes every sensibility of the female, and every feeling of the mother, and makes her more savage than the tiger which howls in the forest, which always spares and cherishes its own offspring.

‘Concealed’ in the ‘domestic jungle’ of the heathen home, Indian mothers were

thus brought before us in a state of perfect brutality...giving existence to millions, intended to be rational, without possessing any ability superior to that of the cow or the opossum to meet the wants of all those beings, their offspring.⁶²

This ‘representation of real life in those regions of darkness’ was then contrasted with ‘the circumstances of a poor cottager in England’, whose home held ‘half a dozen books at least’, prime of which was of course the family Bible, recording the family annals—‘proof that life is held in some estimation’. *This* mother could be found teaching her children to read and spell—skills she herself was taught by her parents ‘and the books she has read’. Moreover, she could ‘convey a mother’s looks and a mother’s heart, into all she says’. Here the ‘heathen’ mother lacked ‘maternal influence’ altogether, while in the Christian mother it was both inherent and nurtured. Britain’s ‘fair’ women, who were by circumstance above (or removed from) such scenes, possessed the power to affect them. Indeed, it was their very ‘heart’ that would enable them more fully to do so.

These images and themes were replayed constantly in missionary literature to construct a reality in which British women were empowered to realize their own virtue and value and to

⁶⁰ Hill, *The World Their Household*, 5.

⁶¹ ‘Heathen Female Education’, *MM*, February 1837.

⁶² *EM*, volume 28, December 1820.

apply themselves to correcting those deficiencies in their ‘heathen sisters’.⁶³ This imagery and language of sisterhood was to remain a popular (and hopefully powerful) device for missionary rhetoric right through the century, especially in literature aimed at girls and young women. The introduction of a series of articles in the LMS’s *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* in 1853 featured the engraving below, explaining,

This picture reminds us of the poor women of India. There are seventy millions of them. They are your Hindu sisters, for whom we want you to pray and to labour... What we shall tell you will furnish additional proof, that wherever Heathenism prevails woman is degraded, and it will also show you how much that Gospel is needed which alone can raise her to her proper station in society, and while it blesses her may render her a blessing to others.⁶⁴



Figure 2—‘A Field Labourer’s Wife in India’
Juvenile Missionary Magazine, 1853.

In the same vein, companionate marriage was seen as another determinant between Christians and ‘the heathen’. ‘It is a remarkable fact’, noted one author, ‘that all the false religions of the world make the woman the slave of the man...but the Christian Religion lifts woman up from her degradation and bondage, and makes her the equal, the friend, and the companion of man’.⁶⁵ Marriage for Indian women, it was supposed, simply cemented the life of ‘degradation’ they had already endured. Charles Grant’s *Observations* explained that

⁶³ This imagery of protection and sisterhood featured very regularly. ‘Let the daughters of Christian England go and take their Hindoo sisters by the hand’, encouraged one article in the *Juvenile Missionary Magazine*, volume 11, 1854, 55. See also Jane Haggis’ discussion of the evangelical ‘missionary of sisterhood’ in ‘White Women and Colonialism: Towards a Non-Recuperative History’ in Midgley, ed., *Gender and Empire*, 65.

⁶⁴ *JMM*, volume 10, 1853, 219.

⁶⁵ *Juvenile Missionary Herald*, new series volume 5, 1858, 41.

'according to the despotic manner of the east, the husband is lord, and the wife a servant; seldom does he think of making her a companion or friend'.⁶⁶ To J. Bentley, neither affection nor devotion could overcome 'the distance between the wife and her husband' caused by such a system. 'In European society', he explained,

we esteem unlimited confidence between the husband and the wife one of the greatest enjoyments of the connubial state, yea essential to the welfare of the family and the education of the children...With us the wife shares the unbounded affection of her husband, enjoys the highest esteem, and is a co-partner in all domestic affairs—with the Hindoo his wife is only a part of the household furniture.⁶⁷

Bentley was not simply playing on his audience's sensibilities, but was highlighting many of the ideals evangelicals were increasingly holding dear to their own identities. Affection and 'confidence' were the marks of Christian marriage, and thus 'heathen' marriage must lack them altogether. A Christian woman was educated and intelligent, but balanced her personal identity within her appropriate sphere—maintaining her air of 'delicate sensibility' that Bentley saw as vital to marriage.⁶⁸ Indeed, Bentley questioned how 'domestic happiness' could exist where wives 'are reduced to a state of complete servitude, and are neither qualified nor permitted to be the companions of their husbands'. He furthermore asserted that 'the Hindoos are seldom happy in their marriages', and 'instances of solid union and unalloyed happiness are rare indeed' as 'the haughty superiority of the man extinguishes that delicate sensibility which must form an ingredient in every happy union'.

Bentley was cautious in providing his own caveats. It was possible, he admitted 'that in some few cases a congeniality of disposition may happen to subsist' in Indian marriages, 'and that a consequent degree of happiness may fall to their share'. This however, he decided was not 'of the same refined cast as in Europe; but is greatly diminished by those latent feelings

⁶⁶ Grant, *Observations*, 29.

⁶⁷ Bentley, 'On the State of Female Society in India', 183-4.

⁶⁸ Similarly, John Harris, in his *Patriarchy* (London, 1855), asserted that 'heathens' also maintained concepts of 'respective spheres' for men and women, but the idea had been 'unduly magnified by the husband, to the consequent depression of the condition of the wife below her proper social rank'. In turn 'every other part of the family organization suffers the loss of her just influence, and shares...in her degradation'. According to Bentley, a son was thus brought up without 'reverential regard to his mother which ought to constitute the leading emotions of the youthful mind' and was not hereby early initiated into the rudiments of domestic tyranny'. An essay on Hindu weddings explained that 'children of four or five' were often given in marriage and 'of course...cannot tell whether, when they grow up to be men or women, they will love or even like one another. But their heathen parents care nothing about this'. It was therefore not the tradition of child-marriage itself that was the root of marital discord and inequity, but the very nature of 'heathen' society and its lack of 'natural affection'. 'In this and many other ways', the essay concluded, 'it is shown that they are very little concerned about the present or future happiness of their families'. *JMM*, volume 8, 1851, 81-2.

of superiority which nothing can completely eradicate', and that 'there must assuredly be less ardent affection, and more solid misery among the majority of Hindoo families, than in any European community'. 'Weighed in this balance', Bentley finally decided, 'the Hindoo will be found wanting'.

As we shall see, the influence of the Gospel combined with the influence of Christian families was regarded as the remedy to the most fundamental and pernicious qualities of heathenism, intended, as Anna Johnston writes, to restore 'a natural, Edenic state of relations between the sexes' and introduce 'the social characteristic of modern, Christian nations'.⁶⁹ As early as 1810, the idea that the Gospel would transform even heathen families had become widespread, as evidenced in a sermon at the LMS's sixteenth general meeting. It had made the character of women in Christian countries 'so superior to what it was, or what it is at this day, among Pagans and Mohammedans, that they appear to be a different order of beings', and the result of this transformation was that 'the *Christian* female, raised to the station she was designed to occupy in the domestic circle' (but no further) fulfilled the Biblical archetype of the wife: a spiritual, parental, and financial partner and 'helpmeet',

not only in the management of their worldly circumstances, but in promoting the health, the character, and the reputation of her husband, and, above all, in advancing personal piety, and meetness for the kingdom of heaven'.⁷⁰

Not only were Christian women supposed to be the saviours and heroes of their 'heathen sisters' under the sway of tyrannical husbands, but to be the vessels and models as well of the 'maternal influence' that would effect change at the root of Indian society: the relationship between mother and child. It was thus in their power—and incumbent upon them—to reform and re-make heathen families. Indeed, it was an emphasis on the conversion of 'heathen' mothers that came to characterize much of the ideology and theology of missions—and therefore its rhetorical discourse—by the mid-nineteenth century.⁷¹ In much the same way that Indian women's 'degradation' was catalogued and put on display, and thus attributed to

⁶⁹ Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire*, 45.

⁷⁰ George Collison, 'Sermon III: Britain's Prayer for the Heathen Nations' in London Missionary Society, *Four Sermons, preached in London at the Sixteenth General Meeting of The Missionary Society, May 9, 10, 11, 1810, &c.* (London, 1810), 33.

⁷¹ Hill, *The World Their Household*, 5. As Scudder put it, British women's exalted status was due wholly to Christianity, 'and everything that makes you to differ from heathen mothers proves it'. *Appeal to Mothers*, 44.

their character as wives, it also affected their character as mothers. William Ward, in his wide-ranging *Hindoos*, simultaneously identified the roots of Indian mothers' 'failings' and what instead raised the Christian mother to model status:

The deficiency in the education and information of females not only prevents their becoming agreeable companions to their husbands, but renders them incapable of forming the minds of their children, and of giving them that instruction which lays the foundations of future excellence: by which tender offices, European mothers become greater benefactors of the age in which they live, than all the learned men with which a country can be blessed.⁷²

The centrality of 'woman's influence' to evangelical ideology did much to create a sense of urgency and fear surrounding the 'corrupting' influence of the 'heathen' mother.⁷³ This incapability to exert a positive influence (and, in fact, her propensity toward a *negative* influence) was the basis for much of the imagery of the 'heathen' mother presented to elicit the sympathy and 'aid' of her Christian counterparts in Britain (and farther afield). 'It is not expected that the poor ignorant mother can well train or teach her children', ran one article in a series called 'Woman in India', for despite her love and good intentions, 'she can do them but little good, and her first lessons are often very foolish'.⁷⁴

It was likewise asserted that it was (at least partially) from Indian mothers' 'corrupt' influence that India was sunk in sin.⁷⁵ Physical images of mothers instructing their children in idolatry, and the associated textual images constructed in narrating these 'domestic scenes' were popular and pervasive, especially in children's missionary literature—aimed at both Christian girls and their mothers. The article accompanying the illustration below identified mothers as 'the great pillars of idolatrous superstition', subject to 'their family priests, who worm their way around them'.⁷⁶ Thus, the *Juvenile Missionary Herald* later reminded readers, 'there must be efforts of a special character...when we remember how powerful for

⁷² Ward, *Hindoos*, volume 1, 183; 279.

⁷³ Some were willing to admit that 'women's influence' held as much sway in India as it did in England—[for good or for bad]! 'From what we have heard and seen we believe that the females have more influence over the families of the natives than is generally thought in England'. Russell, 'Thoughts', 18.

⁷⁴ *JMM*, volume 11, 1854, 32-6.

⁷⁵ 'Evangelical concentration on the figure of the Christian woman, and particularly the mother, as the source of spiritual light', writes Anna Johnston, 'fuelled statements such as "the influence of females in all countries is great for good or evil—it is the chief means by which the chains of Satan are riveted on to the minds of the young". The judgemental missionary writer could thus decide that Indian mothers' influence was more evil than good'. *Missionary Writing and Empire*, 93.

⁷⁶ *JMH*, new series volume 8, 1855, 171.

good or evil is female influence':

Hitherto the whole weight of it has been against us in India: mothers, wives, have been the greatest hinderers in individual instances of conversion to Christianity. But there is a change beginning in this respect...until India's daughters shall no longer be the great supporters of the filthy idols, but the living ornaments of native Christianity.⁷⁷



Figure 3—‘The Hindoo Mother’s Teaching’
Juvenile Missionary Herald, 1855

Not only was it the idea of a ‘corrupt’ influence that was supposed to characterize ‘heathen’ women, but an utter *lack* of influence altogether. After reciting his standard catalogue of the evils affecting Indian women for ‘The Ladies of Liverpool’, Ward brought his point home:

How deplorable the condition of your sex when superstition...extinguishes every sensibility of the female, and every feeling of the mother, and makes her more savage than the tiger which howls in the forest, which always spares and cherishes its own offspring.⁷⁸

But was this emphasis on ‘women’s influence’ merely a reflection of shifting tastes, rather than shifting sensibilities? Such imagery stood in marked contrast to some earlier portrayals of ‘heathen’ family life that had reflected the significance of family worship and the headship of the father. As William Ward wrote in his *Hindoos*, ‘in all these religious ceremonies not a

⁷⁷ ‘Missionary Work Among the Females of India’, *JMH*, new series volume 14, 1864, 94-5. ‘Heathen mothers’, Joshua Russell asserted, ‘will imbue their little ones with the love of idolatrous practices and of the errors and vices connected therewith. So long as there are heathen mothers there will be heathen children’. ‘Thoughts’, 18.

⁷⁸ *EM*, volume 28, 1820, 312.

particle is found to interest or amend the heart, no family bible...no domestic worship'.⁷⁹ Or, as a later article in the *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* put it:

[The father] does not call about him his wife and children, that they may pray together. His wife, he thinks, will be saved by his good works. His children, if boys, will set up their own gods when they grow up. How different all this from a Christian family, where father, mother, and children, morning and evening, meet together to read the Bible, to sing God's praises, and with one heart and voice to worship the true and living God.⁸⁰



Figure 4—‘A Whole Heathen Family Taking Offerings to a Hindoo God’
Little Home Missionaries, 1842

Whether Ward and his successors were simply misinformed or, more probably, misinforming will remain a matter of some debate, but their central message remained clear.⁸¹ Here unity of purpose and faith—and in this case the action of worship—were identified as one of the most important values of the Christian family, absent in its heathen counterpart, standing as one of the most common themes in missionary literature on the heathen. Thus when Robert Caldwell, SPG missionary and bishop in South India, made the case that missionaries ‘introduce...the gentleness, meekness, and goodwill which are the blessing of families, that

⁷⁹ Ward, *Hindoos*, volume 1, cxxxiii; volume 3, 257, note ‘e’. Ward explained that women and children took no part in the father’s worship as it was ‘not supposed to belong to them’.

⁸⁰ *JMM*, volume 15, 1858, 29-30.

⁸¹ See Norvin Hein, *Early Protestant Views of Hinduism* (Naperville, Illinois, 1956), 43. Other studies of Hindu modes of worship in connection with the family and the household include J.E. Padfield, *The Hindu Family at Home: Being Sketches on Hindu Family Life* (Madras, 1896) and B. Mullick, *Essays on the Hindu Family* (Calcutta, 1882).

integrity which is the bond of union in communities and that righteousness which exalteth a nation', he was presenting an idealized model for both 'the heathen' and for Christian Britain—a domesticity built on unity, partnership, and faith.⁸² So beyond distinctions between spiritual roles, and even between *representations*, there are a number of broad themes in missionary literature that serve as markers for 'heathen' and 'Christian' identity.

The phrase '*without natural affection*' from Paul's description of 'the heathen' served as another common rhetorical device. As the *Calcutta Christian Observer* put it in June 1847, '*Without natural affection* is one of the darkest depths into which man, with his boasted powers can fall', and was from early on applied to Indian parents.⁸³ Their supposed lack of 'natural affection' became by and by more central to the evangelical narrative with the prevailing trend of familial themes. Grant noted that 'filial and paternal affection appear equally deficient among them', conceding that Indian parents often showed 'much tenderness to children...but instances on the other side are so general, as clearly to mark the dispositions of the people'.⁸⁴ Abhijit Dutta points out in his study of missionaries in Bengal that John Weitbrecht, the CMS missionary, similarly allowed that, 'although...it was true that Hindu parents manifested a tender affection toward their offspring, it was more of an animal than of an intellectual kind'.⁸⁵ Naturally not all discussions of Indian women were as extreme as to dismiss their humanity outright, but similar imagery was often employed:

That the Hindoo female possesses natural affection no one will question; but it resembles too strongly the affections of an irrational being toward its young, and concentrates all anxiety, not so much in the welfare of her offspring, as in the desire of seeing, and feeling, and handling them.⁸⁶

These assessments of Indian women were neither universal nor consistent, however. There were plenty of opportunities to present them in a more sympathetic light—perhaps in order to prevent the constant images of sorrow and cruelty from desensitizing the audience. The reviewer of John Lawson's 'Woman in India' knowingly presented an assessment of

⁸² Quoted in Piggin, *Making Evangelical Missionaries*, 139.

⁸³ 'Papers on Missionaries', *Calcutta Christian Observer*, June 1847.

⁸⁴ Grant, *Observations*, 34.

⁸⁵ Abhijit Dutta, *Nineteenth Century Bengal Society and the Christian Missionaries* (Calcutta, 1992). 2-7 *passim*.

⁸⁶ Bentley, 'On the State of Female Society in India'.

Indian women quite opposite of William Ward's:

Indian women, whose degraded state has long outraged every feeling of humanity, are not less susceptible of these amiable qualities [of British women]. We could easily mention numerous instances of the most exemplary and devoted affection of these unhappy women'.⁸⁷

Like Grant, Weitbrecht too 'witnessed strong exceptions to the above general phenomenon,' for, according to him, 'the flame of maternal love sometimes burnt brightly even in the breasts of heathen mothers', but that sort of admission did little by way of eliciting the kinds of reactions expected from the home audiences of such narratives.⁸⁸ An 1857 essay on 'Heathen Mothers' in the LMS's *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* explained to its young readers that they were 'without natural affection', but that there were sometimes exceptions to this rule: 'When this great evil ['heathen superstition'] does not make the mother, as it often does, forget even her sucking child, we find her love as strong and as tender as the love of mothers of Christian lands'.⁸⁹ As in other cases, occasional caveats served to reinforce the *Christian* readers' experience with that of the heathens'. 'You have often heard about Hindoo mothers, and have been told how very cruel some of them are', ran one article. 'but they are not *all* so'. 'Many of them love their babies very much', it pointed out, and reinforcing the transformational power of the Gospel, it continued, 'when they become Christians, the parents of Hindoo children are as kind, and love them as much, as your parents love you'.⁹⁰ The article accompanying the portrait of 'A Field Labourer's Wife in India' (Figure 2) above was quite generous: the subject, 'one of the many daughters of toil who dwell in sunny India' was

no doubt hurrying home to get her husband's supper, and perhaps she is walking all the faster because she is thinking of the sweet babe she left in the morning, and longs to carry it at her side—to see its bright eyes, and to kiss its dark, laughing cheek, and call it her 'gem', her 'joy', and 'the apple of her eye'.⁹¹

⁸⁷ *BM*, volume 13, 1821, 293. The reviewer also provided the example of several 'Hindoo women, of the vilest description', whose 'genuine piety and heroic bravery' were narrated in the *Periodical Accounts*. One early appeal in the *PA* insisted that 'these hapless immortals are as capable of receiving instruction, of enjoying the pleasures of social intercourse, of cherishing the feelings of conjugal and parental affection, as the wives and mothers and daughters of Christian England are'. 'Address to the Friends of Missions', *PA*, volume 7, 1819-1823, 45.

⁸⁸ Dutta, *Nineteenth Century Bengal Society*, 2-7 *passim*.

⁸⁹ *JMM*, volume 14, 1857, 119. An earlier article in the same magazine explained simply that heathenism turned a mother's heart 'into a heart of stone'. Volume 1, 1844, 57-60.

⁹⁰ *JMM*, volume 4, 1847, 183-5. Another author similarly explained, 'When we have sent Bibles and missionaries to their fathers and mothers, they will learn to love their little children, and will not be so cruel to them any more'. *Missionary Stories* (London, 1842), 9.

⁹¹ *JMM*, volume 10, 1853, 219.

Indeed, the *JMM* took this point even further in ‘Mothers—Monsters’, persuading its young readers that if they did as much as they could to send out more missionaries, ‘all heathen mothers will learn to love their children as your mothers love you’.⁹² The Baptist Missionary Society (and the Church Missionary Society three years later) themselves attempted to appropriate some of that ‘maternal influence’ over their juvenile readers, entreating, ‘if you love your own sweet mother’s teaching, love the missionary society, which is sending teachers to heathen mothers and heathen children’.⁹³ Thus the transition from ‘many’ to ‘all’ was contingent upon the efforts of young people (as well as their parents) to send missionaries and maintain their work.

*So long as there are heathen mothers there will be heathen children.*⁹⁴

Mirroring the ways the ‘heathen’ adult was differentiated from the Christian, ‘heathen’ children were also often the subject of missionaries’ observations and descriptions, especially as schools formed a major portion of missionary activity. The editors of the LMS’s *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* were certain that a ‘heathen’ childhood was ‘a sad, sad state to be born and brought up in...far worse than any of the little boys in this land, and not to be compared to the readers of this Magazine’.⁹⁵ In fact, much like their parents, evangelical children were constantly reminded how very different Indian children were from themselves. In India, ‘the dear children are taught by their parents to worship idols; they are taken to the temples of the idols when they are very young, and are bid to bow the knee, and offer prayer, to mere stocks and stones’.⁹⁶ Thus, again, even though they, too, received spiritual guidance and teaching from their parents, it was corrupting rather than edifying. ‘There are yet multitudes of children now around us’, wrote one missionary, ‘who seldom hear the name of God, except in oaths and blasphemies; who have no pious friend to take them from the evil example of wicked parents.’⁹⁷

⁹² ‘Mothers—Monsters’, *JMM*, volume 7, 1850, 139-141.

⁹³ *JMH*, new series volume 7, 1854, 76. See also the *Church Missionary Juvenile Intelligencer*, new series volume 6, 1857, 211.

⁹⁴ Russell, ‘Thoughts’, 18.

⁹⁵ *JMM*, volume 6, 1849, 54-8.

⁹⁶ *JMM*, volume 5, 1848, 32.

⁹⁷ *BCM*, volume 7, 1831, 249.

Nor was it only their circumstances or their upbringing that made Indian children objects of evangelical scrutiny and pity. Those ‘heathen’ characteristics outlined in the Bible and applied to their parents were just as often ascribed to them. ‘You have heard much of the cruelties of heathen parents,’ wrote one missionary. ‘Do not think that it is the parents only who are cruel. Where the true God is not known, children are often no less cruel to their aged parents. I do not mean to say that *all* heathen parents, and *all* heathen children are cruel; but it is the nature of heathenism to make them so’.⁹⁸ Not all accounts were so reserved. ‘Children in this country are taught to love one another, but in heathen countries they are without “natural affection”’, one article more boldly proclaimed. ‘Without natural affection’, the favoured phrase of many writers, featured frequently not only in stories of parents abandoning or sacrificing their children, but of children [often grown] leaving their relations to die or even hastening the process.⁹⁹ One reads of children on a pilgrimage to Juggernaut watching their mother die by the wayside, or in a similar story, of a boy who leaves his sick brother on the side of the road to die, leading the narrator to remind his young readers to ‘be thankful you have been taught to love one another’.¹⁰⁰

Besides the ubiquitous Biblical descriptions were the traditional tropes: Indian children were, like their parents, notoriously deceitful and were ‘masters of subtlety’, leading one writer to remark ‘the dexterity of little boys in evading the Gospel is the amazement of the Missionary’.¹⁰¹ ‘Heathen’ children were consummate liars, cheats, thieves, and were ‘very disobedient to their parents’.¹⁰² In an 1811 letter published in the *Periodical Accounts of the Baptist Missionary Society*, Owen Leonard wrote about Indian children, ‘I do not believe that children of their age, even in Constantinople, exceed them in lying, swearing, obscenity, resentment, accompanied by deep-rooted pride...All these vices are seen glaringly in children scarcely arrived at the age of six years’.¹⁰³ Even in the 1870s the girls at the Female Orphan

⁹⁸ ‘Heathen Children’ in *Missionary Stories*.

⁹⁹ See ‘Without Natural Affection’, *JMM*, volume 3, 1846, 84.

¹⁰⁰ *BCM*, volume 1, 1827, 144; 241. Indeed, stories like these echoed the many cautionary tales directed toward British children which told of sudden and unexpected (and often gruesome) deaths and warned them of their own fleeting chances for salvation and redemption.

¹⁰¹ *Calcutta Christian Observer*, volume 10, 1844, 623.

¹⁰² *BCM*, new series volume 3, 1847, 193. Meanwhile evangelical literature abounded in cautionary tales of youthful Sabbath breakers and ‘naughty children addicted to falsehood and deceit’ who had died suddenly and were ‘destined for eternal perdition’. Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness*, 187.

¹⁰³ Leonard to Marshman, Calcutta, 13 June 1811, ‘Moral State of the Children’, *Periodical Accounts of the Baptist Missionary Society*, volume 5, 1813, 332. To this, the editor of the magazine added, ‘This might appear incredible, but children arrive at maturity much earlier in the East than with us.’ Leonard, in classic orientalist form, applies to Indian children qualities that are directly opposite of the values he considers highest. This

Asylum at Calcutta were characterized by ‘deceitfulness, vanity, and indisposition to study’ stemming from a ‘constitutional weakness’.¹⁰⁴ William Ward explained in his *Hindoos* that Indian children, ‘destitute...of all that contributes to the formation of good dispositions and habits...herd together for mutual corruption’, later reiterating that they

are seldom corrected, and having none of the moral advantage of the children of Christian parents, they ripen fast in iniquity, and among the rest in disobedience to parents....At a very early age, they enter into the paths of impurity, in which they meet with no checks either from conscience, the virtuous examples of the parents, or the state of public morals'.¹⁰⁵

Thus the failure of the Hindu parent was not a lack of affection, but misguided affection in the form of permissiveness. ‘The Hindoos in general carry their attachment to children, especially to sons, to the greatest excess’, and ironically, Ward points out, ‘they are amazed at the apparent want of affection in Europeans, who leave their parents, and traverse foreign countries, some of them without the hope of ever seeing them again’.¹⁰⁶ Joshua Marshman’s 1816 pamphlet *Hints Relative to Native Schools* reminded readers that many ‘native’ students and their parents were ‘utterly unacquainted with the nature and obligation of relative duties,’ and that ‘ignorance of parental duty on the one hand, and of filial obligation on the other’ were at the root of many of the problems facing missionaries and the progress of the Gospel.¹⁰⁷ Even at the very end of the nineteenth century, James Dennis revealed that these conceptions still prevailed among evangelical writers—and therefore among their audiences. ‘In India’, he writes, ‘the utter neglect of family training seems to be the feature most to be noted... The children, except those of the higher classes, are left to their own devices to grow up under the influence of their own tainted environment’.¹⁰⁸ These examples probably reveal as much as anything else about evangelicals and those qualities they held dearest: affection and tenderness were equated with obedience and reverence. As the *Baptist Children’s*

comment, curious in and of itself, can be taken in at least two ways. He either attempts to temper Leonard’s assessment with a rationalization for his readers, or simply applies a further distinction to emphasize how very different children in the East are—or perhaps both.

¹⁰⁴ J. Fayrer, *European Child-life in Bengal* (London, 1873). Quoted in E. M. Collingham, *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj, c. 1800–1947* (Cambridge, 2001), 179.

¹⁰⁵ Ward, *Hindoos*, volume 1, xxxv; 163. Ward later adds that Indian parents were ‘exceedingly neglectful of early discipline, and hence disobedience to parents is proverbial to a shocking degree’. 288.

¹⁰⁶ Ward, *Hindoos*, volume 1, 179.

¹⁰⁷ Joshua Marshman, *Hints Relative to Native Schools* (Serampore, 1816). Naturally occasional exceptions emerge: John Parsons, Baptist missionary at Monghir, received two young boys from their mother, ‘a rather superior woman for a native’, and noted that she had instilled in them ‘early habits of obedience’. Parsons, 3 August 1841, *MH*, December 1841.

¹⁰⁸ *Christian Missionaries and Social Progress* (New York, 1899), 127.

Magazine clarified in 1852, ‘Filial Obedience...is the happiness of the offering, the joy of the family, the order and concord of society. The duties of the domestic home are modified and expanded into the duties of social and public life’.¹⁰⁹ Thus the stability and unity of the Christian family was reinforced as the stabilizing factor of Victorian society—and the ideal for which other societies should strive as well.

Conclusions

Though I have mentioned some of the ‘characteristics’ emphasized and mirrored in evangelical literature—unity and companionship, discipline and order—they only serve as a starting point to understanding more fully the motives and ideals of those who, in supporting missionaries, were creating for themselves idealized identities. It was easier, and frankly more interesting, to describe and define what they were *not*—idolatrous, disorderly, and unloving—rather than what they were. Thus, the suggestion by Antony Copley and others that Victorians’ rhetoric on the ‘heathen’ was in response to their own social paranoia certainly holds some merit, but is only a partial explanation. There was a continuous process of self-definition and reinforcement of those characteristics evangelicals considered vital to their own identity, as well as that of their ‘others’. In this case, ‘family’ was a significant element in discussing and describing identity. Through their families evangelicals represented themselves as pious, unified, and stable, while they described the ‘heathen’ in exactly the opposite terms. The increasingly central role of women to that identity saw a parallel emphasis on the character and roles of ‘heathen’ women—as individuals, as wives, and as mothers. This, combined with an emerging trend in British society, also led to more attention given to children, both Christian and ‘heathen’. It was from this context that the earliest evangelical missionaries headed out to India and began to contribute to this developing worldview.

On the missionary field itself, however, these issues of identity and ideals often became clouded. While missionaries remained in relatively close touch with the prevailing religious and social trends at home, especially as consumers of the same literature some contributed to themselves, their own circumstances and constant interaction with ‘the heathen’ meant that

¹⁰⁹ ‘Filial Obedience’, *BCM*, new series volume 2, January 1852, 29.

their perspectives were rarely as one-sided as popularly imagined and portrayed. Constant referencing and borrowing of descriptions and imagery of ‘the heathen’ contributed to a growing body of work on the subject—even if little of it was genuine or original—and it was precisely this volume and repetition, rather than its authenticity, that led to the ‘construction and cultivation’ of popular evangelical ideas and understandings of the world and its people.

But how did this perception of ‘the heathen’ (and their families) work its way into common awareness and thought, and thus into missionaries’ narratives of their work and experiences among natives—heathen and Christian? How did representations of the mission field simultaneously reflect realities and ideals? How did missionaries’ narratives and appeals serve to create and reinforce such a worldview? This is what I see as the key issue that this study addresses—the difference and divergence between narrative and rhetoric, experience and perception. The following chapters examine the relationship between missionaries’ ideals and practices: how the power of such imagery and ideology at once provided a core system of values and identity, informed their approaches to mission, and shaped the ways they related their own experiences to home audiences.

Chapter Two: The Serampore Mission Family

'If there is a blessed and happy family in the East Indies it is the Mission family at Serampore'.¹

The story of the origins of the Serampore mission has been well rehearsed, notably in the many biographies of William Carey.² The mission was established in January 1800 by six missionaries of the Baptist Missionary Society: William Carey, Joshua Marshman, William Ward, John Fountain, William Grant and Daniel Brunsdon, and their families. Of these, Carey and Fountain had been resident in India for several years, but precarious finances and an increasingly suspicious British East India Company government at Calcutta had led them to accept an invitation to the Danish enclave of Serampore, fifteen miles above Calcutta on the river Hooghly. The rest, newly arrived, had made an effort to avoid any Company attention, avoiding Calcutta altogether and proceeding upriver. The mission rested on a communal, egalitarian structure that had been planned years in advance, but would require further years to be fully realized.

This chapter examines the establishment of the 'Serampore Mission Family' and the role such ideas played in its formation and function. It considers how the concept of 'family' underpinned the physical and ideological structures of the mission itself, and evaluates how successfully the 'mission family' operated as a model for both the local community and audiences at home. Aside from logistic considerations, there are methodological and ideological reasons for beginning with Serampore. Founded in the Baptist tradition of believers collectively declaring their faith and collectively covenanting to hold each other accountable and sanctified, Serampore was to represent the unity of purpose and purity, and the notion of the 'visible church', that were the hallmarks of that denomination's identity.³

¹ Brunsdon to Sutcliffe, 19 November 1800, BMS MSS IN/2. See *BM*, volume 14, 1822, 126.

² John Clark Marshman, S. Pearce Carey and George Smith's remain old standards (see Bibliography). Mary Drewery's *William Carey: A Biography* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1979) and Timothy George's *Faithful Witness* (New Hope, Connecticut, 1991), both contribute much new insight—though both draw heavily from their predecessors. K.P. Sen Gupta's *The Christian Missionaries in Bengal* (Calcutta, 1971) offers a critical perspective on the Serampore Mission, drawn primarily from printed correspondence and William Ward's journal.

³ As we shall see throughout, sanctification and purity were reinforced by strict church order and discipline, features William H. Brackney considers 'paramount' to Baptist identity. *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought* (Macon, Georgia, 2004), 106. See also Raymond Brown, *The English Baptists of the 18th Century* (London, 1986) and Paul S. Fiddes, "Walking Together": The Place of Covenant Theology in Baptist Life Yesterday and

Moreover, the Victorian concept of ‘model domesticity’ in mission was not conceived of spontaneously; rather it was consciously developed over decades of practice in the field. Even from its experimental roots, Serampore was designed as and functioned as a model for its own branches and missions elsewhere, and the ‘Serampore Mission Family’ in many ways lay the foundations for ‘model domesticity’ on the mission field.

Envisioning the Mission Family

Even before leaving England, family concerns weighed on the future members of the Serampore Mission Family. William Carey, when asked by the BMS in 1791 to join John Thomas in Bengal, objected to the idea of ‘leaving his family behind him’, but he had already moved the family several times, all the while dogged by poverty, and his wife Dorothy adamantly refused to participate in his mission scheme. Carey, notoriously single-minded, persisted, finally resolving ‘to leave his family for a season’ and only bring along the eldest of his three sons, then eight years old. It was this particular character trait of Carey’s that would remain the most significant—both to his work and in his family life. S.K. Chatterjee’s criticism that ‘Carey was then burning with missionary fervor and was blind to the particular problems of the family’, is not wholly accurate, but the next several years would contribute much to such an assessment.⁴ Leaving his family behind proved unnecessary, however, when passage for his wife, children, and his sister-in-law was secured by the BMS at the last moment, and they left England forever.⁵

For the next eight years India proved as difficult for the Carey family as England had. John Thomas’ profligate habits had almost immediately sapped their small supply of ready money, and they were forced to leave Calcutta. Finding temporary shelter at Debhatta, in the Sundarbans, with a British salt-agent named Charles Short (whom Carey’s sister-in- law soon married), Carey hacked out a homestead there in his own experiment at establishing a mission settlement and ‘Christian village’ before finally accepting the superintendence of an indigo factory up-country at Mudnabatty, where he and his family remained for five more

⁴ Today” in *Pilgrim Pathways: Essays in Baptist History in Honour of B.R. White*. (Macon, Georgia, 1999). 47-74.

⁵ Sunil K. Chatterjee, *Felix Carey: A Tiger Tamed* (Hooghly, 1991), 12.

⁵ PA, volume 1, 1800, 35.

years. In that time he lost his youngest son to fever, another son was born, and his wife Dorothy steadily slipped into depression and insanity.⁶ Timothy George's *Faithful Witness* provides an especially detailed and interesting discussion of this period in Carey's life. This last move, the Carey family's fifth in sixth months, 'must have fallen with a *thud* on this dismayed household'.⁷ The constant shuffling about, deprivations, and isolation of Carey's missionary endeavour had taken a severe toll on his family, and in response he turned more wholly to his work. Carey busied himself with preaching and translation of the scriptures, all while managing an indigo factory—an altogether different experience from that of a village preacher in England. He soon had a small congregation of sorts among his employees and the local people, but was yet to have any conversions or declarations of faith from them, and it was in this period that he further developed his conception of a communal mission, certainly for its social value as much as for its practical value.

Carey had early on recognized the value of multiple missionaries to tackle the variety of tasks and challenges faced in the mission field. Evangelism, itineration, translation, and printing were one thing, but a 'mission settlement' would require 'more missionaries...[to] stay at home and manage our domestic affairs' and 'instruct the children'.⁸ A large 'mission family' would relieve the stresses of social and spiritual isolation he and his family had hitherto endured, and would allow him and others to pursue their missionary work while providing for the children and the daily affairs that had often escaped him. Dorothy, all along a reluctant participant in her husband's mission, had nonetheless provided him with an additional perspective invaluable to future missionaries, that it was 'absolutely necessary for the wives of missionaries to be as hearty in the work of their husbands'.⁹ As we shall see,

⁶ Dorothy—who William described at one point as 'wicked'—had repeatedly spread rumors of William's adultery and even assaulted him. The last year or so of her life found her confined to her rooms, often in restraints. See S. K. Chatterjee, *Family Letters of William Carey* (Hooghly, 2002), 45-68.

⁷ Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Birmingham, Alabama, 1999), 104. Peter Hinchliff, in a rather tongue-in-cheek summation of early missionary activity, explains that that they 'often disappeared into the bush, desert, or jungle, stopped when they came to a site where there was food, water, and heathen, and preached in whatever language happened to be available'. Moreover, they 'did not need much mundane preparation', believing instead that God would somehow provide all the training they needed. 'The Selection and Training of Missions in the Early Nineteenth Century' in G.J. Cuming, ed., *The Mission of the Church and the Propagation of the Faith. Studies in Church History 6* (Cambridge, 1970), 131-5.

⁸ PA, volume 1, 1800, 372.

⁹ Eight years later, When Marshman, Brunsdon, and Grant were preparing to embark for India, 'their wives also were willing to accompany them' (Ward was as yet unmarried). BMS MSS Society Minutes 1792-1837, volume 1, October 1792-April 1799, 106. Another crop of missionaries sent to Serampore in 1809 were exhorted to 'be careful with regard to your conduct in the family, and in the world...Happy is it for such of you who are in the marriage state, that your partners in life...[are] not under the influence of strong persuasion; but

Carey's intentions were in many ways put into practice, but could not retroactively restore a healthy family life. It is perhaps ironic that the Carey family, which would certainly be considered 'dysfunctional' in today's terms, would form the basis for a model of mission domesticity.

Carey's *Enquiry* of 1792, the document that many have considered the first manifesto of the modern mission movement, included his initial ideas for a successful mission premises: 'It should be self-supporting and inhabited by a common family...with common stock...around a common table'.¹⁰ As Oussoren has shown in his study of Carey's ideological influences, the *Enquiry* rested solidly on the principles of the Moravians, Carey's forerunners in the mission field, though it departed significantly on many theological and practical grounds.¹¹ Having established missions in such diverse locations as Greenland, the West Indies, and Abyssinia (Ethiopia), the Moravians had long been on the frontiers of Christendom, basing their missions on the principles of simplicity, proximity to the native population, and self-sufficiency.

Several years in India allowed Carey to further develop his own ideas, and in 1796 he 'proposed to form a Moravian settlement' near Malda of 'seven or eight families', who would 'live together in a number of little straw houses forming a line or a square'.¹² This intimate and communitarian structure would afford four advantages: economy, clearly-allocated tasks, a collective Christian witness, and a renewable resource in the mission's children.¹³ It would allow the missionaries to effectively evangelize while continuing the translation and printing work Carey had begun on his arrival in India, and would moreover provide the social support he had hitherto lacked. In light of the previous difficulties in establishing a mission in Bengal, the BMS committee was at first hesitant about the financial and logistic challenges inherent in this proposal. John Clark Marshman, son of Joshua Marshman and himself an active member of the Serampore mission, was as skeptical in retrospect as the BMS

from conviction in their own minds, agree cordially to accompany you; it is of great importance'. *BM*, volume 1, 1809, 267.

¹⁰ *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (Leicester, 1792).

¹¹ A.H. Oussoren, *William Carey, Especially his Missionary Methods* (Leiden, 1945), 58.

¹² John Clark Marshman, *Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward, embracing the history of the Serampore mission*, volume 1 (London, 1859), 37.

¹³ Carey to Fuller, 16 November 1796, BMS MSS IN/13. See Stanley, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, 39.

committee had been at learning of such a proposal, remarking in his biopic of the Serampore Trio that ‘even if his straw huts and mud floors had not sent half of the community to the grave during the first rainy season the unconceivable distress to which European families must have been subjected in such a colony, in such a climate, would have broken it within a twelvemonth’.¹⁴

The idea of a self-supporting mission, however, remained appealing, and the committee members were anyway well aware of Moravian precedents. J.C.S. Mason explains that many of the ‘principals of the BMS and LMS’ had long been familiar with Moravian publications¹⁵, and the BMS’s *Periodical Accounts* record that the Society had early on received ‘pecuniary assistance’ from one Moravian minister, while another had ‘in a most friendly letter expressed his earnest wishes for our success’ and offered his ideas on ‘the proper advice to be given’ to the missionaries the BMS intended to send out.¹⁶ Andrew Fuller, the Society’s secretary, finally wrote Carey in September 1797 to approve the plan, as ‘the experience of the Moravians seems to sanction it’.¹⁷ Where Carey departed from the Moravian model, however, was in the very purpose and scope of his proposed mission and those that would follow it. As we shall see, many of the pragmatic aspects of their experiences resonated throughout the Serampore model, but while the Moravians saw their role as rather insular and limited, Carey envisioned an expansive mission with printing and manufacturing works, schools, and outstations scattered across Bengal. Indeed, Fuller admitted, ‘I suppose you could not carry it into execution without more missionaries, and without some active amiable women amongst them’. ‘Do whatever your own judgment dictates, all circumstances considered’, he concluded, ‘So advises the Society’.¹⁸ And so it was that almost a year and a half later four new missionaries were selected to join William

¹⁴ Marshman, *Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward*, volume 1, 37.

¹⁵ J.C.S. Mason, *The Moravian Church and the Missionary Awakening in England, 1760-1800* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2001), 74; 173-4. Mason devotes considerable space to the connections between the Moravians and the emergence of evangelical missions, and especially with Carey and the BMS. See also E. D. Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries in India, 1793-1837: The History of Serampore and its Missions* (Cambridge, 1967), 14-15. Carey had been especially influenced by the work of David Brainerd among the Indians of North America. William Ward would later express his own familiarity with the Moravians, recording in his journal going out to India, ‘Thank you, Moravians. If ever I am a missionary worth a straw, I shall owe it to you under our Saviour’, and requesting Andrew Fuller not to ‘print too many encomiums on us. The Moravians do not do so’. See S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey, D.D., Fellow of the Linnaean Society* (New York, 1923), 183.

¹⁶ PA, volume 1, 1800, 49.

¹⁷ S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 185.

¹⁸ Fuller to Carey, 6 September 1797, BMS MSS H1, Home Office Correspondence A, Andrew Fuller, correspondence.

Carey and the recently arrived John Fountain in Bengal, and on 31 May 1799 they set off with their families (and Fountain's fiancée, Mary Tidd) from Portsmouth.

Maintaining good relationships among the missionaries and their families was of course a crucial component of the success of the mission, but it was the wives who were seen as the lynchpins to the scheme. In his farewell address in 1799, Andrew Fuller urged Brunsdon, Grant, Marshman and Ward and their families to 'remember you are going to be members of the "happy family"' and to 'be careful to abound in little offices of kindness to one another and especially to the Sisters'.¹⁹ While the mission's women were expected to provide the domestic foundation of the community, it was also feared that they could prove its weakest points. Indeed, according to Ward, the voyage out was more than once fraught with 'womanish frictions'.²⁰ Nor were husbands immune from fatherly advice from Fuller, who warned them against 'being *too free*' in their connections with 'religious females', as 'many a blot has originated in Christian affection'. 'Marriage is God's remedy against sin', Fuller added, 'but it is not sufficient without your watchfulness. It was not thought indecorous for Paul to warn even Timothy, a man of God, against fleshly lusts'.²¹

On their voyage out, Joshua Marshman revealed his own fears about his family's well-being, and the unknown circumstances that awaited them in India, recording on 5 July 1799, 'Have for many days past found my mind oppressed with fear about my family, respecting their comforts in the strange climate where we must expect to meet many things, which are exceedingly new to a woman's feelings'.²² This last reveals as much about himself as it does about his attitudes toward his wife, Hannah (who would become one of the cornerstones of the Mission Family). A few months later, still at sea, Marshman 'had a long conversation with Hannah about the nature of our calling and our duties toward each other, and above all loving those who are connected with us in the Lord's bonds'.²³ This was apparently an

¹⁹ PA, volume 1, 1800, 229-30. Fuller also authored a short essay entitled 'Portrait of a Good Wife'. See *Oriental Baptist*, volume 4, 1850, 58.

²⁰ Ward also reminded Fuller to 'be very careful what stamp missionaries' wives are made of'. Oussoren, *William Carey*, 66.

²¹ Fuller to Carey, 6 September 1797, BMS MSS H1, Home Office Correspondence A, Andrew Fuller. correspondence. Though directed at the missionaries, this was perhaps just as much about the dangers of women's sexuality and the pitfalls of a tropical climate, already well established in the British mindset. See Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York, 1995).

²² Joshua Marshman, journal, 5 July 1799, BMS MSS IN/29. See also, S. K. Chatterjee, *Hannah Marshman: First Woman Missionary in India* (Hooghly, 1987). Carey, too, noted how his wife and sister-in-law constantly complained about not having 'the necessities of life'. See F. Deaville Walker, *William Carey, Missionary Pioneer and Statesman* (Chicago, 1951), 151.

²³ Joshua Marshman, journal, 1 September 1799, BMS MSS IN/29.

exception to the usual practice of the missionaries on board, who at one point even abandoned their weekly discussions ‘on deck’ as ‘we don’t like to tell each other our faults before the women’.²⁴

Avoiding contention was also essential to maintaining the mission’s integrity, and moreover reflected on the faith of the family’s members and heads equally. Unity and harmony were the hallmarks of the well-ordered evangelical family; the Serampore ‘mission family’ was the model by which such ideals would be presented to the heathen. Andrew Fuller, writing to William Ward in 1802 on the question of ‘unconverted persons’ in the mission family, advised him to ‘only take care of two things’: to preserve the purity of the church, and to ensure ‘that whatever unconverted persons may be in the family, they adhere to all its *orders* and interrupt not its *peace*. If they fail in either of these, the laws of the house should require their exclusion—I mean if they cannot be reduced to order’.²⁵ Fuller was particular to emphasize the values he considered central to the family—and in this case home and church were inseparable. ‘Church’, ‘orders’, ‘peace’, and ‘laws’ were all underscored (and prescribed) as the proper priorities of the mission family. In a joint letter to the Society, published in the *Periodical Accounts*, the Serampore missionaries had suggested that ‘as it is our wisdom to continue together in one family...those amiable dispositions which render society a blessing should be an object of the first magnitude in your choice of a missionary’.²⁶ In 1827 Joshua Marshman emphasized similar sentiments in his advice to those intending to come to India on missionary service:

European missionaries in India will in general be situated alone. Two or three can seldom remain together. But if they do, this should ever be a perfect matter of choice. To compel missionary brethren to live together without their own choice, is directly contrary to apostolic practice, and it may prove destructive to their peace and to their usefulness. Happy indeed is the missionary who, placed with others, finds them steadily affectionate, wise, and ready to strengthen him in the divine life.²⁷

Cordiality and unity were necessary for the mission’s internal success, as well as its external success, as its function as a model was more immediately intended for the conversion and edification of Indians, rather than simply a social experiment to be reported on; but they were

²⁴ E.A. Payne, *The First Generation: Early Leaders of the BMS in England and India* (London, 1936), 77.

²⁵ Fuller to Ward, 16 December 1802, BMS MSS HI, Home Office Correspondence A, Andrew Fuller, correspondence. This no doubt directly referred to Carey’s wayward teenaged sons, who had been without significant supervision and guidance before moving to Serampore.

²⁶ ‘The Missionaries to the Society’, 18 March 1801, *PA*, volume 2, 1801, 170.

²⁷ *Thoughts on propagating Christianity more effectively among the heathen* 2nd edition (Serampore, 1827), 22.

not the only important qualities. In his own farewell address to Brunsdon, Grant, Marshman and Ward in 1799, Abraham Booth reminded them that ‘it will not be by your *eloquence...your learning...by any exteriors, by anything superficial*’ that their efforts would succeed, but ‘by the exercise of such pious *dispositions*, and virtuous *tempers*, as the Hindoos can understand something of’. This would in turn allow the ‘Hindoos’ to ‘form notions of integrity, benevolence, meekness, and so on’ that would mark their emergence out of heathenism and into Christian civilization.²⁸

Establishing the Mission Family

The ‘Serampore Mission Family’ were quick to settle into their new circumstances and new roles. The rules for the mission had been set out in their ‘Form of Agreement’ and jobs delineated accordingly. Carey was to be the head pastor of the church as well as the treasurer of the mission and the keeper of its medicine chest, Marshman would take charge of the schools, Ward the printing press, Fountain the library; and Brunsdon would preach as well as work in the printing office.²⁹ Each family would receive an equal allowance, proportionate to its size, and the superintendence of the regular affairs of the mission—including accounts, provisions, the charge of servants, and family worship—would rotate monthly among the missionaries.³⁰ This latter point Carey adapted, rather than borrowed, from the Moravians, who chose one ‘Housefather’ to permanently superintend each station. Carey, eager to avoid the potential pitfalls of investing so much responsibility in one man, leaned more heavily on his democratic ideals. A common cash account had served to meet the concerns of the Moravians’ missions ‘where, under circumstances of deprivation and frustration, envy and disagreements could too easily fester’. Carey was all too familiar with this from his years up-country, when the decision to sustain himself financially had left him nearly constantly destitute, and hoped such a system would preserve the Serampore Mission. As he would later find out, though, a large and successful mission was no barrier to ‘envy and disagreements’.³¹

²⁸ BM, volume 1, 1809, 308-312. Emphasis in the original.

²⁹ Marshman, *Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward*, 58-60. Grant had died a fortnight after arriving at Serampore in October, followed by Fountain in December and Brunsdon the following July.

³⁰ Joshua Marshman to his parents, 17 August 1800, BMS MSS IN/29.

³¹ See Mason, *The Moravian Church*, 150. Oussoren points out that John Ryland was not impressed with Carey’s ‘democratic’ solution—creating immediate ‘equality’ at Serampore—fearing that in time it would generate dissent when new missionaries would arrive and take their place within the mission. On this point he argued that the Moravian plan of one ‘housefather’ was superior in eliminating such issues. In settling at

Furthermore, none of the missionaries was to engage in private trade, and ‘every matter’ concerning the mission would be democratically ‘determined by a majority of votes’, including the election of ‘new members’.³² The family met together daily at eight in the morning for family worship, at three in the afternoon for dinner—when they would ‘deliver our thoughts on a text or question’—and again in the evening for prayer.³³ The Serampore Mission Family thus served at once as nuclear family and professional association, adopting the relationships and duties of the former and the organization and pragmatics of the latter.

Women were all along intended to play a significant role in the ‘mission family’, not only looking after the ‘domestic affairs’ alluded to by Carey and minding the children, but specifically in evangelizing Indian women. In 1796 Carey had discussed ‘the almost necessity of *females*, well-qualified, to communicate the Gospel of Christ in a situation where superstition secludes all the women of respectability from hearing the word, unless from their own sex’.³⁴ Just before Brunsdon, Grant, Ward, and Marshman departed for India in 1799, John Ryland specially directed their wives to ‘strengthen the hands of their husbands in all their missionary labours’ and to ‘gain access to the Hindoos of their own sex, and with simplicity and affection relate to them the blessed effects of the Gospel on their own hearts’.³⁵ A few days later, in London, Abraham Booth reminded them that their wives had joined them from ‘a sense of duty and benevolence’ and left behind their friends and country, and

Serampore, Carey and the others effectively had to abandon the poverty-centered Moravian model in order to maintain (and expand) the project there. The large amounts of capital the mission required, especially initially, led Carey to suggest to the BMS committee they invest in the East India Company and let the Serampore missionaries live off of the dividends, though this idea was dismissed. *William Carey*, 72; 169.

³² Additionally, Saturday evenings were devoted to airing and discussing any problems or grievances within the family, and resolving them before they could be allowed to escalate. This, of course, was subject to the willingness of the parties to make such things public! Joshua Marshman, journal, 2 May 1801, BMS MSS IN/29. See also J. Ivimey, *Letters on the Serampore Controversy Addressed to the Rev. Christopher Anderson; Occasioned by a Postscript Dated Edinburgh 26th November, 1830, Affixed to the "Reply" of the Rev. Dr. Marshman. With an Appendix Containing Various Documents of Original Correspondence*. (London, 1831).

³³ William Ward, journal, 1 August 1800, BMS MSS IN/16, volume I, 1800-1805. (Hereafter referred to as Ward, followed by the date, unless otherwise noted). E. Daniel Potts’ transcript of William Ward’s journal, held at the BMS archives at Regent’s Park College, Oxford, and at the Carey Library, Serampore College, Serampore, India, is an invaluable resource for the study of the Serampore Mission. The journal consists of three volumes and covers the years 1800-1812. An index to Ward’s journal, also compiled by Potts, is held at the Carey Library at Serampore College.

³⁴ Carey’s insistence that they be ‘well-qualified’, assumedly for teaching, is quite interesting, especially as many male missionaries had had no professional training as such for their intended positions. ‘Carey to the Society, 28 December 1796’, *PA*, volume 1, 1800, 347.

³⁵ ‘An Address to Missionaries’, 7 May 1799, *PA*, volume 1, 1800, 515. An extract was reprinted in *MH*, October 1847.

therefore deserved their husbands' 'first regards' and 'most tender affections'.³⁶ The position and duties of 'The Missionary's Wife', Andrew Fuller and the other members of the BMS Committee later explained, were to 'aid' and 'encourage' her husband in his work and to 'relieve him of the care of all those domestic arrangements which devolve properly upon her'. Apart from her 'domestic duties' she was expected to quickly acquire the local language and work on 'the religious improvement of the natives of her own sex', to whom her husband might not have access. Lastly, it would be 'peculiarly her province to promote cordiality and mutual esteem' among the members of the mission.³⁷

It does not appear, however, that such involvement was immediately assumed by the missionary wives at Serampore. After a meeting in May 1807 in which the Mission Family gathered 'for the keeping up of vital religion', William Ward remarked that 'Sister Marshman met our native sisters and held an experience meeting with them. This I have long urged and longed for. I cannot bear that our sisters should be mere housewives'.³⁸ As Jane Hunter has pointed out, though, 'housewives' were often exactly what early missionary wives were, and their evangelistic duties became caught up in their domestic roles. Not only were these women to superintend the religious instruction of their own households—including servants—they were to extend their 'female influence' to native households as well. 'By the way she ran her home', Hunter writes, 'a woman was to demonstrate to the heathen the detailed reality of the lived Christian life', and as 'early and indirect instructors in home economics', they at once mirrored the 'sphere' they would occupy at home and reached out to impact other households by their example.³⁹ Though Leslie Flemming has insisted that missionary wives' domestic example 'scarcely challenged prevailing Indian social norms', the British concept of 'separate spheres' had met an interesting counterpart in the 'superstitious' seclusion of the Indian household.⁴⁰ 'Clearly', Flemming writes, 'although largely unrecognized either by the missionaries or Indian women, the similarities in their

³⁶ 'Short notes of an address delivered to Joshua Marshman, William Ward, Daniel Brunsdon, and William Grant, May 10, 1799', *Missionary Herald*, October 1847. See also *PA*, volume 1, 520.

³⁷ 'Letter of Instructions to New Missionaries', 'Papers on Missions, IX', *Calcutta Christian Observer*, June 1847, 348.

³⁸ Ward, 25 May 1807.

³⁹ Jane Hunter, 'The Home and The World: The Missionary Message of U.S. Domesticity,' in Flemming, ed., *Women's Work for Women*, 166. 'Indirect' would soon become direct, as increasing numbers of girls' schools and orphanages developed curricula along those lines. See below, Chapter 5.

⁴⁰ Leslie Flemming, 'New Models, New Roles: U.S. Presbyterian Women Missionaries and Social Change in North India 1870-1910,' in Flemming, ed., *Women's Work for Women*, 48.

social roles were sufficiently similar, that missionaries could offer little of a genuine critique of Indian society'. As we shall later see, such critiques of Indian households and domesticity, if not genuine, still became significant to the missionary discourse of the civilizing power of the gospel and the central role of women in exhibiting it.

Of the women at Serampore, Joshua Marshman's wife Hannah was certainly the most prominent. Hannah played a large role not only in the day-to-day management of the mission, assiduously keeping its account books and playing hostess to a regular stream of visitors, but also in maintaining several schools and instructing the women among the mission's native Christian community, leading some to call her the 'Mother of the Mission'. She straightaway had taken Carey's 'lively but undisciplined sons...under her wing' while their own mother languored in her madness, and later took in a number of orphaned children of the Mission Family, including Grant, Brunsdon, Oakey, and Robinson's, so that by 1812 she had thirteen children, 'six of her own and seven adopted ones'.⁴¹ On the death of the wife of William Robinson in July of 1810, their young children were placed under Hannah Marshman's care at Serampore 'in consequence of a promise that [she] made of being a mother to her children', and it was her hope that 'they shall not notice the loss of their mother'.⁴² In several cases where missionary wives died, their children were remanded to the care of the Serampore Family while their fathers continued their work.⁴³ When Richard Mardon's wife died in 1811, leaving four children all under the age of five, they were sent to live 'with the other orphans of the mission at Serampore', but in this case Joshua Rowe wrote to Mr. Mardon that he would take on 'some or all' of his children'.⁴⁴

Illness and death were indeed painfully regular facts of missionary life in India, and in a few cases, missionary wives and children returned to England rather than 'amalgamating' into the 'mission family'. The widow of Joel Randall left India in May 1819 along with

⁴¹ Leonard Wood, *Sermon in Remembrance of Mrs. Harriet Newell* (Boston, 1814), 193. Mrs. Newell to Mrs. S.H., Andover, Mass., 27 June 1812. See also Ward, 30 October 1808. Hannah Biss had left her youngest, Mary, 'to be instructed by Sister Marshman', who 'loved her as her own child'. Mary herself died shortly thereafter. Hannah Biss to Mrs. Sutcliffe, 30 April 1808, BMS MSS IN/2; Ward, journal, 26 Feb 1806. Mrs. Marshman wrote to a Mrs. Clark in Bristol that she had taken Mrs. Robinson's children 'under my own care, according to a promise I had made to their mother long before her death. If the Lord please to spare my life, they shall not know the loss of their mother'. *PA*, volume 4, 1810, 159; 170.

⁴² *PA*, volume 4, 1810, 159; 170.

⁴³ Felix Carey's children were remitted to Serampore from Burma after their mother died, the youngest being taken in by her grandmother. Ward, 2 December 1807; 26, 30 December 1808. Amos Sutton's child was placed in the care of Mrs. Ward while he remained in Orissa. Ward to Ivimey, 4 September 1818, *BM*, volume 11, 1819, 178.

⁴⁴ 'Review of the Mission', *Serampore Circular Letters*, January 1812, 4-12.

Hannah Marshman and her three youngest children, the latter returning a year later with the eldest of the three.⁴⁵ Mrs. Rowe brought Richard Burton's two motherless children back to England with her in 1826 (he died two years later), and the widow of the LMS's Samuel Trawin brought her own two children and two of the Marshman's children as well the next year.⁴⁶ Generally, however, widows of missionaries were told that they would 'find an asylum at Serampore'.⁴⁷ John Fountain's widow married William Ward, setting 'a precedent whereby widows of deceased BMS personnel voluntarily remarried within the Baptist mission community, instead of returning to Britain'.⁴⁸ Likewise, John Chamberlain, after losing his first wife in 1805, hinted at William Grant's widow as a replacement and married her shortly thereafter (though she, too, died within another year).⁴⁹ After this Chamberlain expressed a wish to marry her sister, but this was denied as 'illegal and improper'.

Single women came out as well to marry into the mission family and thus plant their feet firmly in the enterprise. In response to Chamberlain's request, the Rev. Joseph Ivimey had suggested a girl from his congregation as a possible candidate, and in due time she made her way to Serampore. Without much ado, Chamberlain was soon 'pining for Sister Underwood'—who had arrived in May 1809 with two other missionaries and their wives—and writing 'some plaintive verses' to her. They finally married that September.⁵⁰ The widow of John Biss had also returned to Serampore together with them, where she endured the overtures of the widowed William Robinson until February 1812, when instead she married William Moore.⁵¹ In 1807 a Miss Williamson had come to the mission to be baptized, but she apparently wanted more: at the weekly meeting on 4 September the missionaries 'resolved to decline accepting Miss Williamson's proposal of joining us as a Mission Family'.⁵² Had she desired to become a 'female missionary', or perhaps to marry

⁴⁵ *MH*, May, August 1820.

⁴⁶ *BM*, volume 21, 1829, 176; *EM*, new series volume 6, 1828, 213. Trawin was an LMS missionary, and this serves as one of many instances of the close relationship between the missionaries of the two societies.

⁴⁷ *Serampore Circular Letters*, November 1808, 182

⁴⁸ S. K. Chatterjee, *Hannah Marshman: The First Woman Missionary in India* (Hooghly, 1987), 16. See A. C. Smith, 'The Legacy of William Ward and Joshua and Hannah Marshman', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 23, 3 (July 1999), 120.

⁴⁹ Ward, 3 September 1805, 28 December 1805, 17 September 1806.

⁵⁰ Fuller's Bound Letters, v.2, to Carey, Marshman and Ward, 1794-1815, 306; 339, BMS MSS H1; Ward, 4 September 1807; 17, 18 September 1809.

⁵¹ Ward, 31 October 1810; *Serampore Circular Letters*, volume 6, 1813. They had two children together, and when she died in 1818 she left six orphans, who joined the rest at Serampore. Robinson eventually married five times.

⁵² Ward, 4 September 1807.

into the Mission Family? Ward is silent on these questions, and Miss Williamson soon returned to Scotland.

While the missionaries' wives had their own responsibilities, the children of the Serampore Mission had also been designated a prominent role since its origins in Carey's conceptual mission settlement. He had long intended to bring up his children as missionaries themselves, hoping that each could be devoted to a different language to the broadest possible service. In the same letter to the Society in which he pointed out the need for women workers, he also stressed

the importance of a proper and practicable plan of education, not for the children of the natives only, but for the children of the missionaries also, (some of whom, it is to be hoped, might in time be converted by the grace of God, and become missionaries themselves, or be otherwise serviceable in the mission).⁵³

Marshman, as an erstwhile schoolmaster, was particularly aware of the children's needs, reminding Fuller that 'we have ten children in our united family, shall they fall a prey of ignorance? Rather, are they not a treasure, which duty, affection, and own interest command us to improve to the uttermost? Accordingly our brethren requested us to undertake the schools'.⁵⁴ This was reiterated in a collective letter by the Serampore missionaries in March 1801, in which they reminded the Society that 'to cultivate the minds of our *own* youth, and bring them forward as much as possible for the work of the ministry, is of great importance also; and persons capable of this will always be indispensably necessary in our mission'.⁵⁵ Soon Carey had enlarged on his plan of preparing the mission's children for service, but with certain practical alterations. All children were to remain under the direction of the Family until the age of twenty, meanwhile being provided with an education and employment.⁵⁶ Afterward they would 'become their own masters', but be offered the option of continuing their work at the mission. If any displayed particular spiritual 'gifts', he might be considered for the ministry and only after a probationary period of three or four years have his name submitted to the Society for election as a sanctioned missionary.⁵⁷ The missionaries had

⁵³ Carey to the Society, 28 December 1796, *PA*, volume 1, 1800, 347.

⁵⁴ Marshman to Fuller, 15 July 1802, BMS MSS IN/19A; S. K. Chatterjee, *Hannah Marshman*, 23.

⁵⁵ 'Missionaries to the Society, 18 March 1801', *PA*, volume 2, 1801, 171.

⁵⁶ *Serampore Circular Letters*, November 1808, 181-2.

⁵⁷ 'Carey to Fuller, 30 June 1802', *PA*, volume 2, 285-6. See also J. Marshman to Fuller, 15 July 1802. Even this plan was not without its hitches—John Chater wanted to send his children to school in England, but the Society replied that they were 'not authorized to comply with his request. BMS MSS Society Minutes, 1792-1837, volume 5(A), October 1819-July 1823, 15.

established a fund from the profits of the press to provide an education in ‘the Seminary at Serampore’ for all of the children of the mission. With some foresight, the missionaries also made provisions for those children who were not led to remain in the mission field, in the form of a sort of annuity fund from which they could later draw. This second fund was also designated for any children who might be handicapped or otherwise unable to either participate in the mission or care for themselves.⁵⁸

As Secretary of the BMS as well as friend and mentor to the Serampore missionaries, Andrew Fuller readily offered advice on the operations of the mission. In his farewell address to the missionaries he had directed them to provide in their relationships with their children ‘an example to the poor Hindoos about you’.⁵⁹ The responsibilities of the mission household were both internal and external, and the discipline, order, and religious instruction which characterized the ideal evangelical family bore additional influence for the families at Serampore. Probably in response to the state of Carey’s children, Fuller had considered the position of the others at the mission. ‘You cannot expect that your family should be free from unconverted persons’, he wrote to William Ward in 1802, but offered two principles by which the mission family should handle any such issues: that the purity of the church and the order and peace of the family be maintained. Failing this, Fuller asserted, ‘the *laws* of the house should require their exclusion—I mean if they cannot be reduced to order’.⁶⁰

Fuller was certainly aware that not all of the mission’s children would be destined to become missionaries themselves, but seemed to say that some of them might need a nudge in the right direction. Joshua Marshman said the Carey boys were ‘without control’, and ‘obstinacy and self-will took very deep root in their minds’, and in order to prevent ‘the other branches of the family being injured by his [Felix’s] example’, he held a public meeting to rebuke the young man.⁶¹ Chatterjee, in his study of Felix Carey, notes that ‘Ward found that the boy was experiencing *unhealthy premature development*, which was naturally occurring among European children who resided in the tropics in their teens and *especially* when they

⁵⁸ *Serampore Circular Letters*, November 1808, 181-2.

⁵⁹ *BM*, volume 1, 1809, 308-312.

⁶⁰ Fuller to Ward, 16 December 1802, BMS MSS H1, Home Office Correspondence A., Andrew Fuller, correspondence. Fuller warned them against marrying ‘carnal’ (native) wives, a practice adopted by some LMS missionaries elsewhere; any who did ‘should be liable to be sent out of the family’. Ultimately, however, Fuller left this in the hands of the missionaries, saying that such an expulsion should only occur ‘if the family please, or should judge it necessary for its peace’.

⁶¹ Joshua Marshman, journal, 1802, BMS MSS IN/29.

were deprived of the loving affection of their parents'.⁶² Ward, as unofficial father-figure, expressed a great deal of concern for the young men of the mission. In 1803 William Carey Jr. was 'caught sneaking about' with the daughter of one of the mission's guests, a Miss Herklots, then ten years old. 'He has', wrote an exasperated Ward, 'for several months, contrary to repeated advice, to a solemn promise made to Mr. M., and to the rules of the family, been carrying on a kind of courtship with Miss Herklots'.⁶³ In 1806 John Marshman was suspended from the congregation, the severest form of church discipline, for apparently co-habiting with 'a bad woman'—a prostitute.⁶⁴ On Christmas Eve of 1809, Ward noted, 'I talked to John Marshman with many tears. Jabez, Jonathan, and John are growing up to manhood fast...[with] no signs of real grace...Jabez, the eldest, seems far from righteousness'.⁶⁵ Despite the vagaries of dealing with a clutch of teenaged boys in provincial Bengal, the Serampore missionaries remained steadfast in their hopes that all of the children of the Mission Family would be able (and willing) to contribute to its aims.

Modeling the Mission Family

The missionaries at Serampore no doubt realized the importance of maintaining a positive public image of 'the mission family', as the eyes of the evangelical world were on them. The 'Serampore Trio'—Carey, Marshman, and Ward—reported to the BMS corresponding committee in December 1801 that 'we live in love. and are, perhaps, as happy a family as any in the world',⁶⁶ and Carey later added, 'I have great pleasures in all my brethren and sisters here. They are of the right sort, and perhaps as striking a proof as ever was exhibited of the possibility of persons of different tempers and abilities being able to live in one family in the exercise of Christian love.'⁶⁷ To John Williams he wrote, 'Brethren Marshman, Ward, and Brunsdon with myself and our wives and children form a common Family, and live in the

⁶² Felix married at eighteen, then thrice more. Two of his wives were fifteen years old. Chatterjee, *Felix Carey*, 18-22.

⁶³ Ward, 2 August 1803. Five years later William married his brother Felix's sister-in-law, Mary Kincey. Ward, 1 August 1808.

⁶⁴ Ward, 2 May 1806; 26 May 1806.

⁶⁵ Ward, 24 December 1809.

⁶⁶ Carey, Marshman, and Ward to Society, December 1801, BMS MSS IN/19.

⁶⁷ Chatterjee, *Hannah Marshman*, 18.

utmost harmony; we love one another and are as the heart of one man in our work'.⁶⁸ At his wedding to Mrs. Fountain in 1802, Ward recorded in his journal that Carey 'delivered a very appropriate address...and made a pleasant allusion to our family situation, in which all personal interests were swallowed up in the interests of the whole'.⁶⁹

This 'harmony', or at least its appearance, remained strong even in 1804, when in their renewed 'Form of Agreement' the Serampore missionaries reflected, 'no private family ever enjoyed a greater portion of happiness, even in the most prosperous gale of worldly prosperity, than we have since we resolved to have all things in common'.⁷⁰ Missionaries at each station were to gather together their own 'mission families' and read the Form aloud three times a year and renew their pledges of unity to one another, but this barely lasted a year before the practice was abandoned.⁷¹ James Biss, on his arrival at Serampore in 1805, wrote that 'it does my heart good to see the *order* and *union* that subsist in this family', cryptically adding, 'while I feel I shall be the very means of destroying them'.⁷² Was this simply self-effacing reflection, or perhaps an admission of a personality that might not fit square with the Family? Biss was not the only one who feared the effects of clashing personalities or interests: it caused Ward to 'tremble' to think that 'one man of the wrong temper could make our house a hell'.⁷³

Naturally, as KP Sen Gupta is quick to point out in his *Christian Missionaries in Bengal*, life within the Serampore Mission Family was not always one of communal harmony.⁷⁴ S. Pearce Carey, in his biography of Carey, pointed out that the 'strain on human nature of this clubbing together' might have proven the early demise of the 'mission family' and the

⁶⁸ Carey to John Williams, quoted in T. Wright, *Olney and Dr. Carey (Serampore Letters)* (New York, 1892), 60.

⁶⁹ Ward, 10 May 1802.

⁷⁰ Quoted in George Smith, *Life of William Carey, D.D., Shoemaker and Missionary* (London, 1855), 131.

⁷¹ PA, volume 3, 1806, 198-211.

⁷² J. Biss, journal, 18 November 1805, BMS MSS IN/2. With the addition of five new missionaries in 1805, Andrew Fuller expressed his concern over the management of the growing Mission Family, warning William Ward, 'I am also afraid lest the mission family should be too unwieldy' [for Carey to manage.] Fuller to Ward, 12 September 1805, BMS MSS HI, Home Office Correspondence A., Andrew Fuller.

⁷³ Quoted in Smith, *Life of William Carey*, 131.

⁷⁴ S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 185.

⁷⁴ As noted above, William Ward's journal provides a particularly wealthy resource for the workings of the 'mission family', even its trials. In June 1807 Mrs. Mardon was charged with 'drinking too freely' and suspended from the Serampore congregation for almost eight months. That year Felix Carey and John Chater and their families moved to Rangoon, where Mrs. Chater 'tired everyone...with her wants and effeminate manners'. Mrs. Carey, too, 'had no missionary feelings' and 'did not like to be deprived of bread, butter, meat, etc.' 'Amidst these things', Ward added, 'it was no wonder that persons like Sisters Chater and Carey quarreled'. Ward, 26 November 1808.

mission itself. The combination of a long voyage, desperate circumstances, and the pernicious Bengali climate, he continues, had even brought two of the missionaries ‘to blows, and in the presence of Bengalis’, certainly an inauspicious start.⁷⁵ E.D. Potts, in his seminal *British Baptist Missionaries in Bengal*, points out the shortcomings of this egalitarianism, which ‘among those who were not of equal calibre or devotion necessarily brought conflict’.⁷⁶ John Fountain had developed a reputation as something of an upstart ever since arriving in India in 1796, and his political views nearly resulted in his recall; his death in 1799, however, rendered that unnecessary.⁷⁷ John Chamberlain, too, proved a contentious member of the mission, at one point refusing to take on the superintendence of the family and engaging in a significant private trade in textiles on the side. He eventually declared himself independent from the Serampore Mission and the Family altogether in 1808.⁷⁸ With that the missionaries at Serampore ‘ceased to live in one family’, establishing other separate outstations in 1809, but the concept of the Serampore Mission Family remained consistently strong.⁷⁹ Even after many years the Serampore family’s unity was featured any time it was mentioned. Andrew Leslie, writing to a friend in Bristol in June 1824 reported that ‘much harmony and Christian spirit prevails among the Mission family’. Even in 1830, reflecting on his career at the mission, Carey claimed,

‘Although the churches at the Stations are all independent of us, in everything relating to church government and discipline, yet our connection with them has always been so intimate, that a bond, almost equal to that uniting a Christian family, is felt to pervade the whole system, and to give strength, confidence, and happiness to all embraced by it’.⁸⁰

The appellation of ‘mission family’ was not simply an internal marker for the members of the Serampore Mission, but became something of a popular label among mission circles.

⁷⁵ S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 185.

⁷⁶ Potts considered this democratic approach to the mission a ‘noble statement of purpose’ but not ‘a rule of government’. *British Baptist Missionaries in India, 1793-1837*. 22-23.

⁷⁷ ‘The Committee having inspected the contents of Mr. Fountain’s journal cannot forbear to express their decided disapprobation of the general spirit of it...[It] is injurious to the mission, and threatens its overthrow.’ BMS MSS Society Minutes 1792-1837, volume 2, August 1799-April 1805, 4.

⁷⁸ The missionaries ‘talked to him about refusing to take a part of the burden of the family, which lay so heavily, especially on our sisters...but he was not persuaded’. See Ward, 15 July 1803 and 15, 19 February 1808.

⁷⁹ Joseph Ivimey, *Letters on the Serampore Controversy* (London, 1831), 73.

⁸⁰ W. Carey and J. Marshman, ‘Appeal by the Serampore Missionaries, on behalf of the labours in which they are engaged, 17 June 1830’, in *Reply to the Rev. John Dyer’s Letter to John Broadley Wilson Esq.* (London, 1830), 83. In 1848 the *Juvenile Missionary Herald*, in a series entitled ‘First Mission to Bengal’, the author (‘F. F.’) explained that even in 1830 ‘Serampore was still the head-quarters of the mission—the happy home of all missionaries to the East. All the stations sent word thither, from time to time, of their welfare; so that, perhaps, hardly a week passed that the three brethren there, Carey, Marshman, and Ward, the fathers of the mission there, did not hear some cheering accounts from one or other of their younger brethren’. *JMH*, new series volume 1, 1848, 12-16.

William Johns, describing his arrival in India in a pamphlet entitled ‘The Spirit of the Serampore System’, recalled ‘having landed safely and in peace at the abode of ‘the Happy Family’, as it used to be called’. Harriet Newell, an American Congregationalist missionary wife, wrote to her mother and sister in July 1812 that she and her husband had been invited to ‘visit the Mission family’ at Serampore, and had found ‘a happy dwelling’ where ‘peace and plenty reign’.⁸¹

Conclusions

By amalgamating evangelical ideals, Moravian practices, and democratic sentiments and adjusting them where necessary, the Serampore missionaries had established the initial paradigm of evangelical missions to India. Their emphasis on family structures and roles and their focus on order and discipline provided foundations for both mission strategy and mission ideology. The Serampore missionaries had provided initial models—positive and otherwise—for the conduct of missionaries, converts, and ‘the heathen’ alike.⁸² But by its very nature it was subject to change and had to be flexible; the decentralization of the mission in 1809 only signaled the beginning of a series of shifts in principle and practice by the Baptists and their evangelical counterparts in Bengal and farther abroad. As we shall see in the next chapters, the realities and practicalities of the Indian mission field in many ways would not bear out such a model of operation, though the principles of the ‘Serampore Mission Family’ and the expectations and ideals that underlay it would remain constant. Just as Andrew Fuller had cited the experience of the Moravians in support of Carey’s communal ideas, however, so Serampore would serve as a point of reference for later missionaries. As

⁸¹ S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 294. The LMS missionary Trawin, on his deathbed, implored a servant he mistook ‘for a gentleman who has ever been a friend to the missionary cause’ to ‘be the father of the mission family’, imputing not only the qualities of headship and leadership, but financial support as well. ‘Death of Mr. Trawin (Calcutta)’, *Missionary Chronicle*, March 1828.

⁸² For example, two decades after its establishment, as they were being sent to Sumatra, Evans and Burton were instructed to decide for themselves how far to imitate the Serampore example: ‘Whether you reside together, so as to form but one family, or not, must be determined for yourselves, when you are able to judge of the circumstances of the station. On various accounts we consider such an union desirable, especially at first; but whether the plan be adopted or not, you will, as early as possible, after your arrival agree mutually on those internal regulations which shall prevent any possible source of misunderstandings and disputes’. ‘Instructions delivered to Evans and Burton, missionaries to Sumatra, London, 17 December 1819’, *Baptist Missionary Repository*, 1820, 36.

Carey and Marshman would later write,

The Serampore Mission is still only the original stem and branches of the first Protestant Church planted in Gangetic India, which included its proper natives. Although the churches at the Stations are all independent of us ...our connection with them has always been so intimate, that a bond, almost equal to that uniting a Christian family, is felt to pervade the whole system, and to give strength, confidence, and happiness to all embraced by it.⁸³

The concept of the ‘Serampore Mission Family’ is significant at a number of levels. What had begun as something of a social (and spiritual) experiment had over the course of the years come to represent—at least in its brighter moments—an ideal reflection of the Christian family. With industrious and powerful personalities as father figures, dedicated, intelligent and frugal mother figures (personified by Hannah Marshman and, later, Charlotte Carey), and children who occupied clearly defined and contributing roles, the missionaries at Serampore certainly provided audiences at home as well as local onlookers and colleagues with a model of evangelical domestic order and established something of a paradigm for the structure—and the *representation*—of missions in India. Critical and sympathetic voices alike have also brought attention to the cracks in and failures of the ‘Serampore Mission Family’—as a group and as an institution—and it is perhaps ironic that it should represent the ideals of both evangelical identity and the missions movement.

But Serampore also represents something more *historiographically*. In providing a model for outstations and for successive missions, Carey and his colleagues also established an idyllic and idealised ‘past’ for themselves and for later historians. The heroic status the ‘Serampore Trio’ quickly achieved contributed to an almost hagiographic representation of themselves and their work, lasting even up to the present. This sentiment had been felt even as early as 1811, however, when the ‘younger’, newer members of the mission broke with the ‘Trio’ over issues of funding, accountability, and leadership—and, of course, publicity. Even those ‘younger brethren’, however, carried with them many of the lessons and models learnt at Serampore and applied them to their own missions, even if they did not recognize the immediate influences it held on them. As we shall see in the next chapters, these models and influences from Serampore—on both practice and perceptions—combined with other missionaries’ personalities and experiences to have a great impact on the path of evangelical

⁸³ Carey and Marshman, ‘Appeal by the Serampore Missionaries’, 83.

Christianity in Bengal and the narrative and rhetorical value of missionaries' descriptions of it.

Chapter Three: Model Converts—Model Heathens

Over such converts as these, are we not warranted to rejoice?¹

In November of 1800, a joiner in Serampore fell from a roof and dislocated his shoulder. His friend brought him to the home of a local doctor, the Baptist missionary John Thomas, who set the joint and took the opportunity to tell the man about Jesus Christ. As they left, the joiner and his friend promised to return to hear more, which they did. A month later, the joiner was baptized and soon became an invaluable asset to the Serampore mission in spreading the Gospel. Thus began the well-known story of the Baptists' first convert in Bengal, Krishna Pal. In the same way as the Serampore mission quickly came to stand as an early model of Baptist missions in India, Krishna Pal came to represent and embody the potential of converts and the Indian Church itself—despite any contrary evidence in either case. Traditionally, Krishna Pal's story revolves around his relationship with the Baptists of the Serampore Mission, especially the familiar Serampore Trio: William Carey, Joshua Marshman, and William Ward, and I rely extensively on the latter's journal to examine this story for several reasons. Ward and Krishna quickly developed a close friendship that lasted for more than twenty years until their deaths, but just as importantly, Ward's journal is the most complete and regular record of the missionaries' experiences with Krishna and the other early converts, and many of his observations contributed to his later multi-volume study of Bengali society, *A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos*.

¹ ‘William Ward to a friend in Edinburgh, 10 May 1820’, *Baptist Annual Register*, 1820, 35.



Figure 5—Krishna Pal
W. Ward, *The First Hindoo Convert*, 1852



Figure 6—William Ward
Baptist Magazine, 1817

While the Serampore missionaries were establishing a model for their evangelical audience and for those who would follow them to India, they were also modeling their expectations for prospective Christians. As Catherine Hall has noted, missionary families and households, ‘themselves often imperfect reflections of evangelical ideals’, provided models for indigenous ‘Christianisation and civilisation’, and missions served as ‘extended families’ for enquirers and converts—many of whom had left or been cast off by their own families. The lessons learnt there could either provide the foundation of their faith or the rocks upon which it might shatter.² Joshua Marshman reflected in 1827 that as ‘pure and searching as are those precepts which inculcate gospel-holiness, their meaning must be learned by heathen converts in the first instance from the practice of their teachers’.³ Indeed, ministers and missionaries alike were regularly reminded that they were ‘stewards’ of the extended family that was their congregation, and were therefore responsible for instituting regular family prayer and ensuring that parents were instructing their children in pious habits.⁴ Thus, in much the same way as the Moravians had intended to be ‘a light in the darkness’ by their example of piety and industry, the ‘order and union’ of the ‘Serampore mission family’ was also intended to

² Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, 93. See also Catherine Hall, ‘Missionary Stories: Gender and Ethnicity in England in the 1830s and 1840s’ in Lawrence Grossberg, *et al.*, eds., *Cultural Studies* (New York, 1992), 254.

³ ‘Thoughts on propagating Christianity more effectively among the heathen’ (pamphlet) (Serampore, 1827), 11.

⁴ See ‘Hints to Ministers of the Gospel’, *The Christian Observer*, April 1814, 223. See also Hall, *Civilising Subjects* for a further discussion of the concept of the missionary’s ‘extended family’.

demonstrate to the heathen the superior character of the Christian religion and its attendant benefits.

This chapter shifts the focus from the ‘Serampore mission family’ itself to those of their earliest converts, and examines how those ‘lessons’ were taught and received. Just as importantly, though, it also examines how the experiences of the mission’s first decade were recorded, interpreted, and published abroad. How were the stories of the first converts presented to the best effect? What did they tell people at home about ‘the heathen’, and about the missionaries themselves? How did they influence the first generation of missionaries, converts, and audiences, and those who came after them? The dialectic faced by Krishna Pal and other early converts, however, remains at the core of these narratives.

For the Baptist missionaries at the Serampore Mission, Krishna was quite literally a prototype—as their first convert he would serve as the model for later converts, and his family would provide a model for theirs. He represented what a convert *had* been, what he *could* be, and what he *should* be. The close proximity of Krishna’s home to the mission compound itself provided the missionaries a unique opportunity to observe—and more importantly, influence—what they considered typical ‘heathen’ behaviours and the transition to a ‘Christian’ lifestyle. There were social, cultural, and familial characteristics the family had to adapt—or abandon—and their trials became the rubric by which the missionaries developed their conceptions of what it meant to be a convert, and what it meant to be a heathen.

Krishna and Gokol

Throughout the missionaries’ personal accounts and correspondence back and forth with the Baptist Missionary Society, Krishna’s family played a visible and important role. He and his wife, Rasu, had four daughters. Also living with them were Rasu’s sister Joymuni and a servant woman named Unna. There was another family, however, whose role was just as visible. Gokol Sah, the ‘friend’ who had originally brought Krishna to the doctor, lived near Krishna with his mother, his wife Kumal, and their adopted son, Roop Chund (who eventually became a preacher). Gokol and Krishna began to visit the missionaries together

and both expressed interest in the Gospel message, but in the missionaries' eyes, as Krishna became the 'model convert', Gokol remained—or became—the 'model heathen'. The missionaries shrewdly noted the differences between the two men in their writings, and their respective traits and quirks, successes and failures set a standard by which later converts would be judged. These parallel narratives about Krishna and Gokol often reveal the complex nature of the various conceptions and expectations surrounding them.

According to K.P. Sen Gupta, though, the real and abiding legacy of the Baptist missionaries at Serampore lay in the numerous instances of adultery, intoxication, 'quarrelsome behaviour', schisms of belief and power struggles among their converts.⁵ Sen Gupta portrays the relationship between the missionaries and their earliest converts not as harmonious and mutually edifying, but as discordant and troublesome, and claims moreover that 'the values and morals of the Indians hardly changed after conversion'.⁶ At first glance, and taking the materials 'at face value' (as Frederick Downs has warned against) Sen Gupta's conclusion seems fair, but to thus paint the entire experience of the first decade of the Serampore mission as a failure surely overstates the case. Missionaries' expectations for their converts reflected much of their own ideology and experiences, and this was then reflected in the ways they wrote about the mission. Here I intend to explore how the very ups-and-downs recorded by the missionaries came to reflect and influence their ideas own of 'convert' behaviour and 'heathen' behaviour as well as those of later missionaries.

Not much is known about the lives of Krishna or his friend Gokol before they encountered the Baptists at Serampore. They were both Sudras, Krishna a joiner and Gokol a distiller. Both Krishna and Gokol were aware of the Baptist missionaries, and had come into contact with them previous to the scene described above. In fact, Krishna had worked for the Moravian missionary Grassman for four years before that society closed its mission at Serampore in 1792.⁷ They both had often heard the Baptist John Fountain speaking and

⁵ *The Christian Missionaries in Bengal, 1793-1833* (Calcutta, 1971), 150-156. Sen Gupta directs the reader to the various materials in the correspondence of the BMS between 1800 and 1810 labelled 'Misconduct'. A table of baptisms appended to the former BMS missionary William Adam's *Queries and Replies Respecting the Present State of the Protestant Missions in the Bengal Presidency* (Calcutta, 1824) described a number of converts as 'doubtful', of 'doubtful character', 'we fear gone back', 'died among the heathen', and even 'now insane!'

⁶ Sen Gupta, *Christian Missionaries in Bengal*, 253.

⁷ Ward, 15 January 1801. As Mason points out, 'The course of the missionary awakening would have been different had the Moravians succeeded in establishing a mission in British Bengal', *The Moravian Church and the Missionary Awakening in England*, 81.

preaching, and Gokol had ‘for some time followed [the missionaries] at a distance’.⁸ Soon after Krishna’s accident the two men went together to visit William Ward and Felix Carey (William Carey’s son), who talked to them and ‘went through the Bible to them’.⁹ A few days later they came together again for prayer, but the next morning Gokol came to tell the missionaries that his wife ‘had the night before been opposing him to the utmost’, and she, along with Gokol’s mother and son, ‘had left him on account of the Gospel’.¹⁰ Krishna’s family, on the other hand, seemed eager to become Christians. ‘A whole family desiring to hear the Gospel’, exclaimed Ward, ‘and declaring in favor of it!’¹¹ Joshua Marshman speculated that this was ‘perhaps...the first instance of the gospel being brought into a Hindoo family at their own request’.¹² While this was surely an exaggeration, it certainly set a precedent for the Serampore missionaries and their relationships with Krishna, Gokol, and other ‘inquirers’.

For several weeks afterward, both men became regular visitors at the Serampore Mission—Krishna with his family, and Gokol without. After a month of regular visits, study, and prayer, Krishna and Gokol both still seemed steadfast in their commitment to becoming Christians. William Ward counted them both as friends, but while his confidence in Krishna grew, so did his suspicions regarding Gokol. ‘We have heard,’ he wrote after Gokol told of his experiences searching for salvation, ‘that Gokol has never made good on any of his engagements with people’.¹³ Just before Christmas in 1800 Gokol and Krishna ‘publicly threw away their cast [sic]’ by eating with the missionaries, and a week later Krishna was baptized.¹⁴

⁸ Ward, 14 December 1800.

⁹ Ibid, 1 December 1800.

¹⁰ Carey to Ryland, 27 November 1800, BMS MSS, IN/13, ‘38 Letters to Ryland’.

¹¹ ‘At Khristno’s house the matter appears quite different’, Ibid. Ward wrote the same day that ‘Creeshnoo says his wife and children are all desirous of becoming Xns. They declared for Xt. at once. This work was new, even to Bro. C.’. Ward, 5 December 1800.

¹² PA, volume 2, 1801, 121 and 139.

¹³ Ward, 14 December 1800.

¹⁴ Ibid, 22 December 1800; Ryland to Sutcliffe, 7 March 1801, BMS MSS H5/6, John Ryland, bound letters volume 6, Ryland to Sutcliffe, 1773–1811. Regarding their baptism Carey wrote to Ryland, ‘I wish you could be witness to their simplicity’.



Figure 7—‘Baptism of Kristno, A Hindoo Convert’
T. Smith and J. Choules, *The Origin and History of Missions*, 1832.

Gokol, however, had decided to postpone his own baptism for a time, and the close of the year marked a turning point in the relationships between the two men, their families, and the Serampore missionaries. Based on a short excerpt from Ward’s journal, the *Periodical Accounts* attributed Gokol’s reluctance to be baptized to his reluctance to abandon his family, and it was not uncommon for critics of missions to use such publications as material for their attacks.¹⁵ John Bowen, in his 1821 *Missionary Incitement and Hindoo Demoralisation*, based his critical interpretation of Gokol’s reluctance on that account:

Gokol’s case is not encumbered with any technical difficulties. We have a wife beseeching her husband not to cast her off forever. We have the still more powerful appeal of an aged mother...The husband and son, ‘staggered’ by the tears of his wife and mother, avows the sincerity of his conviction, but begs the missionaries to grant him a little time previously to baptism, for the purpose of reconciling these dear objects of his care to the change that has taken place in his religious opinions.¹⁶

In this case it was apparently the power of ‘woman’s influence’ and the sanctity of family unity that had induced Gokol to hesitate in publicly committing to his convictions. The Serampore missionaries, Brown argued, had pressured Gokol to toss in his lot with them

¹⁵ PA, volume 2, 1801, 144.

¹⁶ Including Some Observations on the Political Tendency of the Means Taken to Evangelize Hindoostan (London, 1821).

'instead of strengthening this poor man in his belief, and furnishing him with arguments for the conversion of his wife and mother'. Thus drawn away from his family, Gokol could 'neither advise, protect, nor support those, who, in the eye of God and nature, were entitled to his duty and affection'. By inflicting 'such dreadful misery on the convert's family', Brown concluded, baptism was 'an act of merciless injustice, or driveling absurdity.' This was still early days, though, and the missionaries were not so desperate for converts as to deny him his prerogative. Indeed, it was to be some time before Gokol actually came forward for baptism.

William Ward's words for the first day of 1801 would mark a theme in the missionaries' respective attitudes toward Krishna and Gokol. 'Krishna comes to see us every day', he wrote, 'Gokol does not come, but says he is continually reading and thinking about [Christ].'¹⁷ Krishna had become a regular at the missionaries' servants' worship services and Wednesday-evening prayer meetings, where 'his gift in prayer grows fast'. Gokol, on the other hand, had ceased to come around at all. 'We fear,' Ward lamented, 'he is not honest at bottom'.¹⁸ Krishna continued to grow in the outward signs of his faith—and for the missionaries, Krishna's relationship with his family was central to this. He had begun to hold family prayer meetings in his home, blessed the family meals, and instructed his family in the Gospel on Sundays—all to the missionaries' great pleasure.¹⁹ Joymuni was baptized, and Rasu and Unna soon after. Ward's biography of Krishna Pal sums up the scene:

[Krishna's] wife...had embraced the Gospel, and had been baptized, and transferred her heart into religion; Joymuni, the sister of Krishna's wife...had given her heart also to the Saviour, and zealously conversed with her friends and neighbours in opposition to idolatry...his children willingly yielded to receive Christian instruction, and manifested much shrewd discrimination; and the voice of prayer and praise rose twice a day from the altar of this family so recently redeemed from idolatry. Who does not feel that such a household, now right, and right for the first time, must be happy?²⁰

Recall from the previous chapter Ward's declaration that in heathen families there was 'no domestic worship', as it was 'not supposed to belong to them'. Yet here he—and more importantly, home audiences—was faced with an example of a *transformed* family.

¹⁷ Ward, 1 January 1801.

¹⁸ Ibid, 14 January 1801.

¹⁹ Ibid, 15 January 1800, 13 February 1801; Daniel Brunsdon, journal, 27 Jan. 1801, BMS MSS IN/2; PA, volume 2, 1809, 109.

²⁰ William Ward, *The First Hindoo Convert: A Memoir of Krishna Pal, a Preacher of the Gospel to his Countrymen more than Twenty Years* (Philadelphia, 1852), 19-20.

Krishna's family was spiritually in order, and he had declared that 'his thoughts were now about the salvation of others'.²¹

This may not have been simply the result of the Gospel, however. Krishna had for several years been a leader of a Kartabhaja sect, a devotional movement that emerged in the late eighteenth century around Bengal and elsewhere in India. Geoffrey Oddie, in his article on Kartabhaja converts, stresses the role of pre-conversion ideas in their spiritual and social lives after conversion.²² Building on anthropologist Robin Horton's theories, Oddie offers three general approaches to conversion that incorporate converts' experiences: *intellectual* (taking Christianity at face value), *rationalization* (bringing Christianity in line with their own experiences) and *continuity* (making connections between Christianity and those experiences). The latter seems to be the best explanation for Krishna's eagerness to take on multiple roles in the mission. The Kartabhaja movement, Oddie explains, featured many similar aspects to evangelical Christian beliefs, like the concepts of *avatar* (paralleling Christ), *bhakti* (love and devotion), the accessibility of salvation, and congregationalism—though it was often these similarities that most frightened missionaries and publicists alike.²³

Perhaps this ability to laterally shift his belief system is why Krishna was so willing—and indeed able—to assume positions of leadership, first within the convert community and congregation, and later as a missionary himself. Perhaps this also explained something of his family's willingness to throw their lot in with him, as Christianity was meeting their own spiritual needs and expectations. Though this might not have been such a remarkable transformation for them, for the Baptist missionaries it was indeed something amazing.²⁴

The importance of missionaries' own theology and experience in approaching conversion cannot be underestimated, either, and this was reflected in the ways they explained their encounters with 'heathens' and native Christians. When Andrew Fuller advised William Ward to expect to 'have a number of cases come before you similar to those in the primitive

²¹ Ward, 22 January 1802.

²² Geoffrey Oddie, 'Old Wine in New Bottles? Kartabhaja (Vaishnava) Converts to Evangelical Christianity in Bengal, 1835-1845', *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 32 (1995), 327-343. See also Badwell L. Smith, ed., *Hinduism: New Essays in the History of Religions* (Leiden, 1976), 1-15, for further explanation of the various *bhakti* movements in Bengal.

²³ Oddie elsewhere explains that, despite their similarities, Hinduism and Protestant Christianity were more often presented as complete opposites, especially when the former was presented as 'a way of works' rather than of grace. *Imagined Hinduism*, 227-9. .

²⁴ Eleanor Jackson provides an excellent analysis of the roles Krishna and his family played in early evangelism and church life in Serampore. 'From Krishna Pal to Lal Behari Day: Indian Builders of the Church in India or Native Agency in Bengal 1800-1880', 4-6. NAMP/CWC Position Paper, September 1997.

times, as of unbelieving husbands and wives deserting their companions, etc.', the only basis for such a claim was his biblical training and pastoral experience, yet these examples were basic and broad enough to anticipate any number of challenges they might encounter.²⁵

Biblical allusion remained the most common means of explaining missionaries' experiences on the field, as well as for further words of counsel from Fuller and others. 'Through the medium of their and your struggles', Fuller wrote in 1802 in response to a letter from Serampore, 'we read the *Acts* and *Epistles* as it were with new eyes; and seem to behold as in a mirror the Christianity of the early ages'.²⁶ The predominance of Biblical allusion and imagery in missionaries' accounts can be explained by more than literary convention or even simply a familiarity with the subject. For many, the descriptions of 'heathen' peoples and the challenges faced by the early church were literal mirrors of the world they were attempting to evangelize. Explaining things in Biblical terms was second-nature, and they were moreover writing to a theologically informed audience, a spiritual audience, for whom the mission enterprise was not just a series of adventures in exotic locales, but the continuation of the Great Commission of Christ himself, who had instructed his apostles to carry the gospel to the corners of the world and to all nations.

Paul's two letters to the Corinthian church in particular, so frequently alluded to by missionaries and others, addressed a community of Christians struggling with internal schisms, domestic disputes, sexual immorality, and their own shifting identities.²⁷ One of the central issues for the Corinthian church was the extent to which they must abandon their former lifestyles and adopt new ones, especially in their forms of ritual and worship. Indeed, Geoffrey Oddie reminds us that for Indian Christians as well as their first-century forbears, 'the adoption of a new identity did not necessarily mean a complete rejection of the old' and often involved instead the adoption of an additional identity'.²⁸ For Carey and his associates, as for many missionaries afterward, these issues would remain at the forefront of their

²⁵ Fuller to Ward, 1 August 1801, BMS MSS H1, Home Office Correspondence A, Andrew Fuller, correspondence.

²⁶ Fuller to Missionaries, 20 April 1802, BMS MSS H1, Home Office Correspondence A, Andrew Fuller, correspondence.

²⁷ For an analysis of I and II Corinthians from the postcolonial perspective, see R.S. Sugirtharajah's *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism* (Maryknoll, New York, 1998), where he represents the letters as a power-struggle between Paul and the infant church at Corinth which was mirrored in the struggles between missionary ideals and authority and native social and religious conventions and autonomy.

²⁸ Geoffrey Oddie, ed., *Religious Conversion Movements in South Asia*. London Studies on South Asia, Number 6 (London, 1991), 6.

relationships with native converts and have ramifications for the development of indigenous Christianity as much as for mission practice. The example of *I* and *II Corinthians* in many ways informed their belief in the transformational power of the Gospel, a fundamental aspect of missionaries' personal and practical theology. Christian knowledge, empowered by the Holy Spirit, would transform individuals, families, and society itself.

This was underscored by a belief in a process of 'continual sanctification', and provided one reason for the emphasis missionaries placed on 'proper' domesticity and family worship among converts: they served as external proofs of their salvation and visible signs of change and devotion. The need for 'proofs' reflected something of the Baptists' theology as well, which dictated that true conversion would manifest itself in visible ways. Despite the belief in the possibility of change, this often combined with their own perceptions of 'the heathen' to contribute to a complicated position toward native converts. Echoing the language of some of their predecessors, the Junior Brethren at Calcutta complained to the BMS in 1819:

So complicated is the falsehood that attached itself to the Hindoo character, and they practice lying so habitually, and with so little idea of guilt, that it becomes almost instinctive....We can [thus] never feel ourselves justified in believing a native...but are obliged to withhold assent, and wait for more satisfactory evidence.²⁹

The paternalism inherent in Christian theology also shaped missionaries' worldviews and informed their relationships with Indians. Andrew Fuller, Secretary of the BMS, reassured William Ward in 1801 that 'God has honoured you much in making you instrumental to the good of these dear children'.³⁰ This fatherly imagery was central to missionary language—from the pastors of the BMS committee to the missionaries and converts to congregations and readers back home. 'These [converts] give us much pleasure', Carey wrote to John Ryland, 'Yet we need great prudence for they are but a larger sort of children compared with Europeans; we are obliged to encourage, to strengthen, to counteract, to advise, to disapprove, to teach; and yet to do all so as to retain their warm affections'.³¹ Indeed, Carey added in a later letter, they had to be 'led like children' if they were to avoid idleness.³²

²⁹ 'Junior Brethren to Society, Calcutta, April 1819', *BM*, volume 12, 1820, 126.

³⁰ Fuller to Ward, 1 August 1801, BMS MSS H1, Home Office Correspondence A, Andrew Fuller, correspondence,.

³¹ Carey to Ryland, 15 June 1801, BMS MSS H5/6, John Ryland, bound letters volume 6, Ryland to Sutcliffe, 1773-1811.

³² Carey to Ryland, 8 March 1802, College Street Baptist Church MSS. Quoted in Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries in India*, 42.

Missionaries were often called on to serve in multiple ‘fatherly’ roles. In addition to their own households and the ‘housefather’ duties at Serampore, for example, they were also the leaders of their congregations and the ‘extended family’ of the missionary and convert communities. Nor was this limited to ‘fathers’: Carey’s biographer George Smith said of Charlotte, Carey’s second wife, that ‘she learned Bengali that she might be as a mother to the native Christians’.³³ As we shall see in the following chapters, it was precisely the demands of these multiple roles that would most challenge many missionaries and lead to serious debates about the essential character of their task.

Gokol, meanwhile, had distanced himself both from his friend and the missionaries. ‘Gokol sits at home melancholy’, Ward wrote in February 1801, and was forbidden by his wife to talk to Krishna or the missionaries.³⁴ Three months later, however, Gokol returned, apparently on better terms than he had left, and ‘proposed to be baptized’. Ward revealed his typical reticence regarding Gokol in remarking,

Though there are some things in Gokol not so satisfactory as in Krishna, yet, on the whole I feel a great pleasure in what he did tonight. His moral character is blameless; his great want seems to be decision of character; though his being one of the first who renounced and broke the infernal chains of the cast endears him to us.³⁵

Andrew Fuller wrote knowingly to Ward later that year that ‘the Hindoos are distinguished by their hypocrisy; and if no extraordinary test of their sincerity existed you could never be satisfied of it’. Losing caste would have to do as proof of their sincerity, though even such willingness was thought no guarantee. ‘They may not all be sincere’, Fuller offered, ‘neither are ours: but I hope some will’.³⁶ This was yet another example of the early missionaries’ ‘ideological luggage’ coming into contact with the local ‘accepted wisdom’ and their own experience. The Calvinistic roots of their theology demanded proof of true conversion, but combined with the proverbial ‘falsehood that attaches itself to the Hindoo character’ and their first-hand experiences of ‘insincere’ converts, their assessments still bore enough weight to

³³ George Smith, *Life of William Carey*, D.D., 182.

³⁴ Ward, 4 February 1801, 13 February 1801. William Carey wrote to a colleague in England in 1796 to tell him of his munshi Boshoo’s ‘awful fall’ into adultery ‘and his separation from us’. Although Carey believed that ‘out of fifty servants, forty-nine will be found guilty of the same crime’, he felt it an absolute necessity ‘to bear a more public testimony against his, as his profession of the Gospel was so well known’. *PA*, volume 1, 1800, 331.

³⁵ Ward, 30 May 1801.

³⁶ Fuller to Ward, 1 August 1801, BMS MSS H1, Home Office Correspondence A, Andrew Fuller correspondence.

merit publication.³⁷ Gokol's want of 'decision of character' is what contrasted him with Krishna, whom Ward viewed as a model of constancy. Both had heard about Christ together, had come to the mission together, and had thrown away their caste together; but as the missionaries began to lavish attention and praise on Krishna and his family, Gokol alienated himself. His status as 'one of the first', though, may have offered him some sense of security with the missionaries, and it seemed to them that he had finally decided to fully embrace the Christian life as Krishna had. Had he finally gained some resolve? Had he repented of his past sins and become a changed man? The missionaries' journals are silent on these points; perhaps they were simply satisfied to welcome him back into their fold. A week later Gokol was baptized, with his wife, 'who has been a great enemy', looking on.³⁸

William Ward found it 'of great importance to direct all that come to us on a course of industry: for the Hindoos are naturally indolent', and Gokol, his son, and his brother-in-law were soon working in different capacities for the Mission.³⁹ Krishna had been provided joinery work, but the missionaries longed to provide him 'other and longer employment'.⁴⁰ Only a few days after Gokol's baptism, they had been thinking 'of setting [Krishna] more entirely apart to the world of making known the Gospel'.⁴¹ Even Krishna's family was involved: 'We have been at the expense of keeping a man on purpose for the instruction of his family alone in Bengali', and his 'wife and wife's sister talk a great deal to the Bengalee women'.⁴²

³⁷ Nearly half a century later, similar sentiments prevailed among the missionary community. The LMS missionaries at Bhowanipore, describing the 'quarrels...inconsistencies and hidden sins' of their converts, lamented, 'Alas! for human hopes, when built upon Bengalee consistency and faithfulness: it is, indeed, building them on sand!' *Missionary Magazine*, September 1849.

³⁸ Ward, 7 June 1801. Later, when the wife of another convert came to Serampore, Ward wrote that 'there is something very uncommon in the wife of a Hindoo coming so far from home, to embrace a new religion, and that among foreigners'. Ward, 28 June 1802. Anna Johnston writes that 'when the fight for converts became particularly fraught, though, frustrated missionaries were quick to blame the resistance of converts' wives and families'. *Missionary Writing and Empire*, 93.

³⁹ Ward, 8 March 1802. Robinson echoed this sentiment even in 1847 in a report 'On the Condition of Piety' in Bengal, noting the 'inveterate aversion [converts] show when required to relinquish old customs, for habits of cleanliness, industry, and independence'. *Calcutta Christian Observer*, June 1847, 342-345. In 1805 Hannah Marshman wrote to a Mrs. Clark in Bristol with her assessment of Hindoo women: 'The women are in general very dirty, and almost as unmoved as stoics. Boiling their rice and bathing their children, is nearly all they do. The generality of them are very shame-faced: when they meet you, they will cover their face with their cloth, or run away. There are some few among them who will spin a little thread, or beat a little brick-dust; but these last are very few. Our native sisters are become very decent, and keep their houses in good order. Since we have talked to them, they spin a little thread for the duryees, or tailors.' Hannah Marshman to Mrs. Clark, Bristol, January 1805, *PA*, volume 3, 1806, 87-8.

⁴⁰ Ward, 6 July 1801.

⁴¹ Ibid, 12 June 1801.

⁴² Ibid, 15 June 1801, 12 June 1801.

If one convert was good, a family of converts was infinitely better. Perhaps this message was obvious in more than just the missionaries' journals. By August, Gokol's wife Kumal asked to be baptized, too, leaving Carey especially pleased:

[She] gives us great hopes, tho' it is but a very little time since she was so much against the [idea] as to leave her husband because of his attachment to it. Then she repeatedly declared that she would rather die than eat with a Christian—now her heart is melted down when she hears the Word, and I doubt not that she will soon make an open profession by baptism.⁴³

Such successes were indeed ‘something to write home about’—they encouraged not only the missionaries, but their supporters as well. Every convert represented ‘a brand plucked from the flames’, but more importantly Kumal’s conversion represented another *family* brought together through Christianity and more opportunities to bring others to the faith. This emphasis, as we have already seen, was central to the missionaries’ vision for Serampore. According to George Smith, Carey ‘was creating a new society, a community, which has its healthy roots in the Christian family. Krishna Pal had come over with his household, like the Philippian’.⁴⁴

‘Violent Passions’ and ‘Foolish Quarrels’

Two incidents that month served to dampen the missionaries’ spirits, however. On 18 August, Krishna ‘went into a most violent passion with our Brahman’—presumably referring to one of the *munshis* assisting the missionaries in the Biblical translations which occupied so much of their time and efforts—‘and grieves us much’.⁴⁵ ‘Passion’ was certainly the ‘heathen’ trait that seemed to vex the missionaries most about Krishna, but Ward’s response to his action is interesting. Though grieved at Krishna’s outburst, Ward noted with smug irony that ‘his hatred to Brahmanism almost exceeds ours’.⁴⁶ Carey especially had a reputation for despising and attacking ‘Brahmanism’ and what he perceived as the Brahmins’

⁴³ Carey to Fuller, 4 August 1801, BMS MSS H1, Home Office Correspondence A, Andrew Fuller, correspondence. The subject of what was to be done with converts whose wives (or husbands) would not join them had long occupied the missionaries, and they at last referred it to Andrew Fuller and the Committee. It was at last decided that such cases must be handled as they arose, but that after a given period the marriage should be considered dissolved and the parties free to marry again. This practice would later find its way into legislation, easing many of the immediate problems associated with conversion.

⁴⁴ Smith, *Life of William Carey, D.D.*, 142.

⁴⁵ Ward, 18 August 1801.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

'revered and undeserved social status'.⁴⁷ Krishna almost certainly picked up on this, and combining it with his own apparent evangelistic fervor took it to the logical next step. The missionaries' disapproval was certainly of his methods, rather than his motives. An even temper was essential, especially for an evangelist, but more importantly, 'their Brahman' was an important and necessary figure at the Mission. His was a presence that had to be tolerated in order to achieve their long-term goals—a necessary evil, perhaps, but one that Krishna might otherwise have jeopardized. A few days later Ward noted 'Krishna's mind is well again', and with that the missionaries could count another lesson learned in the differences between 'convert' and 'heathen' behaviour.⁴⁸ It was not to be the only lesson that month, as a week later the missionaries' were again dismayed by their converts' behaviour:

We have been made unhappy this week by a foolish quarrel betwixt Krishna's family and Unna, who lived with them as a servant. They are so foolish as not to keep their differences to themselves. Unna got it into her head that as she was a holy sister, it was not right to be Krishna's servant. They are now parted, and Unna works at making pasteboards at our house, and lives at Gokol's. They all sleep in a place which was formerly Gokol's cooking room. It is poor as a pigsty.⁴⁹

Though it seems to have been a relatively minor issue, this 'quarrel' and its resolution provide important insight into the missionaries' perspective. Indeed, each sentence in Ward's journal entry reveals much about his perceptions of the situation—and more about his perception of the larger issues it illustrated. His use of 'foolish' twice in quick succession shows his exasperation. He apparently considers it a trivial matter that has been blown out of proportion by, again, the loss of tempers. Their making the matter public, though, is what frustrates him most, reflecting Krishna's opinion that 'the natives...were full of quarrels continuously' and Charles Grant's assessment of the nature of Bengali society:

No stranger can sit down among them without being struck with this temper of malevolent contention and animosity, as a prominent feature in the character of the society...[and] it enters into almost every family. Seldom is there a household without its internal divisions, and lasting enmities, most commonly too on the score of interest. The women partake of this spirit of discord [and] rise in furious passions against each other, which vent themselves in such loud, virulent, and indecent railings, as are hardly to be heard in any other part of the world.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (Berkeley, 1998), 88.

⁴⁸ Ward, 23 August 1801.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 29 August 1801.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 22 September 1801; Grant, *Observations*, 28.

Pradip Sinha, in his *Nineteenth Century Bengal*, also points out that feuding was a common feature of domestic life, especially within joint families, where space was often at a premium. ‘The ugliness of tensions within a joint family drew the attention of Victorian critics’ like Nagendra Nath Gosh, who

describes the Bengali home as a source of endless distraction and embarrassment. He also refers to the agitation of feeling caused by the living together of a large number of men and women very few of whom are in sympathy with each other and almost every one of whom has some grievances as against the rest’.⁵¹

Yet again the missionaries were being confronted by ‘textbook’ ‘heathen’ behaviour, which they had assumed had been abandoned as Krishna’s family and Unna had immersed themselves in Christianity and the work of the Mission. ‘How discouraged we sometimes are’, an exasperated Ward wrote, ‘by their accusations, quarrels, and apparent untruths!’⁵² The missionaries certainly recognized that the matter had as much to do with the women’s roles in the household and the mission as with any intrinsic character flaws, but Ward’s use of the phrase ‘Unna got it into her head’ shows that he did not quite take her perspective seriously. Instead, he implied that she was in the wrong, and instead of further exploring the issue the missionaries offered for her to come and work for them. Perhaps they ignored it because of its possible implications, or because it represented a Pandora’s box of issues that they were unable, or unwilling, to deal with yet. K. P. Sen Gupta points out that ‘the missionaries specially advised their women converts to cultivate love and harmony, and to avoid particularly all back-biting, tale-bearing and enlarging on others’ faults’.⁵³

As in their own ‘family’, the Serampore missionaries highly valued unity and harmony in their converts’ domestic relations, and the Gospel was the key. A short article in the Baptists’ *Monthly Circular Letters* in 1808, entitled ‘Memorial of Rughoo’, described how the recently departed man had quarreled with and separated from his common-law wife, but soon had become a Christian and introduced his new faith to her. She in turn was converted,

⁵¹ Pradip Sinha, *Nineteenth Century Bengal: Aspects of Social History*. Calcutta: 1965. 134-5. This, however, could just as easily have been said (and was) of the ‘Serampore mission family’ and others. Some scholars have argued that ‘joint families’ were more of an upper-caste concern. See Raychaudhuri, Tapan, ‘Norms of Family Life and Personal Morality among the Bengali Hindu Elite, 1600-1850’ in Rachel Van M. Baumer, ed. *Aspects of Bengali History and Society* (Asian Studies at Hawaii, 12). (Honolulu, 1975), 14-16.

⁵² S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 286.

⁵³ Sen Gupta, *The Christian Missionaries in Bengal 1793-1833*, 152. Ward, 5 April 1802. See also Chatterjee, *Hannah Marshman*, 26: ‘20 May 1805: Spent the evening with Mrs. Brown in the Aldeen house in Serampore. There was no evil speaking or backbiting in our conversation.’

and the two were married, remaining ‘to the end of Rughoo’s life, an affectionate and happy couple, whose domestic happiness had been greatly heightened by their reception of the Gospel’.⁵⁴ Whether this account of Rughoo and his wife was completely factual or at least partly allegorical, it clearly highlights and emphasized the positive influence of the Gospel on families and households and the values of domestic peace and unity.

It is interesting that Unna went to live at Gokol’s house. The missionaries had recently purchased a plot of land, on which they were constructing ‘a house for Gokol and a room for Unna’ as well as ‘a place of worship and a school’.⁵⁵ Had the prospect of her own quarters played a role in her asserting her position as a ‘holy sister’? In any case, Ward’s last two sentences provide yet another perspective on the varied lives of the convert families. That they all sleep in the kitchen hearkens back to one of his earliest observations, that ‘the houses of the poor are only calculated for sleeping in’.⁵⁶ Gokol’s ‘pigsty’ stood in contrast to Krishna’s home, which was always ‘made very clean’ when the missionaries came around.⁵⁷ Was this because their lessons on domestic order had been received well by Krishna’s family? Was it because they had a servant (or children)? Was it because Gokol’s landlord refused to repair his roof in the rainy season owing to his conversion? Whatever the reasons, it was enough for Ward that these things were so, and to him they meant that much of the ‘heathen’ still remained in all of their converts. Unna’s separation from Krishna’s family apparently provided a solution to their quarrels, as they were not mentioned again in any of the missionaries’ journals until a few months later, when Joymuni (Krishna’s sister-in-law) and Unna went together on ‘a kind of preaching visit’ to three of Krishna’s sisters in Chandernagore while Krishna was itinerating with Ward and Felix Carey.⁵⁸

December 1801 ushered in another season of tension regarding Gokol when on the 3rd he was seized by the Danish authorities for debt and imprisoned for almost the entire month.⁵⁹ For the next several months, the small community of converts at the Serampore Mission were involved in increasingly serious problems. The first emerged when Krishna charged Gokol with continuing to follow his ‘Hindoo Goroo’, but the missionaries recorded that ‘the

⁵⁴ *Monthly Circular Letters*, volume 1, 1808, 75.

⁵⁵ Ward, 25 August 1801. This land would later become the site of Johnnagar, the ‘Christian village’ erected by John Mack in 1828.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 6 December 1800.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 12 December 1800.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 30 October 1801.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 3 December 1801; 12 December 1801.

evidence was contradictory, and we could come at nothing decisive'.⁶⁰ 'We were much pained', Ward lamented, 'yet the evidence given brought out many particulars respecting the former life of our brethren and sisters'. Though we have no record of what that evidence was, it is plain that it provided, as far as the missionaries were concerned, many important details about 'heathen' life that contributed to their conceptions of the differences between that life and a model Christian one.

A fortnight later they arranged a meeting between Krishna and Gokol and 'things seem again to be healed', but the very next day 'the difference is opened again', as 'Gokol has said some unkind things to Krishna again today', echoing Krishna's own words of late.⁶¹ Gokol had made some 'accusation against Krishna, which appearing to us to originate in envy, we utterly discouraged it. This so enraged Gokol that he withdrew himself from his employment at our house, and from worship, and uttered many hard speeches against Christ and the Gospel, drawing Unna into the same sin'.⁶² Shortly thereafter, Gokol surprised the missionaries yet again, for a week behaving 'in the most irregular and imprudent manner. His conduct is like that of a person insane. He and his wife and Unna are full of passion against us and Krishna's family', which made the missionaries 'very uneasy'.⁶³ The three were absent from that week's Lord's Supper, and for two more weeks remained 'aloof, though they have not left the small huts which we built for them'.⁶⁴

Their anger with the missionaries was apparently not enough for them to abandon the mission altogether, and the relationship between Gokol, Kumal, and Unna and the missionaries continued in an uneasy stalemate for another three weeks. At that point, Carey and Marshman visited the three, and 'rebuked them and exhorted them; but their state of mind was far from encouraging'.⁶⁵ In matters of church discipline, this was a last effort before suspension 'from the privileges of the church—that is, the Lord's Supper and voting at

⁶⁰ Ward, 12 January 1802; 15 January 1802.

⁶¹ Ibid, 31 January 1802; 1 February 1802.

⁶² Missionaries to Society, 13 April 1802, *PA*, volume 2, 1801, 237-8. John Bowen consistently relied on the contents of the Baptists' *Periodical Accounts* for his criticisms, characterizing Gokol as a 'poor victim', whose 'hard speeches' provided 'a most useful example of the effects produced by blind zeal!' *Missionary Incitement and Hindoo Demoralisation*, 55.

⁶³ Ward, 6 February 1802. Imagery of insanity was often applied to converts whose behaviour was deemed inappropriate. George Pearce, a Baptist missionary at Calcutta wrote of one new convert: 'The brahman who was last baptized, I am sorry to say, became *deranged*. The affliction appeared to be caused by excessive concern for his wife, whom he had left. He has since left us, and where he is, I know not'. George Pearce to John Dyer, 23 December 1837, BMS MSS IN/29.

⁶⁴ Ward, 7 February 1802; 19 February 1802.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 6 March 1802.

church meetings for a time'.⁶⁶ In response, Gokol the next day 'sent word that he would kill himself, if he was not permitted to come to the Lord's Supper'.⁶⁷ This threat elicited no reaction from the missionaries; indeed Carey had always regarded Gokol as a man 'whose mind is naturally very susceptible of an enthusiastic turn'.⁶⁸ Some days later the matter came to a head when Gokol stole some clothes from Krishna's house.⁶⁹ Had his debts driven him to such desperation, or was his an act of spite? The missionaries turned to Krishna to find the answer. For the next week Krishna and Gokol 'had a great deal of talk', and Gokol's family and Unna, repentant, returned to the church.⁷⁰

Later, with the dramatic details of this story laid out before them, the BMS could not help but pass it along to its constituent congregations through the *Periodical Accounts*. Sure this would be the case, Ward wrote to the Society after the matter had been settled to provide what he considered a clearer explanation of matters at the mission:

I will just give you the substance of a conversation which passed between myself and Krishna two or three days ago. Now and then I try to get from Krishna the state of mind of our native brethren and sisters, and of enquirers. It will easily occur to you that we see almost every one of our native friends every day, yet that there will be a distance betwixt them and us, which prevents them from unburdening themselves to us, as they do to one another. To remedy this, I ask Krishna now and then respecting them individually; and I have every reason to think that he talks with a perfect sense of impartiality.⁷¹

Thus Krishna had been installed as the 'model convert'. It is clear from a very early point that Ward considered Krishna a friend, but here he revealed a regard for him unexpressed anywhere else. He trusted Krishna implicitly regarding his opinions of the other converts, and set him before the Society as useful to the mission in more than just evangelism. Carey, too, had early on noted in his letters to the Society that by Krishna's 'affectionate simple conversation with others [he] is likely to be of much use'.⁷² Ward's conversation with Krishna framed him as a 'model convert' indeed: he asked the right questions, provided the right answers, and volunteered just the kind of information Ward wanted in assessing the

⁶⁶ William Cathcart, ed., *The Baptist Encyclopedia*. 2 volumes. Revised edition (Philadelphia, 1883), s.v. 'Suspension'.

⁶⁷ Ward, 7 March 1802.

⁶⁸ Carey to Ryland, 27 November 1800, BMS MSS IN/13.

⁶⁹ Ward, 16 March 1802.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 27 March 1802; 28 March 1802.

⁷¹ Ward to Sutcliffe, 2 April 1802, BMS MSS, IN/16.

⁷² Carey to Ryland, 30 January 1801, BMS MSS, IN/13.

'state of mind' of the other converts:

W. Ward—Well Krishna, have you talked to Gokol lately?

Krishna—I was at his house the other night till quite late...and all [Gokol's] family were present. I told Gokol to lay aside all anger against me; and to pray for me as I prayed for him constantly...I reminded him of the suffering and death of Christ and exhorted him to keep up a continual remembrance of those sufferings...I told him of Job (We are reading Job in English in the family, and we [discuss] the substance of each chapter in Bengali as our Brethren are with us every evening at family worship.)...(I have since conversed again with Krishna about Gokol. He thinks Gokol has now parted with his Bengali gooroo, and that he is looking toward Christ. He is afraid Unna has no faith in Christ in her mind, and that she only seeks the loaves and fishes.)

W. Ward—Krishna, how is Kumal, the wife of Gokol?

Krishna—I think I see her mind tender and well. But Gokol is often full of passion. When he hears about Christ he is better; but afterwards he is full of anger with those about him.

Ward closed the letter with a brief mention of Krishna's preaching style, that he 'is a little in danger of running into the allegorizing strain', and a final assessment of Gokol: 'either an awful hypocrite, or a wild and unsteady character'.⁷³

Taking into account their rather staged quality, what can be gathered from Krishna's answers? What do they reveal about him, and about the way he wanted Ward to see him? Instead of reading for resistance, as many historians and critics approach missionary documents, this conversation invites reading for overt compliance. Krishna eschews anger and embraces humility and prayer as the solutions to the conflict between himself and Gokol—and more importantly as the solutions to overcoming that aspect of a 'heathen' lifestyle. His exhortation to Gokol to remember Christ's sufferings was no doubt well intentioned, but had earlier proved a problem for Gokol, who had come to Ward complaining that keeping 'his mind always on Christ's death makes his brain dry and exhausted'.

Ward explained that it was 'a very common thing among Hindoos to think that holiness consists in always thinking of one thing, or one name, and if a name, to be always repeating it'.⁷⁴ Krishna's preaching, on the other hand, was 'very free from Hindoo errors and prejudices', but in the case of his conversation with Gokol perhaps some leeway was allowable. Krishna's mention of Job may have led Ward to his assessment of 'running into the allegorizing strain', but it also demonstrated the effect of the missionaries' services and lessons on Krishna's thought patterns. To Ward, and especially to congregations back home,

⁷³ Ward to Sutcliffe, 2 April 1802, BMS MSS, IN/16. Avril Powell addresses these types of 'testimonies' and the process of their translation and publication in her 'Processes of Conversion to Christianity in 19th Century North West India' in Oddie, ed., *Religious Conversion Movements in South Asia*, 44.

⁷⁴ Ward, 30 August 1801.

internalizing and applying the word of God to his life was a definite sign of true faith and an indication of why Krishna served as a ‘model convert’.

Whether the allusion to ‘loaves and fishes’—the tangible rewards of following Christ (or following his followers)—is Krishna’s or Ward’s, it is Krishna’s assessment of Unna, and thereafter of Kumal, that further reveals his unique position in the convert community as well as the more ‘traditional’ aspects of that community. He is able to criticize Unna and her faith because she had until recently been a member of his household, and his opinion may have been skewed because of the quarrel. Kumal, on the other hand, though a professed believer, was another man’s wife in a house separated from his own and with whom he would have had very little direct contact—even in situations like the one he describes to Ward. Ward’s reliance on Krishna’s singular perspective reveals the influence Krishna actually bore on the missionaries’ perceptions of the converts, but Ward’s own observations were not unfounded.

Just a few days later, Gokol burst into the school-room with a stick and ‘stamped upon the testament, etc’. Later that day he did it again, and when the missionaries took up the matter with him, they concluded that ‘his pride cannot brook being kept at a distance; and we fear he smokes hemp, which has an intoxicating effect’.⁷⁵ The missionaries were either painfully naïve, painfully longsuffering, or painfully desperate to retain their converts (and perhaps all three). They had already suspended him and Unna from the Church, and their last recourse would be to exclude him, but two weeks later matters between them seemed to have improved and Gokol returned to work at the missionaries’ house.⁷⁶ Though he and Unna remained suspended, his wife Kumal continued to attend worship and participate in the Lord’s Supper, and perhaps the missionaries hoped that her example would be a positive influence on Gokol. Just as things seemed to settle down at the mission, Krishna and his temper presented yet another case for worry among the missionaries. A new convert, an older man named Petumber Singh, had arrived at the Serampore Mission the previous December, and had moved into Krishna’s home to be instructed in Christianity. Like Krishna, Petumber soon converted and grew steadily in his faith. When Petumber took on paid employment under the missionaries, Krishna at the encouragement of the missionaries ‘thought he ought to pay him [rent] for these three months’. A disagreement arose, not on

⁷⁵ Ward, 5 April 1802.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 21 April 1802

account of the debt itself, but from Krishna's method of collecting it:

Yesterday Krishna, having occasion for money, sent his servant to demand the payment of this sum without first mentioning it to him. This appeared to the old gentleman such a breach of hospitality...that he was quite astonished, and began to think he was fallen among people who had fallen below heathens...We acknowledged to Petumber that Krishna had acted unadvisedly, and unkindly...but that we thought it reasonable, that as Krishna had a family, that he should reimburse him.⁷⁷

Upon hearing this news from Petumber, who had 'brought a note...to prove it', Marshman was incredulous, exclaiming 'What!...have we been deceived at last?' Only a few days earlier Marshman had accused Krishna of overcharging them for his carpentry and lectured him on 'the necessity of justice and equity in all our dealings with men', though 'on examining the case more minutely, we found very little if any occasion for blame'. Marshman blamed their error on his observation that 'justice and equity are exotics in Bengal, so much so that we never expect to see them here'. Despite all the trust they put in Krishna, it seemed he was not above the 'heathen' propensities toward 'avarice' and 'artful schemes'.⁷⁸ In this case, though, they attributed Krishna's error to poor judgment, and when they explained the matter to him he seemed to accept his fault.

But in the same way as previous disagreements among the convert community, this matter did not remain at rest for long. Early on the morning of 19 May, two weeks later, Krishna found Petumber at the mission school, where Petumber was a teacher, and began to quarrel with him over the matter that apparently had been laid to rest.⁷⁹ This 'previous little disagreement' was larger than Marshman had estimated. Krishna 'had given [Petumber] reproachful language in the presence of many people drawn together by the noise'. Quarreling was one thing, but doing it publicly was intolerable—it not only reflected poorly on the converts and the mission, but also proved to the missionaries that between the black-and-white distinctions of 'convert' and 'heathen', there was in fact a very broad grey area.

Marshman praised Petumber's coolness in the face of Krishna's anger, saying 'We found the old man had been able to preserve his temper in an extraordinary degree'. Perhaps Krishna's role of 'model convert' was soon to be usurped. For Ward the incident was especially upsetting. He was closest to Krishna, and had seen him at his best and worst, but

⁷⁷ J. Marshman to Committee, 29 April 1802, BMS MSS, IN/19A, Marshman's bound letters.

⁷⁸ Grant, *Observations*, 27.

⁷⁹ Serampore Missionaries. *Brief Memoirs of Four Christian Hindoos, Lately Deceased* (reprint) (Serampore and London, 1816), 44.

now ‘felt so moved by anger with Krishna that he would not go near him’. Ward maintained his composure, and he and Marshman agree to wait until Carey returned from Calcutta before they breached the topic with Krishna:

All the Church being assembled, Bro. Carey charged Krishna with the crime, and urged the impossibility of a Church of Christ subsisting without brotherly love and affection, and mentioned our determination to keep the Church pure, whatever it might cost.⁸⁰

Everyone there no doubt understood what Carey meant by his last words. Krishna humbly said that he was praying about the matter, and Petumber had readily agreed to forgive him, ‘on a changed conduct’. The missionaries ended the meeting by exhorting the congregation, ‘especially the women, to cultivate love and harmony’. A month later Marshman noted with pride, ‘I was quite refreshed to see the love and union which now appears between Krishna and Petumber’.⁸¹ Ward, however, had remained obstinately mute on the subject.

He was, in fact, quite silent regarding the converts as 1802 progressed. Only in October did he finally mention them again, when Gokol was excluded from the church.⁸² Some time later a morose Ward complained that ‘Krishna means well, but is not the most prudent’, and remarked tersely, ‘Gokol had a bad name always, and is not in the Church’.⁸³ Krishna’s imprudence was again to prove disappointing to Ward. On Sunday morning, 2 January, Ward was late for the worship service at Krishna’s house, and when he arrived he found that Krishna had begun the service in his stead. While Krishna may have considered it initiative, Ward viewed his actions quite differently, most notably as Krishna had administered the Lord’s Supper. ‘I was grieved at the irregularity of this proceeding’, Ward wrote. The Lord’s Supper was an especially important ordinance, intended to reflect the spiritual purity of its participants and to bind the individuals of the Church together into one body, and all the native converts participated, but this ritual was only supposed to be led by an ordained minister. Ward attributed Krishna’s behaviour to his envy of Petumber and another convert named Komal, who had been chosen as itinerant preachers instead of himself because of what Ward called ‘some imperfections in his conduct’. Surely Krishna’s actions that day did not help his case, but that may have been his purpose. In a letter to the Society, the missionaries

⁸⁰ Ward, 2 May 1802; J. Marshman to Committee, 29 April 1802, BMS MSS, IN/19A, Marshman’s bound letters.

⁸¹ J. Marshman to Committee, 29 April 1802, BMS MSS, IN/19A, Marshman’s bound letters.

⁸² Ward, 3 October 1802.

⁸³ Ibid, 24 December 1802.

took a rather lenient position, explaining that due to their reaction, ‘he came to himself, and has since given up this irregularity. We suppose he had not been apprised of the evil of schism. He says he longs with his whole soul to communicate the Gospel to his fellow countrymen’.⁸⁴ In this version, Krishna’s ‘envy and bitterness’ became ‘ignorance and zeal’, but Ward’s idea of some gambit for position may not have been far from the truth.

By March Ward had recommended that Krishna ‘be employed as an itinerant’ preacher with a salary of twelve rupees a month while away, and six while at home.⁸⁵ This recommendation was finally taken up in May, after a long discussion among the missionaries regarding his role at Serampore:

It is absolutely important to have a native family at Serampore to break the distance betwixt the natives and us; to entertain enquirers from a distance; and to afford a continual means of instruction to new comers. They do not understand our words as well, nor can they open their minds so freely to us, as to native brethren. In these respects Krishna and his family greatly serve the Mission.⁸⁶

This sentiment Ward had expressed earlier in the missionaries’ letter to the Society, and despite Krishna’s personal inconsistencies his value to the mission was unquestionable. But how long would it take for him to overcome those ‘imperfections’ in his personality and become, once and for all, the ‘model convert’? Gokol had been readmitted to the church, and the community of converts was growing and thriving, thanks in large part to Krishna’s good example, and that of his family.

By late June, however, the mission was cast back into turmoil. Rumours began to circulate surrounding Krishna’s daughter Goluk and a young man at the mission named Kolladhor. Intimations of ‘an improper connexion’ between the two had reached the missionaries, and Carey and Marshman brought the subject to Krishna’s attention.⁸⁷ Krishna ‘went into a dreadful passion and would hear nothing’, and ‘was full of rage, making use of the most dreadful expressions of vengeance upon us’.⁸⁸ This kind of reaction they might have expected to come from Gokol, but here was Krishna directing his anger at *them*.

⁸⁴ Carey, Marshman, and Ward to Society, 7-29 Jan 1803, BMS MSS, IN/21.

⁸⁵ Ward, 19 March 1803.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 9 May 1803.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 25 June 1803. Bowen cited this incident as another of the Baptists’ failures. Goluk had left her husband ‘*to be Christ’s*’, [he quotes *PA*, volume 2, 180] but was ‘*detected in an intrigue with a young man under her father’s roof*.’ This, Bowen argued, was yet another example of how missionaries were ‘demoralizing Hindoostan by tearing asunder the bonds of society, and thus generating complicated instances of adultery, suicide, and blasphemy’. *Missionary Incitement and Hindoo Demoralization*, 55.

⁸⁸ Ward, 26, 30 June 1803.

Krishna immediately went home and kicked out two boarders he thought were the ones who had talked to the missionaries. His family had been under the microscope of the missionaries' gaze for several years, but now Krishna was furious that the missionaries would meddle in their affairs, especially based on rumour and conjecture.

The missionaries asked Petumber, who had become the Mission's unofficial peace-maker and counselor, to speak with Krishna, and their conversation seemed to help.⁸⁹ Harkening back to the earlier scenes, Petumber had now assumed the role of the patient and faithful adviser, and Krishna of angry and disillusioned follower. That night they held yet another church meeting to discuss Krishna's behaviour and the matter between Goluk and Kolladhor.⁹⁰ It carried over to the next night, when they heard evidence of 'many indecent familiarities between Kolladhor and Goluk' but could not come to any definite conclusions, except that there was 'conspiracy if not indecency'.⁹¹ A week later they judged that Krishna, Rasu, Joymuni, and Goluk be suspended for a month, which Krishna accepted 'with meekness'. ('The women', Ward added, 'were less mild'.⁹²) At the end of that period Krishna and Rasu were restored, but Joymuni and Goluk were further suspended on account of an 'indelicate and improper letter' from Goluk to Kolladhor.⁹³ After yet another month, on the first of October, a clearer picture of the events of the past few months was revealed. Rasu told the missionaries that when Kolladhor first came to the mission, they thought he was unmarried 'and that the bond between Goluk and her husband was not indissoluble', and hoped the two might be married 'if he became a Christian'.⁹⁴ Ward attributed the whole matter to matchmaking, saying that Kolladhor 'came to Krishna's and was encouraged to stay, meet, and marry Goluk'.⁹⁵ At last impurity had been purged from the Church, and the missionaries could once again be secure in their faith in their converts.

Not long after, the missionaries and converts celebrated the first inter-caste marriage at Serampore, between Krishna's second daughter Anunda and a man named Krishna Prasad, notably the Baptists' first Brahmin convert.⁹⁶ As the *Baptist Magazine* explained, 'The first

⁸⁹ Serampore Missionaries, *Brief Memoirs of Four Christian Hindoos*, 46.

⁹⁰ Ward, 1 July 1803.

⁹¹ Ibid, 2 July 1803.

⁹² Ibid, 9 July 1803.

⁹³ Ibid, 6 August 1803; 3 September 1803. Goluk remained suspended the next month as well.

⁹⁴ J. Marshman, journal, 30 August 1803, BMS MSS, IN/19A.

⁹⁵ Ward, 24 October 1803.

⁹⁶ See S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 235-239 and Serampore Missionaries, *Memoir of Krishna Prasad* (Serampore, 1819).

Christian marriage of Hindu converts' was in retrospect 'the first solemn engagement of that happy institution, the Christian family, before which the seraglios of Bengal were eventually all to disappear....nothing wonderful in the eyes of England—a prodigy and a portent on those of India'.⁹⁷ The celebratory mood was short-lived, however. In May 1804 Unna was suspended for 'lying' and 'on suspicion of having the foul disease'—syphilis.⁹⁸ Anunda had been ready to be baptized, but that was put off because of her 'quarreling', and it seemed that her marriage with Krishna Prasad was getting off to a rocky start.⁹⁹

At the church meeting of 1 June, the missionaries 'talked much to Krishna about Rasu, who appears to be at the bottom of many uneasinesses in the church. Krishna justifies her in all things, and seems full of wrath against Krishna Prasad'.¹⁰⁰ Ward did not offer a clear picture of what those 'uneasinesses' were, nor did either Carey or Marshman, but they obviously had much to do with the contentious relationships within Krishna's family. They, too, were losing their 'model' status. At the end of June, Krishna Prasad wanted to move to another house, but Krishna would not allow it, and the local constable was even called to prevent what might have escalated into more than just a family quarrel.¹⁰¹ For the missionaries, especially Ward, this was absolutely the last straw. Krishna was told he would have to find employment elsewhere and 'could no longer in his present state and temper be considered as a catechist', and even with this step he 'did not seem humbled yet'.¹⁰²

Five days later Krishna married his third daughter, Kisuree, to a catechist named Bhyrub, without the missionaries present. Indeed, he performed the ceremony himself using a modified version of the missionaries' own ceremony, further telling the missionaries that 'there was no love among us and therefore he did not wish to be among us'. Ward's response

⁹⁷ 'The First Christian Hindoo Wedding' in 'Scenes from Serampore', *BM*, volume 51, 1859, 653-4.

⁹⁸ Ward, 4 May 1804. The question of converts' marriage had elicited a number of questions from the missionaries in their early years at Serampore. In 1803 Boddheesa, a former byragi who had received a 'new' wife from his guru, became a Christian, but the missionaries were unsure how to handle such a situation. 'I declare I know not how it ought to be treated,' William Ward wrote in his journal, 'whether as something bad which can only be mended in a new generation, or whether it ought to be treated at once as an adulterous connexion'. 25 June 1803. Not only was this a matter of establishing a church and setting a precedent for Christian communities in India, but Ward also reveals an awareness of the disruptive nature of conversion and their wish to make such 'transitions' as easy as possible. Joshua Marshman puzzled over a similar—if opposite—question in his journal in 1804, lamenting that 'no one will give them to wife'. Many parents considered 'prior contracts invalid' and 'will not give their daughters'. 'This will be a puzzling business', he concluded, 'till there are enough converted to intermarry with each other'. J. Marshman, journal, 12 May 1804, BMS MSS IN/19A.

⁹⁹ Anunda was eventually baptized in 1805, but was suspended several times afterward.

¹⁰⁰ Ward, 1 June 1804.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 30 June 1804.

¹⁰² Ibid, 14 July 1804.

was reserved, but telling. ‘This is a dreadful irregularity...The mission is in deep waters now’.¹⁰³ Bhyrub himself was no ‘model convert’. On 6 August he was caught ‘passing forged notes and guarantees’ in order to get money from the missionaries, in consequence of which he was ‘sent away’. Ward cynically noted that ‘Krishna has made a pretty mess of his marriage game with this villain’, and things between Krishna and the missionaries remained up in the air.¹⁰⁴ Mohan, Goluk’s husband from Calcutta, came to live at Krishna’s in October and took up carpentry with him. Anunda, meanwhile, had left her father’s house with Krishna Prasad.¹⁰⁵

Finally, at the beginning of November, Krishna reconciled with the missionaries, ‘and was received to friendship again; but was told he could not expect to be made a catechist again’, or at least only ‘after a long proof of a more steady walk’. Krishna’s family remained ‘in an alienated state’.¹⁰⁶ Was the lesson here that they had put too much on Krishna too early? The missionaries were perhaps finally realizing that their relationship with their first converts had so far been a learning experience, and would have to continue to be one.

Denouement

In February of 1805, Rasu and Joymuni ‘declared that they wish to live in love with us, and that they were great sinners in keeping back so long’.¹⁰⁷ Be that as it may, the missionaries were not as quick to forgive as they had been, not so desperate to usher back into the fold those who had gone astray—not without more tangible examples of good conduct and pure motives. The two women remained suspended until the end of March, and were only ‘tacitly’ admitted to the church again.¹⁰⁸ Mohan’s baptism in April, however, provided the kind of reassurance the missionaries needed to believe in the efficacy of the mission, and of their converts’ role in bringing others to Christianity. Krishna had had much influence on him, and Andrew Fuller’s hope that Goluk might convert him, instead of the other way around, was fulfilled.

¹⁰³ Ward, 19 July 1804.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 6 August 1804; 7 August 1804.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 20 October 1804.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 2 November 1804.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 16 February 1805.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 30 March 1805.

Things from that point remained relatively calm at the mission, at least concerning the converts. Much of the Serampore missionaries' attention was diverted to the arrival of two new missionaries in the summer of 1806, and the subsequent row with the British authorities that lasted through the fall. A sepoy 'mutiny' in Madras Presidency had allegedly been instigated by missionary activities, and the British Government had swiftly reacted by enforcing current anti-mission policies and imposing further restrictions on existing activities.¹⁰⁹ In November Bhyrub, Krishna's son-in-law who had been run off for fraud and theft, returned to the mission. He immediately was caught again 'forging a receipt to get money from us', and had stolen a silver spoon from the missionaries' house. This time the missionaries felt they could not simply dismiss him, and 'unable to bear his thieving any longer we have this day carried the matter before the magistrate, who has given him a thorough flogging'.¹¹⁰ Krishna once again grew angry with the missionaries, who instead of showing forgiveness and kindness, especially to one of his family, had handed Bhyrub over to be flogged. Ward, astonished, wrote, 'To show you what lengths these people go to in their transports of passion Krishna's example will suffice: he declared that he would sell his all, and wander about the country to warn people against becoming Christians'.¹¹¹ Krishna had finally fallen from Ward's grace, ceased to be a 'model convert'—indeed ceased to represent the trials of a Christian—and was dismissed to the level of 'these people'. The next morning Krishna 'confessed his fault in indulging passion', but for Ward, though he could forgive him, Krishna would never occupy the same place as he had.

For the next two years Ward hardly mentioned Krishna's name in his journals, until Krishna moved to Calcutta in November of 1808. There he soon fell into some trouble with the British authorities for publicly preaching, but so impressed the magistrate and the constable by his resolution to preach that they granted their approval.¹¹² Indeed, there also remained something of a struggle of roles and identities between the missionaries and their converts, especially those like Krishna who showed signs of wanting more responsibility and agency. Andrew Fuller addressed this in a letter to Ward in December 1806 praising the

¹⁰⁹ See Jonathan Brooke, 'Preachers, Policy, and Pragmatism: East India Company Administration and the "Missions Question" in Bengal, 1806-1807'. M.A. thesis, University of New Orleans, 2003 and S. K. Mitra, 'The Vellore Mutiny of 1806 and the Question of Christian Missions to India', *Indian Church History Review* 8 (1974), 75-82.

¹¹⁰ Ward, 25 November 1806.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 6 December 1806.

¹¹² Ibid, 14 November 1808.

missionaries' efforts to enable and encourage 'native officers' and preachers. A missionary's influence, Fuller postulated, should be 'not official but natural', reflecting his 'superior wisdom and experience'. On the other hand, Fuller countered, 'if it should so happen that a native pastor should have more wisdom and rectitude', his own advice and even admonishment ought to hold just as much place and influence as the missionary's.¹¹³ This democratic ideal would play itself out in a variety of ways at Serampore and other stations across Bengal and India, but would also lead to serious debate over the relationships between missionaries and native preachers.¹¹⁴ Soon after, Ward reverted to a tone reminiscent of his earliest days with Krishna when he described their new arrangement:

Having begun an experience meeting at Calcutta on a Tuesday evening, I go down every Tuesday with Bro. Carey. At these meetings I get from Krishna an account of what he is doing. These meetings I find very useful, especially to the members born in this country, who have had little knowledge of the Xn. life.¹¹⁵

Krishna had regained his trust, and had certainly regained the role of 'model convert'. Perhaps in Calcutta he was removed from the daily scrutiny of the missionaries and the claustrophobia of the Serampore Mission. In any case, Krishna flourished in Calcutta as a preacher and evangelist until 1813, when he left to initiate a mission in Sylhet. He died there nine years later, and William Ward followed him only a few months afterward.

Conclusions

How ought we to assess the first decade of the Serampore Mission and the relationships between the missionaries and converts? On the one hand is the view that the results justified the processes. The first converts had overcome personal and social obstacles and asserted their newly found Christian faith. On the other hand is the view that the trials of their early years represented the failures of the Serampore Baptists and their converts. They could not get past their conceptions of 'heathenism' nor see realised their ideas of 'model converts'. For example, it is interesting to note that in Ward's *Brief Memoirs of Four Hindoo Christians, Lately Deceased*, (1810), he included Petumber Singh and Krishna Prasad, but

¹¹³ Fuller to Ward, 2 December 1806. Quoted in Report 3, 'Native Churches and Pastors', by J. Trafford, G. Pearce and J. Page, *Report of the Conference of the Baptist Missions of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1855), 40.

¹¹⁴ See John C. B. Webster, *The Christian Community and Change in Nineteenth Century North India*. (New Delhi, 1976).

¹¹⁵ Ward, 27 November 1808.

Gokol was left out in favour of two other admittedly obscure converts.¹¹⁶ Setting aside the interpretive extremes, these years provided a series of learning experiences for the missionaries and the converts as they developed their respective conceptions of identity, conduct, and purpose, and also especially set something of a precedent for their narration.

The Serampore missionaries' own evangelical, non-conformist backgrounds had certainly influenced their concept of *ecclesia*—the Christian community or body of the church—and the ways it ought to be built up and structured in the mission field. It is clear that they had a definite sense of the value of the family as a cornerstone of this *ecclesia*, and in establishing such a community—an extended family itself—they were recreating 'the family' along lines that had not yet been drawn. What the story of Krishna Pal reveals, though, are the obstacles involved in their synthesizing their own ideas of the family with those of their converts. Their ideals of domestic harmony, unity, and hierarchy had found counterpoints in their archetypical conceptions of 'the heathen' in India, complicating their approach to modeling (or enforcing) their expectations. This, too, was a learning experience, and one that provides a clearer insight into the ideological and sociological processes behind the dynamics of this early mission. To understand their motives and actions, we must also understand the ways they interacted with each other and understood those respective conceptions. The story of Krishna Pal and the other early Serampore converts, then, is not necessarily one of success or failure, but of a constant struggle in the development of ideas and identities.

What about the narrative power of the missionaries' and converts' experiences? Frederick Downs asserts that Carey and the other missionaries were silent 'on the subject of their social activities' because their 'supporters wanted to hear about evangelism-as-conversion/baptism and nothing else'.¹¹⁷ In their case this is not completely so, as the BMS's *Periodical Accounts* and various other periodicals followed each step of the Serampore Mission Family—and its extensions—with relish. Yet William Ward taciturnly instructed Andrew Fuller and the BMS Committee in 1806 that 'when you put the *Periodical Accounts* to press be careful with the

¹¹⁶ Rughunath was formerly an adulterer and hook-swinger, 'and though he had no talents to preach, yet on all occasions he recommended the Gospel, by a humble behaviour, and a grateful sense of kindnesses'. He and his converted wife were 'an affectionate and happy couple, whose domestic happiness had been greatly heightened by their reception of the gospel. During the two years of their marriage, the missionaries never heard of a single difference between them, and during R.'s last illness, his wife nursed him, day and night, with the greatest tenderness'. Futik had also been 'sunk in idolatry', but eventually brought a number of people to Christianity, and 'except some quarrels with his sister before her baptism, his conduct was exemplary; and these quarrels were, no doubt, the fault of his sister, in a great measure.'

¹¹⁷ Downs, *Christianity in North-East India*, 70.

freedom with which I write to you, exposing the secrets of the Mission, and the relative state of things betwixt us here' and to 'take care that the utmost delicacy be observed'.¹¹⁸ The missionaries' struggles and those of their converts' were equally fascinating for readers, on more than theological or evangelistic levels—theirs were families and communities meeting universal internal and external challenges head on, and provided audiences with a new perspective on their own lives. No matter how ideal or depraved, whether models of unity or discord, they were families nonetheless; and for missionaries, converts, and readers alike the day-to-day activities and relationships of the mission enterprise proved just as important as itineration journals and statistics.

¹¹⁸ Ward to Fuller, 7 March 1806. BMS MSS IN/16, '17 letters to Fuller'.

Chapter Four: Christian Villages and Village Christians

'Civilisation and salvation walk arm in arm together'.¹

Despite nearly two decades of direct contact and community between missionaries and converts in Bengal, it seemed that ‘progress’ was slow in being realized. William Ward complained to John Ryland in 1818 that ‘our Christian Hindoos are dwarfs...Either we have not hit the chord which touches the heart of a Hindoo, or it is our jargon, or something or other is amiss’.² He had certainly not forgotten the difficulties faced by Krishna Pal and the other early converts at Serampore, but efforts to meet those difficulties continued to test the Baptists, especially as they had spread their efforts right across Bengal by then. Missionaries were often at odds to discover how best to balance what they saw as the obvious spiritual and temporal needs of their converts with their ideas of an independent Indian church, and this ambivalence was often manifested in the Christian communities that continued to crop up throughout the countryside. While itineration—making lengthy tours to preach, teach, and distribute literature—remained the primary role of the missionary, the demands of native Christians required more than occasional visits or the presence of a resident catechist or native preacher (himself often hardly trained).³ Meanwhile, the dissociative power of conversion, combined with the absence of regular spiritual and temporal support left many new Christians in a difficult state. ‘You may easily conceive’, wrote one missionary, ‘how the consciousness of being thus situated must operate against the carrying out of religious convictions, and deter from making the practical avowal of faith in Christ implied in Baptism’.⁴

The solution, many believed, was to remove converts altogether from their ‘heathen’ environments and create new self-sufficient communities where native Christians could grow in their faith and prosper without any obstacles . As both centralized communities and

¹ ‘Carey, Marshman, and Ward to the U.S. Baptist Board of Missions, 25 June 1816’. *BM*, volume 10, 1818, 193.

² Ward to Ryland, Serampore, 4 September 1818. *MH*, April 1819. (John Ryland had become Secretary of the BMS after Andrew Fuller’s death in 1815.)

³ Oddie, ‘Missionaries as Social Commentators: The Indian Case’, 198-9.

⁴ *MH*, September 1843.

refuges from temptation and persecution, these ‘Christian villages’ would enable the infant Indian church to gradually—but steadily—take firm root. One LMS missionary, describing ‘The Christian Village in a Heathen Land’ explained that such communities ‘preserve them [native Christians] from the contaminating influences of heathen intercourse [,] facilitate their regular Christian instruction and promote their mutual comfort and edification’.⁵ Some, on the other hand, were certain that such communities would develop on their own. Joshua Russell, one of the BMS Committee members who had been sent in 1851 to survey the India missions, defined ‘Christian villages’ as ‘simply, several native families living near together and professing Christianity’. ‘When we consider how bad the heathen are’, he assumed, ‘it certainly seems very desirable that a Christian family should not choose to dwell where it must be surrounded by such a moral atmosphere but should prefer proximity to other Christian families’.⁶ Ironically, in such cases the ‘visibility’ of the Christian converts to each other and the missionaries also served to render them effectively ‘invisible’ to their former neighbours.

Certainly, as we shall see, organic ‘Christian villages’ appeared and even flourished, but conversion to Christianity had long presented problems for both the convert and the missionary. J. Williamson, at the Baptists’ station in Sewry, on the northwestern edge of Bengal, made the dual role of his ‘new Christian village’ quite clear, and in doing so neatly summed up the principles behind the concept. Constructed in 1828 (ten years after the station itself was established) it was ‘intended chiefly for the relief of indigent Christians’ and as ‘an asylum to inquirers, who, through fear of persecution, feel themselves unable to make a public profession of Christianity’.⁷ In addition, Williamson considered his converts’ proximity very important,

inasmuch as the close superintendence they so much require, can be so much more easily and efficaciously employed than if they were residing at a distance, or even dispersed throughout the village. Indeed, they are so situated, that hardly any thing, even of trifling moment, can transpire without its becoming almost immediately known’.⁸

⁵ *Missionary Magazine*, August 1849. ‘Both adults and children’, the article continued, ‘are separated from the evil influence of daily and hourly beholding the wicked life and hearing the filthy conversation of the heathen’.

⁶ Russell, ‘Thoughts’, 21.

⁷ Williamson to Dyer, 6 May 1828, *BM*, volume 21, 1829, 176.

⁸ *MH*, April 1828. James Smith, at Chitora (near Agra) likewise pointed out that ‘the missionary’s bungalow is close at hand’ to the homes of the hundred villagers there.

In spite of much debate over the fundamental nature of these villages many missionaries initially found success with them, and in turn with those who read about them. The Christian community at Serampore, as the previous chapter has suggested, had from its beginnings been closely monitored and supervised by the missionaries there, and had, especially through employment, avoided many of the harsher realities that abandoning caste and adopting this new religion entailed.⁹ In early 1826, on a piece of high ground about a mile away from the mission premises, the missionaries at Serampore erected a new ‘Bengal Christian village’ called Johnnagar, named for John Clark Marshman.¹⁰ Built especially for the Christian employees of the Mission Press, Johnnagar was intended as a place ‘away from the distractions of Hinduism’ where the missionaries could provide for converts’ ‘general comfort’ while ‘facilitating the communication of religious knowledge’.¹¹ Thirteen homes surrounded a chapel set in the centre, and a ‘native preacher’ lived on the premises, holding services and leading an adult school on Tuesday and Saturday nights.¹²

In May 1826 William Carey wrote to his colleague Joshua Marshman, then on a fund-raising trip to Britain, that the new village was ‘fast rising up; about a dozen houses are already erected and occupied, and all things there are orderly, and as we could wish’. No new conversions, however, had ‘lately taken place’, an important factor that would determine the ‘success’ or ‘failure’ of not only Johnnagar, but other ‘Christian villages’ as well.¹³ John Mack frequently led worship at Johnnagar and met with the ‘native brethren’, and Hannah Marshman held Sabbath day meetings, which ‘a good number of women attend’. ‘Till [the village] was erected,’ Mack wrote in May 1828, ‘we always had great difficulty in assembling our brethren and sisters, but now, with the new arrangement we have formed, we have the natural union of husbands and wives, and children, &c. in the common privileges of God’s house’.¹⁴ An update from Serampore in 1845 explained that ‘Johannugger’, an

⁹ See *Serampore Periodical Accounts*, January-March 1823, 23-24.

¹⁰ George Smith, in his biography of William Carey, mentions that this was the same place where Krishna Pal had erected a chapel across from his own house, and where the original Serampore missionaries had also built a school and the house for Gokol and Unna. *Life of William Carey*, 141.

¹¹ *Ye Are My Witnesses, 1792-1942: One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of The Baptist Missionary Society in India* (Calcutta, 1942). The CMS’s Isaac Wilson, at nearby Agurpura, was apparently keen to provide a similar community in connection with his wife’s orphanage, and was accused by John Mack of ‘poaching’ converts by offering them higher salaries. See Eleanor Jackson, ‘From Krishna Pal to Lal Behari Day’.

¹² SPA, 1827-1834, volume 1, 1827, 101.

¹³ William Carey to Joshua Marshman, 31 May 1826, CWM MSS S525, Carey Letters.

¹⁴ SPA, 1827-1834, volume 1, 1827, 101. A series of Helen Mack’s letters, printed after her death in 1830, provide some insight into a missionary household and the point of view of a missionary wife. Describing their daily routine, Helen wrote that she and John worshipped together in English before breakfast, ‘but after

'interesting spot', was 'inhabited by Christians; none but those who profess Christianity reside here', and a decade later the *Missionary Herald* mentioned sixty Christian families there, worshipping in a 'homely, thatched, but very neat chapel'.¹⁵

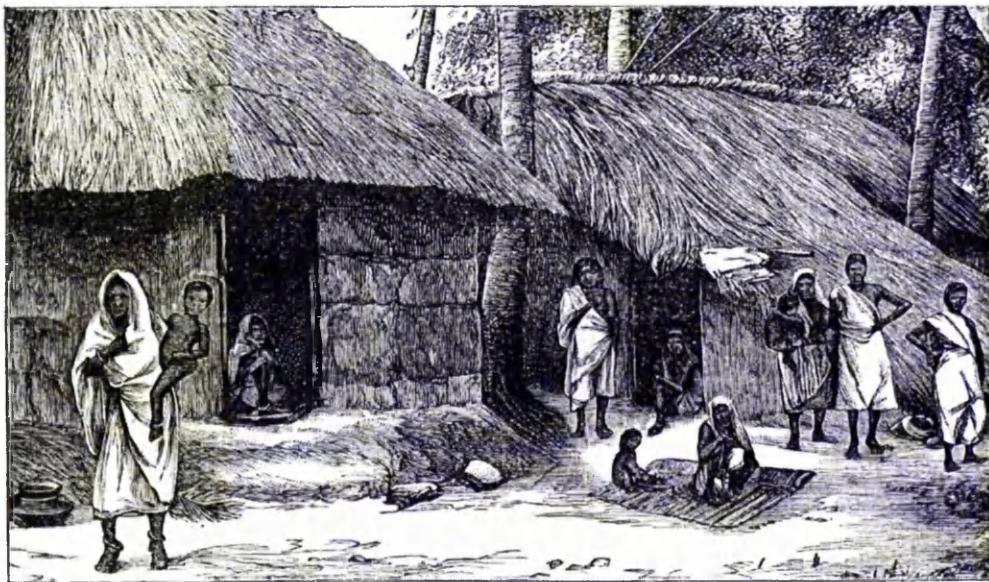


Figure 8—‘Christian Villagers at Serampore’
G. Smith, *Life of William Carey, D.D., Shoemaker and Missionary*, 1885

The previous chapters of this study introduced the connections between the growing emphasis on the family and missionary ideology, and examined how the labels of 'heathen' and 'Christian' came to differentiate certain personal, individual characteristics. Domestic harmony and unity, even cleanliness and industry, distinguished those persons and families on whom the Serampore missionaries had focused their attentions—and their narratives—and this would prove a pattern for others to follow. They also underscored notions of public, disciplined sanctification and outward signs of grace. This chapter continues with the theme of narrating the relationships between missionaries and converts, especially in negotiating the balance between those characteristics and identities, and discusses how they were applied more broadly to groups and communities.

As Baptist missions expanded after the first decade, experiences like those at Serampore were reflected in households and villages across Bengal, and much as the Serampore missionaries had emphasized sanctification, community, order, and the close supervision of

breakfast the servants come to hear.' Three of them lived 'in the Christian village, members of Christian families—the others are heathens, but their attending on worship is not contrary to any prejudice; and can I look round the circle of dark, but not unpleasant faces, and not feel interested?' *MH*, October 1830.

¹⁵ *MH*, November 1845; *BM*, volume 47, 1855, 249.

native Christians, other missionaries attempted to merge their ideals and expectations with the pragmatics of Christianity's spread in India. Emerging communities of Christians were crucial to both their missions and to their representations of them, and practical issues represented the core themes of missionaries' accounts of itinerating and preaching among villagers, especially as settled communities of converts and native Christians began to grow up throughout the region. Those accounts reflected the ideals, goals and concerns in working with their congregants, and moreover reflected much of the missionaries' own personalities. An examination of their accounts yields a clearer understanding of how these missionaries balanced narrative with rhetoric and relied on domestic and familial themes in both their work and their writing.

The three mission stations I examine in this chapter represent something of a cross-section of 'Christian villages': at Jessore a number of them were established by the missionaries there; at Lakhypore and Khari organic Christian communities formed themselves and were supported and encouraged by missionaries; and at Barisal both types were in evidence. 'Created' and 'organic' Christian villages each presented unique challenges to missionaries as well as to native Christians themselves. Viewed as havens or refuges from 'heathen influence' and persecution, such communities reflected idealized 'Christian' values and functioned as extended families for converts, many of whom had left their own families and homes behind. The reports and narratives the missionaries constructed reveal much about the ways in which they envisioned the various roles of 'Christian villages' and mission stations within the local context as well as the complex task of establishing—even enforcing—what they considered conventional Christian communities. Most importantly, perhaps, the serialized stories of missionaries and 'Christian villages' did much to make sense of their work in the villages for their supporters back home.

The questions and challenges surrounding Christian villages naturally became interesting subjects for publication at home, and with the introduction of the *Missionary Herald* in 1819, which assumed from the *Periodical Accounts* the task of disseminating 'missionary intelligence', missionaries and home audiences alike could follow the progress and the ups-and-downs of the various missions on a monthly basis. News of new converts, mission stations and churches were eagerly received by the BMS Committee and readers at home in

Britain, and missionaries were keen to provide the most encouraging reports and profiles of their work that they could. Like the stories of the Serampore Mission, those of these stations were built up piecemeal over the years via letters, journals, and annual reports, and in reconstructing them we can see yet another example of how the combination of narrative and rhetoric could be used to great effect in publicizing missionaries' activities and rallying the types of support they so desperately needed. As missionary publicity went, they met the criteria of interest, response, and struggle that stimulated audiences and maintained readership. One of the challenges of reconstructing these narratives and following the shifts of attention from one station to the next is examining and questioning the criteria that missionaries used in writing their reports—deciding what information to include and how to present it—and the criteria that the BMS Home and General Committees and the editors of the missionary journals used in selecting and presenting that material for public consumption back home in Britain.

Each of these three case studies shows how missionary expectations were often challenged in a variety of ways, which in turn challenged their own conceptions and narratives of these communities. As the years passed and missionaries became more familiar with both their fields and the expectations of their supporters at home, they also became more conscious of the power of their own words and stories, and of the influence their reports had beyond simply informing the Home and General Committees. They certainly, too, came to understand the powerful role editors, publishers, and other publicists played in promoting the cause of Indian missions. As we saw in the previous chapter, the serialized trials and successes of the 'characters' in missionaries' narratives engaged audiences, maintained their attention and generated support on several levels. Examples of conversion and the beneficent effects of the Gospel, whatever the number or extent, were proof positive of a return on the investment of funds and prayers from supporters at home. The three 'spotlight' stations in this chapter thus earned their places in journals as much for their apparent successes—in terms of conversion and spiritual growth—as for the complex and interesting character of the narratives produced by the missionaries in charge of them.

Christianpore and the City of Hope

While John Mack was laboring at Johnnagar, other Baptist missionaries were establishing ‘Christian villages’ throughout North India and as far away as Arracan, on the Burmese border.¹⁶ Brian Stanley, in his *History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, mentions such ‘experiments’ in Jessore in the 1820s, especially the village aptly named ‘Christianpore’, directing us to G. Soddy’s study of *Baptists in Bangladesh* based on his 1978 D.Phil. thesis of the same title.¹⁷ Much as Serampore had done before, and as other stations soon would, the Jessore station became a focus of ‘missionary intelligence’ published in Britain.

The district of Jessore, lying roughly 65 miles NW of Calcutta, covered almost 5000 square miles and encompassed a population of well over a million at the opening of the nineteenth century. The people there were mostly agriculturalists, raising indigo, sugar, and other crops, and were predominantly Muslim. This in itself is rather significant, given that even early on the Baptists had consistently found difficulty in reaching out to Muslims. Indeed, despite some ongoing efforts in distributing tracts and other literature, several Baptist missionaries publicly dismissed any hopes of converting India’s ‘Mohammedans’. This approach was particularly interesting, given Bengal’s large Muslim population, but may have had as much to do with perceptions as with strategy. Was it the Baptists’ emphasis on defeating Brahminism that prevented them from splitting their focus? Or was it, as several missionaries noted, that Muslims were too aggressive and hostile toward Christianity? It was, therefore, of some interest that the Baptists found early and consistent success in Jessore. Perhaps they had encountered non-Muslim communities or other marginalized groups who found they had little to lose—or something to gain—by embracing Christianity.¹⁸

¹⁶ J.C. Marshman, *Carey, Marshman, and Ward*, volume 1, 353. There, one missionary reported, ‘religion pervades families—the praises of God are on the lips of children—and everything betokens its living power’. Another missionary at Chunar wrote in 1825 that converts there were ‘holding family worship among themselves regularly’. *BM*, volume 18, 1826, 249.

¹⁷ Stanley, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, 143. G. Soddy, *Baptists in Bangladesh: An Historical Sketch of More Than One Hundred Years of the Baptist Missionary Society in Bengal* (Khulna, Bangladesh, 1978), 34. Soddy, a missionary in the area in the 1940s, provides a basic outline of the mission’s growth and progress in the first few decades, though he provides no footnotes to his sources. We can, however, supplement these accounts with the various series of *Periodical Accounts*, but few original materials are extant. E. D. Potts also claims there were several ‘Christianpores’ established by the various mission societies throughout the period. *British Baptist Missionaries in India*, 226, n3.

¹⁸ It is interesting to note, however, that in 1818 William Thomas recorded in his journal that a small group of Muslims had come to the Jessore station professing Christianity and promising to bring ‘hundreds of friends and followers’ (though they are not mentioned again). *MH*, October 1818.

The first Baptist church in Jessore was established in 1807 by itinerants from Serampore, who visited monthly, preaching and administering the Lord's Supper. Within a year, however, matters within the young church were 'low', with many converts 'backsliding' and exhibiting 'coldness' of faith. That August Carapeit Aratoon, an Armenian convert and missionary from Serampore, arrived with two other 'native brethren' to assess the situation, and though they found ready audiences, they also met with hostility from local zamindars and munshis. Returning to Serampore with this report, Aratoon was immediately dispatched back to Jessore that October to purchase land and establish a mission station.¹⁹ Within a few years the Jessore church boasted sixty members, and Aratoon and others from Serampore regularly visited until William Thomas, another 'country-born' missionary, was sent to superintend the station in 1813. There he encountered severe opposition from local villagers and zamindars, and the next year lost many of his congregation to what was only described as 'the Hindoo heresy'—perhaps Kartabhaja or a similar movement—leaving the native church splintered into several factions.

Matters of pastoral supervision and maintaining order and church discipline occurred as they had at Serampore—and as they would at many other mission stations and Christian villages. The factors of distance and time often combined with internal and external pressures to undermine the integrity of such communities, creating difficult situations for missionaries and converts alike. These difficulties, however, could be put to good use in missionaries' narratives to challenge readers' expectations and spur them to further action. Their dramatic elements engaged readers' interests while at the same time underscoring the missionaries' need for more money and manpower to ensure that the small successes could be replicated and that Christianity could continue to grow in India.

In 1817 Thomas relocated the station to Sahibganj, where circumstances were apparently better. By 1822 the church had nearly a hundred members, and Thomas, with nineteen members and several 'native preachers', established the village of Christianpore sixteen miles away, to 'ease persecution by landlords and magistrates'.²⁰ This, according to Soddy, proved to be a bad idea, since by drawing converts to Christianpore the church was unable to grow in its members' original communities, and in 1825 the project was abandoned altogether and the

¹⁹ PA, volume 3, 1806, 521, 528, 540. From the zamindar of Golukmandal he purchased a small parcel of land at Chougacha. Soddy, *Baptists in Bangladesh*, 34.

²⁰ See MH, September 1823.

people moved back into Sahibganj.²¹ This was an early example of what would become one of the most difficult ideological and practical problems that missionaries would face: were Christian communities intended to keep to themselves or to become the source of the diffusion of Christianity in India? For missionaries and converts alike, distinct Christian communities and villages were initially intended to bring out new Christians from the midst of ‘the Heathen’ and to instill and maintain the social and behavioural hallmarks of their new faith. For the Baptists in particular, as discussed in the previous chapters, the concept of the covenanted community of professed believers was at the core of their vision for mission stations and congregations everywhere. Pragmatics, however, soon superseded ideology, and the practical difficulties of organizing, supervising, and most importantly *replicating* such communities remained at the front of the missionaries’ efforts—and their narratives.

In 1827 William Buckingham was sent to replace William Thomas, who left missionary service and returned to the indigo business while maintaining close ties and ‘cooperating’ with Buckingham and Serampore.²² The situation at Jessore, meanwhile, was ‘discouraging’. The congregation suffered from ‘spiritual torpidity’ and two native preachers had been suspended for ‘immorality’, though they had lately been restored.²³ In October Buckingham found that ‘the religious state of these families is sufficiently gloomy’.²⁴ The next month he went back to Serampore for further instructions, and returned to Christianpore to find ‘religion at a low ebb’.²⁵ By the end of 1828 the church recorded 20 members, with an additional 20 suspended or excluded, but eight were soon restored and two baptized, bringing

²¹ Soddy, *Baptists in Bangladesh*, 34. One missionary, however, on an itinerating trip up from Chinsurah in 1826 mentions Christianpore as ‘in a manner formed into a separate hamlet’. The nearby community of Bakuspal, under the eye of Ramsunder, one of the native preachers, had several Christian families, whose ‘simplicity’, like many others’, was likened to that of the primitive Christians of the New Testament. *MH*, February 1827.

²² An Anglo-Indian and former soldier, Buckingham had suffered a near-death experience from illness that led him to turn from his ‘profligate’ ways and seek religion. He married and spent a few years in business at Calcutta before suffering a breakdown in 1822, when he sold all his possessions, ‘adopted native dress’, and ‘set out upon a pilgrimage’. This, however, proved too difficult, and he soon returned to Calcutta, deciding that he would instead become a sort of *sanyasi* ‘in the jungles of Saugor Island’. For some reason, though, he went upriver to Serampore to seek the advice of William Carey, who put Buckingham into the hands of William Ward. Ward spent time with him, counseling and teaching him, and providing him with a job as superintendent of workmen at the mission. Within a few months Buckingham was baptized and accepted as a member of the Serampore church, remaining at the mission. *SPA*, 1827-1834, volume 9, 1834, 615.

²³ *SPA*, 1827-34, volume 1, 1827, 4-5.

²⁴ *Ibid*; 20. Arriving in one village in native dress, Buckingham was driven off by local villagers when they learnt he was a missionary; at the next village he ‘put on Sahib clothes’ and was well-received. *SPA*, 1827-34, volume 2, 1828, 204.

²⁵ *SPA*, 1827-34, volume 1, 1827, 4-5.

the total membership to thirty by early 1829.²⁶ It was then that Buckingham, too, made an attempt at establishing a Christian village, this time at the southern end of the district near Kadami, on the edge of the Sundarbans.²⁷ Buckingham called the Christian village *Bhursapoore* (or Bharasapore), meaning ‘City of Hope’, and four families settled there initially, with several others expected. A school was established, and the villagers’ fields were ‘rented by themselves in the ordinary way’.²⁸ The ‘native preacher’, Sharon, who like Krishna Pal had been befriended and trained by William Ward, lived there with his family and led worship for all the residents ‘both morning and evening’. Soon Buckingham was happy to report that the villagers ‘observe the Christian Sabbath, and occasionally meet with Sharon of their own accord to read, sing, and converse on religious subjects’.²⁹

By 1830 the ‘darkness’ hanging over the churches in Jessore had been ‘dispersed’, and the church at Sahibganj was in good shape, especially ‘since the removal of a quarrelsome family to another part of the district, a peaceful affectionate spirit has prevailed’.³⁰ This was also an opportunity for Buckingham to provide his home audience with a glimpse into the inner-workings of the Christian village and the particular difficulties that existed between ‘Christian’ and ‘heathen’ behaviours in his congregation and community. For some months previous four members of the church, all widows, had been ‘a constant trouble to the Christians in the *parah* [neighbourhood], as well as myself’ due to their ‘malignant dispositions’.³¹ This had somehow led to a quarrel between an enquirer—a weaver named Ramanath—and some of the other church members, after which Ramanath and his wife Bhogo returned to their home village.

The four widows were suspended from the church in August, only one of whom was restored a month later. Yet another woman was suspended then, however, for much the same cause, ‘on account of her rash and abusive language to the widow of our late brother Dhare’.³²

²⁶ SPA, 1827-34, volume 2, 1828, 204; volume 5, 1830, 309.

²⁷ In February Buckingham visited a Mr. Patton, the ‘European agent’ at Kholena, to ‘inspect the land I am to take for the Brethren’, located about three miles north of the village of Kustovaria. SPA 1827-34, volume 4, 1829, 246.

²⁸ Had they thus been removed from heathen landlords? Was their collective agency supposed to protect them here at Kadami? John Parry later reported that the zamindar of Giliapool was ‘not well-disposed to the Brethren’, but was ‘not inimical’ either, though he seemed to treat his ‘renting out a few *bigahs*’ as a big favor to them.

²⁹ SPA, 1827-34, volume 2, 1828, 205-6.

³⁰ SPA, 1827-34, volume 4, 1830, 309.

³¹ W. Buckingham, Jessore, 30 August 1830, SPA (European Series), 1830-37, December 1830.

³² W. Buckingham, Jessore, 4 September 1830, SPA (European Series), 1830-37, February 1831.

Despite the apparent ‘successes’ of the Christian village and the growing Sahibganj church, those ‘heathen’ qualities that were supposed to distinguish the separate communities endured. This case presented something of a mixed message on Buckingham’s part as to where the root of the *parah*’s trouble lay—in the widows, or in Ramanath and his wife—but as far as Buckingham was concerned, the quarrelsome nature of Indian women was neither solely proverbial, nor erased by conversion to Christianity. Indeed, in many cases the circumstances of a ‘created’ or ‘constructed’ Christian village or community may have contributed to such frictions between families and individuals.

On the other hand were numerous examples of smooth transitions and close community among converts at other villages, though such reports may well have been embellished by missionaries and editors alike to represent their ‘experiments’ positively. Ignatius Fernandez, for example, wrote from Sadamahal (in north Bengal) that he was happy to find that even in his absence ‘the brethren and sisters have lived in harmony and union with each other...and seem to like each other very well’.³³ Likewise, John Parsons was pleased to see the ‘zeal and love for all the Lord’s people’ among the Christians at one hamlet ‘far from any village station’.³⁴ At yet another ‘Christian *parah*’ there were ‘no quarrels’ and no ‘frightful language’, and ‘all was harmony and peace’.³⁵ Some new Christians thus had not only transcended their ‘heathen’ natures, but also had exemplified the models of harmony and union, even in many cases having been thrust together without the immediate supervision of missionaries.

After Buckingham’s death in 1831 he was replaced by John Parry, and Sahibganj and its congregation saw steady growth right through the 1840s. Parry, who saw the ‘native Christian village’ as a protective measure ‘from the oppression and exactions of the heathen landholders’, proudly reported in 1841 that the villagers at Kadami were ‘living witnesses’ to the Gospel, bearing a ‘faint yet public testimony’, and that ‘most of the members...maintain family worship every evening’.³⁶ Parry’s reports to the Society, like many others published

³³ Sadamahal, 28 March 1808. *Monthly Circular Letters*, 87.

³⁴ Muriaro was associated with ‘the missionaries at Mozzupperpore, in the district of Tirhoot’. J. Parsons to Mr. Millard, Andover (Mass.), *MH*, September, 1853.

³⁵ Mary Leslie [daughter of Andrew Leslie, Monghir], *Eastern Blossoms: Sketches of Native Christian Life in India* (London, 1875), 13.

³⁶ J. Parry, Jessore, 5 January 1841, *MH*, August, September 1841. The editor of the *Calcutta Missionary Herald* reminded Parry—perhaps with tongue in cheek—‘that if Christian ryots would make *sure* to pay rent on time, it would prove a good example’ as well. *MH*, January 1845.

in the *Missionary Herald* and similar publications, often featured encouraging stories of ‘progress’ among the Christians—and Christian *families*—at his station and in the villages. One in 1845 told how a young child’s ‘happy death in the faith of the gospel led the family to abandon heathenism, and seek salvation with full purpose of heart’. That family had been driven out of Jessore by persecution, he exclaimed, and had since taken refuge at the mission station, where they were ‘now usefully employed’.³⁷ Similar positive reports from all around Bengal and farther abroad continued to appear in missionaries’ circular letters and, eventually, missionary periodicals back in Britain. These positive reports continued to build on themselves and even served as ‘models’ for other stories and accounts, which continued to reinforce the core theme of the Gospel’s transformative power, especially within families. They simultaneously allowed missionaries to further develop their own rhetorical approaches to their writings, and the differences between simple narrative and rhetorical content gradually became clearer and more sophisticated.

Lakhyantipore and Khari

At the same time as the Christian villages and mission stations around Jessore finally seemed to establish themselves, another field was opening up for Baptist missionaries, this time in the populous marshlands south of Calcutta, on the edge of the Sundarbans. Lakhyantipore and Khari, two villages about thirty and fifty miles south of Calcutta, respectively, were to become the first of a number of stations established by the Baptists in the region. Most of the people there made a subsistence from fishing and the cultivation of rice, and various missionaries were pleased to note that there were relatively few Brahmins in the area.³⁸ ‘Discovered’ by Calcutta missionaries just before 1830, the villages soon sprang to the forefront of their expectations and their reports, and remained there for some time. Missionaries from the LMS had already established a few stations in the area and were

³⁷ *MH*, November 1845.

³⁸ See G. Pearce, 10 April 1830, *MH*, November 1830. Joshua Russell, on his tour of Bengal, wrote that the area south of Calcutta ‘has been called the fag-end of the universe...where dry land seems still in [the] process of formation, and of course somewhat uncomfortable, a paradise for waterfowl and frogs’. ‘Thoughts’, 23. As we shall see, this assessment echoed many of the missionaries’, but moreover reveals perhaps one reason why its inhabitants so readily converted to Christianity.

finding some success there, news they were happy to share with their Baptist colleagues.³⁹ George and William H. Pearce (no relation) had for some years been in charge of churches in the southern suburbs of the city and made regular itinerating journeys throughout the district, but it was native Christians who first approached *them* about coming to their villages.

In January 1829 a handful of villagers from Khari had come up to Lakhypore after hearing something of the Gospel by word of mouth, and had returned shortly thereafter interested in going up to Calcutta together to learn more from the Baptist missionaries. There one villager was baptized, and the small delegation explained to W.H. Pearce that fifty of their neighbours had also declared themselves Christians and hoped someone would come down to instruct and pastor them.⁴⁰ Near the end of February George Pearce had found that the ‘interested people’ at Khari had destroyed their idols and disregarded the few local Brahmins, and that they celebrated the Sabbath together with singing, prayer, and scripture reading. Having publicly abandoned caste, though, ‘persecution’ was quick in coming, in the form of a boycott from the local barbers and midwives.⁴¹ Pearce’s intervention with the local magistrate quickly rectified the situation, and he decided to stay on for a few days to ‘observe’ the village and the newly professed Christians.⁴²

Previous to his arrival in Khari, Christianity had already taken root among the villagers there: ‘it commenced before a Missionary had penetrated so far; nor had it been promoted or maintained by the constant presence and labours of a Christian Missionary on the spot...[and] its good report has spread far beyond, where the Missionary’s foot has never trod’.⁴³ Within a few months of his visit the Christian community included ‘thirty-two families, consisting, with others, of upwards of a hundred individuals’ who ‘strictly regard the Sabbath, live in harmony with each other, and have, by degrees, conciliated the good opinion of many who before reviled and persecuted them.’ Ground had been purchased for a chapel, a bungalow was being prepared as a temporary school and place of worship, and missionaries from other

³⁹ *MH*, October 1829. The LMS’s Edward Ray, for instance, had recently had a large, two-storey chapel built at ‘Kamalcalchoke’, just twelve miles south of Calcutta, where he estimated there were twenty thousand inhabitants. *Missionary Magazine*, December 1836. ‘The degree of union, and disposition to cooperate in works of piety and benevolence’ between the BMS and LMS missionaries in the city was constantly noticed and reinforced, later including a monthly breakfast-meeting where they (and other missionaries in the city) met and discussed various matters. Tyerman and Bennet, Calcutta, to LMS Secretary. *Missionary Chronicle*, July 1827.

⁴⁰ W.H. Pearce, 7 January 1830, *MH*, March 1831.

⁴¹ A similar boycott had occurred in 1818 among the Christian villages in Jessore. *MH*, October 1819.

⁴² G. Pearce, Chitpore, 10 April 1830, *MH*, November 1830.

⁴³ W.H. Pearce, *MH*, May 1831 (extracted from the Calcutta Missionary Herald, September/October 1830).

local stations of various denominations lent their aid and supervision.⁴⁴ Several more villagers had come up to Calcutta to be baptized, and the gospel seemed to be ‘rapidly spreading all around the village and neighbourhood’, leading one of the Calcutta missionaries to remark to the BMS committee in London that a large swell even in *nominal* Christians would certainly necessitate more missionaries.⁴⁵

At the end of 1830, W.H. Pearce set off on an itinerating trip through the villages south of Calcutta with the intention of reconnoitering possible mission stations in the area.⁴⁶ He first considered the village of Foynogor, which lay halfway between the Khari and Lakhypore. It was the ‘capital’ of the district and lay on the road to Calcutta, featured a large number of *pukka* buildings, and perhaps most importantly was situated on high, dry ground. As he continued his journey his impressions of the area were further developed. In this ‘interesting district’ Pearce passed through many villages which he thought himself to be the first Christian minister to visit, finding the people ‘superstitious but ignorant’ and little influenced by Brahmins, leaving him optimistic about future missionary opportunities, especially schools.

Despite ubiquitous oppression and opposition by zamindars, Christianity—which had continued to trickle throughout the region by word-of-mouth and the constant flow of people and ideas from Calcutta—already enjoyed a good reputation among the people in the area.⁴⁷ Indeed, Pearce explained, *dostoor*, or example, ‘sways a very powerful influence over their minds’. In this he saw great potential, believing that the poor and oppressed seemed on the lookout for something—anything—to improve their physical *and* spiritual lot, and concluding that in these villages ‘affectionate, prudent, persevering, evangelical missionary labours’ would accomplish much.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ *MH*, September 1831 (also published as *12th Annual Report of the Calcutta Auxiliary BMS* (Calcutta, 1832)). It was in this report that Lakhypore and Khari were ‘officially’ added as stations. Pearce’s immediate impressions, however, were not optimistic, as Khari was frankly too distant and inaccessible (three and a half days by boat through the Sundarbans) and featured a climate decidedly unhealthy to European constitutions, rendering it doubtful that the Society would be able to locate a mission station there. G. Pearce, Chitpore, 10 April 1830, *MH*, November 1830.

⁴⁵ W.H. Pearce, 25 August 1830; J. Thomas, Sulkea, 13 July 1830, *MH*, March 1831. James Thomas, one of the other Calcutta missionaries, challenged the BMS to consider the effects of a swell in nominal Christians that might result from the establishment or development of a ‘Christian caste’. *MH*, March 1831.

⁴⁶ W.H. Pearce, journal, 24 January 1831, *MH*, January 1832.

⁴⁷ See M. Mohar Ali, *The Bengali Reaction to Christian Missionary Activities, 1833-1857* (Chittagong, 1965) for further discussion about the relationship between converts and zamindars.

⁴⁸ In this case, as in the southern villages, Robin Horton’s theories about shifting circumstances and Geoffrey Oddie’s thesis about preconditions to conversion finds ample evidence. See Oddie, ‘Old Wine in New Bottles?’.

Arriving at Khari in August 1831, W.H. Pearce was pleased with what he found. He noted that the new chapel there appeared well-built, and of good materials; its quality and timely completion under contract proved ‘testimony to the improved principles of our native brethren’. ‘Immediately adjoining the chapel’ stood fifteen houses, occupied by seventy ‘professing Christians’.⁴⁹ The physical construction of the village was an important factor in its perceived spiritual life. Locating the chapel in the centre of the village, in close proximity to the converts’ homes, was intended not only to reflect the centrality of the new faith to their daily lives, but also a visible reminder of it. At the Baptists’ station at Monghir, for example, the chapel(s) served as a focal point for the village. After the English service,

the native congregation are seen waiting to enter, their morning service being held in the English chapel, on account of its contiguity to their dwellings, and being less exposed to intrusion...The people, as in a village church yard in England, are seen gathering together in groups within the chapel enclosure awaiting the signal for entering the house of prayer.⁵⁰

As we can see in the engraving below of the chapel and homes of the Christian villagers at Kalinga, a suburb of Calcutta, this proximity was often a very literal notion. The editor of the *Missionary Herald* explained that the thatched bungalow to the right of the brick chapel housed the ‘native preacher’, and John Wenger’s house was nearby: ‘the whole scene is as it appears from the window of his study’.⁵¹

⁴⁹ W.H. Pearce, journal, August 1831, *12th Annual Report of the Calcutta Auxiliary BMS*, 37.

⁵⁰ The ‘native chapel’, farther removed, was used for weekday services and meetings, was ‘large, its walls are out of mud, whitewashed within and without; the roof is of thatch, surmounted by tiles’. Inside, the ‘floor is made of cement; a raised platform at one end constitutes the pulpit, whilst the whole space before it is covered with benches for the accommodation of the hearers’. Both the ‘native’ and ‘English’ chapels were built on the same model, with the latter ‘rather more finished’: boasting ‘windows of glass, and being enclosed on the four sides by verandahs’, and having a bespoke ceiling of canvas, rather than exposed beams. *MH*, February 1843. A visitor to the CMS’s station at Chunar likened it to ‘A Country Village in England on the Sabbath Day’, as the villagers were all quietly reading at home! *Missionary Register*, November 1821.

⁵¹ *MH*, September 1843.

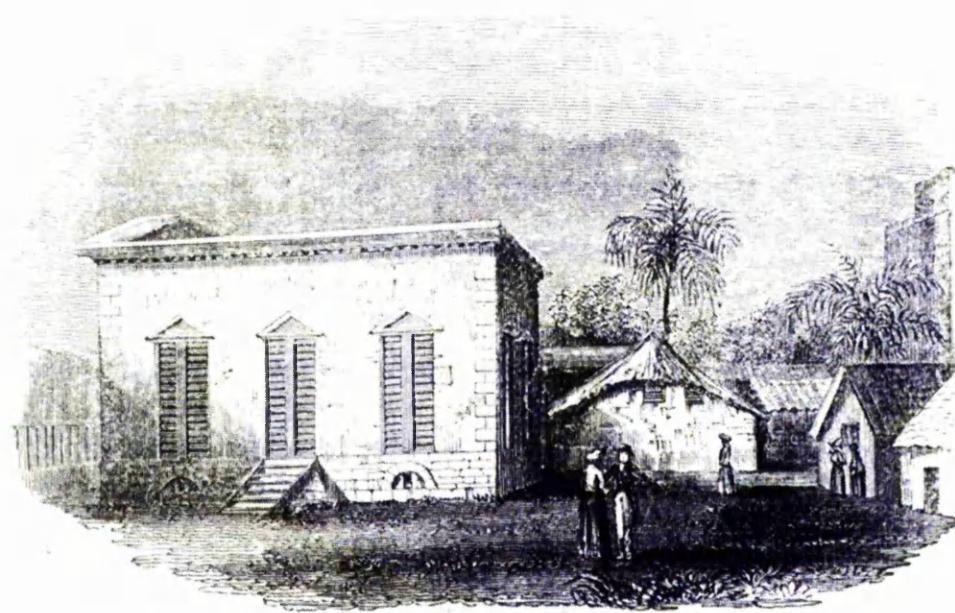


Figure 9—Kalinga Native Chapel, Calcutta
Missionary Herald, September 1843

The physical contrasts between ‘native’ villages and their ‘Christian’ counterparts were thought to provide the best examples of ‘progress’. In ‘Aunt Elizabeth’s Missionary Voyage Round the World’, a series in the *Wesleyan Juvenile Offering*, the title character explained that ‘Hindu villages look pretty in the distance, for they are overshadowed by trees; but they are wretched places to live in’ and filled with ‘confused noise’.⁵² One engraving of ‘A Native Indian Village’ pictured a temple on a hill flanked by mud huts and ‘lounging natives’. In the foreground, however, stood ‘very neat’ cottages ‘in rows’ with gardens, built to keep native Christians ‘apart from the immorality and idolatry of their countrymen’.⁵³ Likewise an earlier article on a ‘convert town’ described ‘neat cottages’, literate households with their own books, and ‘smiling and happy children’ and ‘cheerful’ inhabitants—all effects of the gospel.⁵⁴

⁵² *Wesleyan Juvenile Offering*, volume 15, 1858, 67.

⁵³ *JMH*, volume 2, 1846, 267.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* volume 1, 1845, 79.

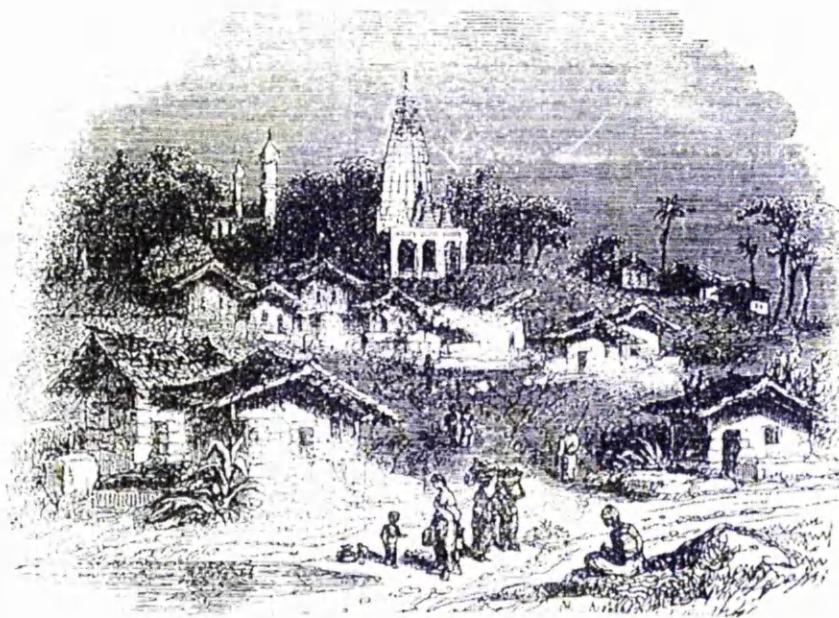


Figure 10—‘A Native Indian Village’
The Juvenile Missionary Herald, 1846

Besides the physical location of the Christians’ homes, other domestic matters occupied a large portion of Pearce’s description of his 1831 visit. On being informed of a number of couples desiring Christian marriage, he designated Sunday for the audience, but was then approached with his first—and seemingly *only*—challenge. One of the converts declared to Pearce that he was married to ‘an idolatress’ but wanted to leave her for a Christian woman—who also happened to belong to a wealthy family.⁵⁵ Pearce immediately denied the man, saying that such a practice would be ‘contrary to scripture,’ and the matter was laid to rest. Brought to the subject of marriage, Pearce explained to the readers of his journal the means of administering the ordinance. A marriage contract, borrowed from the form created by the Serampore missionaries and printed in Bengali, was provided to the couple.⁵⁶ The form consisted of short addresses on the ‘institution, ends, and obligations of marriage; with an engagement [contract], common to both parties, to live together according to the commands of the Gospel, etc.’. Below were ‘separate engagements for each party’ and spaces for the signatures of the witnesses. Using such a form, Pearce proceeded that Sunday to marry ‘15 or 16 couples’ who ‘all hitherto live together very happily.’⁵⁷

⁵⁵ W.H. Pearce, journal, 21 August 1831, *12th Annual Report of the Calcutta Auxiliary BMS*, 37-39.

⁵⁶ ‘In 1802 Carey drew up a form of agreement and of service for native Christian marriages not unlike that of the Church of England’. Smith, *Life of William Carey*, 144.

⁵⁷ W.H. Pearce, journal, 21 August 1831, *12th Annual Report*, 37-39.

Had their conversion experiences given the villagers of Khari a sense of conviction about the ‘proper state’ of their domestic constructions, informed perhaps by earlier lessons from ‘their’ missionaries? Indeed, a year earlier Pearce had married three couples from Khari, providing a ‘testimony to their improved moral habits’.⁵⁸ Other missionaries, too, noted the apparent power of Christian marriage to improve the character and circumstances of converts. The Junior Brethren regularly mentioned ‘illicit’ and ‘adulterous’ relationships among enquirers and converts alike, many of which were ‘reconciled’ through legitimate, Christian marriage.⁵⁹ His colleague George Pearce, ever the pragmatist, believed economic motives proved at least as powerful as spiritual ones, writing that the enormous expense connected to Hindu marriages discouraged and prevented many couples from marrying; Christian marriage, however, was *free*, consisting neither of a dowry, nor any fees to the officiating Brahmins.⁶⁰ In all, Christian marriage—and, perhaps, therefore Christianity itself—provided an appealing option for villagers in this remote area and elsewhere.

Continuing with domestic topics, W.H. Pearce described his visits to ‘all the houses...to converse with the heads of each family as to family worship and relative duties, and to give them such advice as they might appear to need.’ In the role of ‘missionary father’, Pearce offered his advice in the same way that Andrew Fuller and the other Committee members did for Serampore: to those he decided *needed* it. In the case of the Khari Christians, however, it seemed they needed little advice indeed. Another example of their initiative, providing Pearce with further evidence of their sincerity and growth in faith, was their independent exercise of church discipline—which had posed a problem at Serampore and elsewhere. Pearce recorded with pleasure the instance of a woman accused of theft and suspended from communion until she should confess her fault. This ‘proper regard to the purity of the church’ he found especially impressive.

⁵⁸ *MH*, September 1831.

⁵⁹ ‘See ‘Junior Brethren to Committee, Calcutta, 19 October 1818’, *BM*, volume 11, 1819, 222-3. In 1835 a convert named Richard, ‘nominally a Christian but in reality an idolater’, had been ‘living in violation of the seventh commandment [against adultery], but immediately perceiving the sinfulness of his conduct, he applied for marriage, which was accordingly celebrated’. ‘Richard Sargood’, *BM*, volume 27, 1835, 352.

⁶⁰ A letter from ‘A Gentleman in India’ in 1800, appended to Andrew Fuller’s 1808 *Apology for Missions* explained that among ‘the lower classes of the natives here...great numbers cannot marry, because the expense of the ceremony is beyond their power to bear...If they can borrow money for that purpose, they entail upon themselves the ruin of usurious interest, etc. It is an undeniable fact, that many thousands are prevented from marrying, by the want of money. Among the Christians no marriage fees, or any other charges whatever are incurred. The consequences are obvious’.

Near the close of his account, Pearce made a sanguine evaluation of the Christians at Khari: ‘Indeed in every respect, the Gospel has made them better and happier, notwithstanding their trials’.⁶¹ In order to confirm his own opinion, he offered ‘as proof of this’ the opinion of the ‘heathen watchman’ about the villagers’ ‘moral character’ since their conversion. The watchman replied that there had been no *theft, gambling, or adultery*—in the missionaries’ experience, all hallmarks of ‘heathen’ behaviour—and that ‘all was peace and happiness among them’—hallmarks, instead, of conversion and true Christian community.⁶² All in all, Pearce’s encounter with the converts at Khari led him to express sentiments only rarely recorded in such accounts: ‘[Friday] This ended one of the happiest days I have spent on the earth...[Saturday] We then started to rest with feelings of elated gratitude and joy, which scarcely anyone but a missionary is able to appreciate...[Sunday] I was much gratified with my visit’.⁶³

*‘Thus is the sky sometimes overcast, and threatens a storm of destruction to all our labours and hopes’.*⁶⁴

Lakhantipore, before becoming a station of its own, was originally connected with George Pearce’s station at Chitpore.⁶⁵ During Pearce’s early visits to Lakhantipore he ‘found Christianity making its way among the people to an extent not contemplated’.⁶⁶ At one visit ‘six families, comprising about forty individuals’, had declared for Christianity, and several others seemed disposed to follow their example’. Pearce and his wife intended to

⁶¹ Their neighbours refused to give them work, as they had become Christians.

⁶² *MH*, June 1829. ‘The native Christians, like ourselves, are far from being perfect’, George Pearce wrote several years before, but they had abandoned idolatry and its trappings—always the first sign missionaries looked for—which led him and his colleagues to ‘bear their deficiencies with more patience’. Any ‘remaining imperfections’, Pearce was certain, would disappear in time through instruction and education. D.W. Bebbington reminds us mission societies and their publications also served to encourage Christians to more than simple ‘financial backing’. ‘Interest in foreign missions, it was cogently argued, “stimulates, encourages, directs Christian life by calling attention to the example of converts from heathenism”’. It was these object lessons that were often used to drive home points about frugality, hard work, the consequences of sin, and especially the peril of the soul. *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 119, quoting H. James, *The Country Clergyman And His Work* (London, 1890), 156.

⁶³ Pearce later added that much of this was no doubt due to the ‘earnest private and public devotions and prayers of friends at home’. 7 December 1831, *MH* June 1832.

⁶⁴ *MH*, June 1833.

⁶⁵ *BM*, volume 23, 1831, 394. As the native church in Calcutta grew, it became necessary to split it in two, and one half established itself at Chitpore, where G. Pearce also established his boarding schools. The Chitpore church would later split again to accommodate the congregations from Lakhantipore and Khari.

⁶⁶ ‘There are now so many converts to the profession of Christianity’, George Pearce wrote to John Dyer in February 1831, ‘and so many on the point of giving up caste that it will be also indispensably necessary for some European brethren to go down and settle in that district or Christianity will not flourish much among them’. G. Pearce to John Dyer, 12 February 1831, BMS MSS IN/29.

devote the entire month of January 1831 to evangelizing at Lakhypore and ‘in the adjacent villages’. There they found a cholera epidemic raging, and immediately set to administering medicine, though ‘the reports...of the unhealthy state of the country render us very undetermined as to the course we ought to pursue, whether to remain or return home.’ A day later he recorded an inclination to stay, especially as ‘our presence may be of advantage to the poor people’ in providing medicine, ‘while, if we go, it may be construed to the injury of Christianity.’ If nothing else, their visit was a novelty: many of the villagers had come ‘to gaze at us’ and had shown particular ‘astonishment’ at their tent and to Mrs. Pearce herself, ‘an English female having never been in these parts before, at least, for many years’.⁶⁷

If Khari’s Christian community had started off on the right foot, the opposite could be said for Lakhypore. Much closer to Calcutta and more easily accessible than Khari, Lakhypore benefited from more regular and direct contact with Pearce and other missionaries, though, as we shall see, that did not preclude its Christian population from experiencing the same struggles as other ‘Christian villages’ and stations. By May 1832 George Pearce found things at Lakhypore in a ‘painful’ state:

the converts, in consequence of my numerous Calcutta engagements, the distance of the station, and the frequent indisposition of [Mrs. Pearce], had not received that kind of attention which was desirable to give them...[and] many of them grew very careless about Christianity, until, in the time of temptation, they were seduced again into the service of the devil.⁶⁸

Pearce’s concern over his inability to closely supervise ‘his’ converts in the village stations was to become a theme of his experience (and others’) and one of the most difficult challenges.⁶⁹ Many missionaries had initially considered their role an apostolic one, that is, one of itinerant preaching and evangelizing rather than that of a settled pastor, but the centrality of a congregation and its minister’s ‘constant attention’ to British evangelical thought and practice certainly weighed heavily on the missionaries’ minds, even as the circumstances of the Indian context continued to challenge them to adapt their ideologies and methods.⁷⁰ Without the steadfast example and attention of a European missionary, it was

⁶⁷ ‘Journal of G. Pearce, December 1830-January 1831’, *MH*, November 1831 (continued in December 1831 and January 1832 numbers).

⁶⁸ *MH*, June 1833.

⁶⁹ LMS missionaries expressed similar concerns about the logistics of maintaining stations in the area. At Balliahati there was a native catechist resident, ‘but owing to its distance from Calcutta, and its unhealthiness during the greater part of the year, it cannot receive the same amount of superintendence which it might if it were more favourably situated. *MM*, February 1851, 28-9.

⁷⁰ See Porter, *Religion vs. Empire?*, 28.

believed, native Christians would immediately succumb to their old ways, as the villagers at Lakhypore seemed to have done:

The convert cannot escape the polluting atmosphere around him...he cannot escape into some vast wilderness and be at once free from the presence of the vices he would flee...Old temptations assail his every sense, and his weak faith has to withstand assaults of a potency unknown to the novice of happier climes.⁷¹

Two years of poor harvests combined with a lack of ‘regular instruction’ from missionaries had left Lakhypore’s Christian community ‘exposed to more than ordinary temptation’, and many of them had participated in the Charak Puja festival, where they ‘engaged in singing idolatrous songs from village to village’. ‘You may easily judge of my dismay and distress’, Pearce wrote to the BMS committee.⁷²

Indeed, the frequency of such ‘discrepancies in the conduct of native Christians’ had earlier led him to write, as William Ward had done, a cautionary word to the BMS, wondering ‘would it not be better never, or at least for some time to come, not to publish their names in the *Herald* [?] We send their names for *your* information and the *Committee’s*.⁷³ Thus sometimes the realities of missionaries’ circumstances trumped even the rhetorical value of the ‘intelligence’ they forwarded to the Society. Despite the efforts invested in the development of native churches and Christian communities, the threat of failure was constant for missionaries, and such news would certainly not bode well for the continued support of readers at home in Britain, who surely looked for positive effects from all their interest and support.

Though they plainly represented the difficulties the missionaries in India faced and their desperate need for means and assistance, gloomy reports and accounts cannot have served as powerful motivators as conversion narratives and stories of families and villages declaring themselves for Christ. Indeed, the gaps between reality and rhetoric in missionary writing leave many questions about the relationships between missionaries, Committee members, and journal editors. The narratives of the village stations in this chapter reveal debates about transparency and self-censorship, but also shed light on the careful balance that missionaries

⁷¹ *MH*, September 1843.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ George Pearce, journal, 26 June 1830, BMS MSS IN/29.

had to maintain between their short- and long-term ends and the most practical means of achieving them.

George Pearce hoped that his expedient return to Lakhypore would check any further inconsistency, and on his arrival he directed the Christians to separate themselves from ‘the fallen’ so that they would ‘see that we considered their conduct as great a crime of a most heinous nature’. The ‘apostates’ at first ‘treated the others with resentment and contempt’, but within a few days ‘began to consider what they had done, and to be sorry for it.’ When simple remorse proved insufficient for their readmission to the congregation, however, some of them took it upon themselves to go to Khari ‘in order to prevail on the brethren [there] to mediate on their behalf’.⁷⁴ Pearce returned to Lakhypore shortly thereafter, settled what small matters he could there, and continued to Khari to preach and to more fully rectify the situation among his flock. Upon discovering that several of the villagers had followed him there in the hope of being restored to the church, Pearce met with the church members to decide what should be done about the ‘apostates’. They agreed that whoever was ‘sincerely desirous of being reunited to the Christian community’ would be required to go ‘in a body’ to the villages where they had sung their ‘idolatrous songs’ and express their repentance.

The next day, having accepted these terms, the group, ‘overwhelmed with shame’, made the circuit of the neighbouring villages, publicly expressing their sorrow and rejecting idolatry. ‘This’, Pearce wrote, ‘was one of the most solemn and affecting occurrences I have witnessed since I have been in the country’, but while this may have been enough for the congregants and the ‘heathen’, it was not yet enough for him. ‘To make the whole as impressive as possible’, he added, ‘I accompanied the party from place to place, and took upon myself the affecting task of putting the questions to the fallen. To some, perhaps, this may seem...a strange procedure, and hardly justifiable, but the case was a severe one and demanded a severe remedy’.⁷⁵

A ‘tough love’ approach to the missionary-convert relationship had once again been deemed necessary, and Pearce seemed to think it successful. It was, again, a focus on the purity and unity of the congregation and the church itself that formed one of the cornerstones

⁷⁴ *MH*, June 1833.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* As ‘the heathen who looked on seemed...perfectly filled with amazement’, the Christians ‘seemed filled with awe’ and kept themselves removed ‘to let the heathen know that they had not participated in the crime’.

of Pearce's conception and ideal of the Christian community.⁷⁶ In the six months between then and the time of his letter, he assured his readers, 'we have had in charge of the station a zealous and pretty well informed native brother, whose efforts, I trust, have been attended with good.' The Christian community's 'conduct' had 'materially improved' and five more families ('amounting to nearly thirty individuals') had been 'brought over from heathenism'. Thus the 'storm' that had threatened Lakhantipore had ended 'and a clearer and brighter day succeeds'.⁷⁷

*'A visit inferior in interest and pleasure to none which I
have been permitted to pay at this favoured spot'.⁷⁸*

Both George and W.H. Pearce made several visits a year to Khari and the neighbouring villages, and remained impressed with their 'progress':

adultery, theft, and abusive language, to which many of them, in common with their neighbours, had been before addicted, were now unknown among all who named the name of Christ; and chastity industry, and kindness to each other and to the Heathen, were very conspicuous.⁷⁹

A visit to Khari in January of 1833 by both Pearce's yielded similar results. The 'serious deportment at worship' and 'steadfast and consistent character' of the converts gave the two missionaries 'much pleasure'—especially as they had been accompanied by a Mr. Mackay from the Church of Scotland Mission. (Surely much of their 'pleasure' came from their being able to show off their success there.) They later boasted. 'God has been pleased to grant to the labours of the Society's agents a degree of success they have nowhere else experienced'.⁸⁰

A follow-up visit a few weeks later found the Pearce's appropriately busy: making house-calls, examining candidates for baptism, 'aiding the native preachers in the preparation of their sermons', tending to the sick, and performing marriages, besides evangelizing by day and preaching every night. 'Two native brethren' had been assigned who were 'constantly engaged' in superintending the Christians at Khari. Worship was held ten times a week, and

⁷⁶ Some years later, when he had returned to England, Pearce addressed the issue of church discipline at the BMS's annual meeting, explaining that 'in India we are Particular Baptists...and we are not only Particular Baptists but Strict Baptists' to the extent that if any members broke any of the Ten Commandments, 'we put them out of the church'. *MH*, June 1853.

⁷⁷ *MH*, June 1833.

⁷⁸ *MH*, October 1833. See also *Calcutta Christian Observer*, April 1833.

⁷⁹ *MH*, April 1833.

⁸⁰ *MH*, April 1834. See also *CCO*, April 1833.

families and individuals were regularly being proposed for baptism and membership of the church.⁸¹ Several ‘neat chapels’ had been constructed among the villages, with the largest, holding ‘nearly 200 people’, at Khari.⁸²

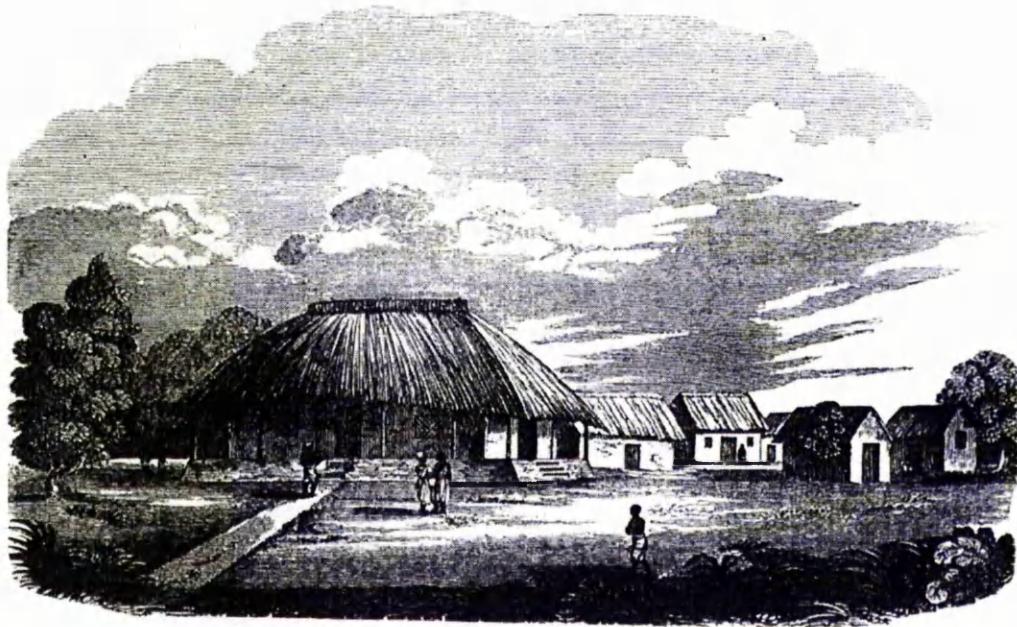


Figure 11—Chapel at Khari
Quarterly Papers, No. 43, July 1832.

By then the estimated population of Christians in Khari and the two nearest villages was ‘about 200, of whom sixty have thrown off caste during the year,’ with ‘several other families’ expected to do so in the near future. The missionaries, in a realistic assessment of their own abilities, were conservative in their hopes for new converts, pointing out that ‘a gradual increase...as we can find means of supplying them with regular instruction, is perhaps more desirable than sudden accessions of large numbers’.⁸³

When disastrous flooding in the area in May 1833 destroyed property and crops⁸⁴, the converts at Khari quickly worked to produce vegetable gardens to replace their lost food

⁸¹ *MH*, August 1835.

⁸² *MH*, October 1833. These were ‘elevated three or four feet above the ground’, with mud walls and straw roofs. As discussed above, such chapels served as central points of mission stations and Christian villages on a number of levels; meanwhile, illustrations of them in missionary publications simultaneously emphasized exoticism of mission stations and chapels while reinforcing their similarities of structure, purpose, and function.

⁸³ *MH*, October 1833. See also *MH*, April 1834.

⁸⁴ As David Arnold has pointed out in his study of famines, the growing population of peasants in the Sundarbans and similar areas (due in part to cheap government land-grants) ‘exposed themselves to the periodic perils of floods, crop destruction, and heavy loss of life’ as they cleared, settled, and cultivated the jungles and ‘the risk of soil erosion and inundation were multiplied’. *Famine: Social Crises and Historical Change* (Oxford, 1988), 54. See also ‘Parker, Balliahati’. *MM*, February 1851, 28-29.

stocks and earnings. W.H. Pearce was highly pleased that they had created for themselves 'constant employment' and a 'means of support', and the earlier difficulties the converts had encountered in finding local employment, on account of conversion, also seemed to be lessening. Their 'good conduct' had

so far conciliated the landholders in the neighbourhood, that by degrees some have begun again to employ them; and they pay their rent so much better than their heathen neighbours, that they are now offered as much land at the usual rate as they can cultivate.⁸⁵

The opposition of landlords and zamindars often stood as 'a deterrent to conversion', Geoffrey Oddie has explained, because they feared it would 'undermine' their control over local labour. Many, however, remained 'neutral or indifferent', and it would seem in this case that Khari's Christians had actually swayed their local landholders simply through their example.⁸⁶ Far from the alleged shiftlessness and insincerity of the 'heathen', however, the new Christians were displaying the qualities of 'good citizens' and were being blessed accordingly. To Pearce, the Corresponding Committee of the BMS, and the editors and readers of the *Missionary Herald*, this certainly must have reflected that sense of social responsibility so familiar to their evangelical experience. As one BMS missionary later noted, 'the converts who are agriculturalists...have frequently come out of idolatry in companies of four or five families together and even more [often expressed in numbers of families]; or when they have come singly, they have generally brought with them their wives and children. Hence they have been able to retain their little farms, and continue their original occupations in their native villages'.⁸⁷

These may very well have been acts of solidarity as much as of faith, examples of farmers who desired conversion while at the same time not wanting to jeopardize their livelihoods or standing amongst their neighbours. As groups they might not face the levels of persecution as individuals would, and therefore would not feel compelled to uproot themselves and relocate. They would retain their independence and self-determination, thus avoiding the

⁸⁵ *MH*, April 1834. On the contrary, as Ronald Savoy has discussed in his *Famine in Peasant Societies*, it was an 'indolence ethic' that many missionaries felt themselves faced with when dealing with (and writing about) 'heathen' villagers, leading them to encourage (and insist on) 'a greater involvement in a market economy'. Quoted in Arnold, *Famine*, 57. Arnold considers such an analysis, however, 'shortsighted and dismissive'. Joshua Russell appealed to 'pious men of property' to 'take land and underlet it to the native Christians', guaranteeing they would see a 'fair and safe return for their capital'. 'Thoughts', 24.

⁸⁶ Geoffrey Oddie, *Hindu and Christian in South-East India: Aspects of Religious Continuity and Change, 1800-1900* (London, 1991), 224. Whether or not Pearce himself had anything directly to do with the landholders' shift is a matter left to speculation.

⁸⁷ *MH*, January 1854.

'trap' so many other converts found themselves faced with when lumped together with missionaries—becoming totally dependent materially as well as spiritually on their protectors. Impressed with their initiative, Pearce recalled that some time earlier, when some of their neighbours 'were anxious to profess Christianity', the Christians at Khari 'saw that they desired support and protection from their landlords rather than deliverance from sin' they denied them and sent them away.⁸⁸

Shortly thereafter, five more families from the nearby village of Madhpore joined the church at Khari; but as it was still flooded, they planned to erect their own chapel in Madhpore, and pledged to Pearce that if they could get 'regular instruction' more families would certainly join. The requests for 'regular instruction' in this often-inaccessible area soon became pleas, shifting not only the nature of the relationship between missionaries and converts, but also the nature of the missionaries' narratives themselves.⁸⁹ The appeals from both native Christians and missionaries alike for more manpower and support certainly became more plainly and boldly stated in their published accounts. News and updates from the village stations became less regular than it initially had been, but in this case it meant that the Pearce's accounts were longer and more detailed, hopefully attracting and maintaining the attention and interest of readers back home.

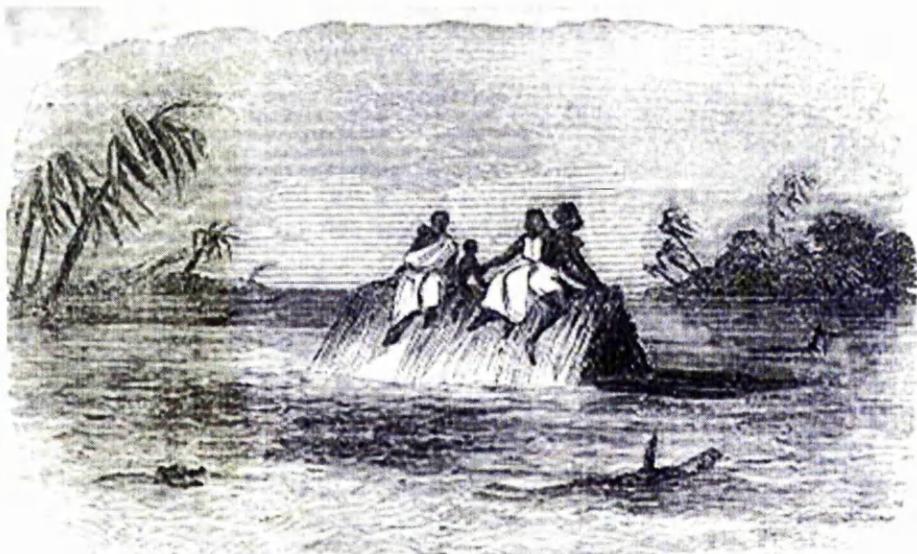


Figure 12—Providential Deliverance—Floods at Mukherjea-mahal, 1833
Missionary Herald, August 1839

⁸⁸ *MH*, October 1833. See also *MH*, March 1834. The latter reads 'salvation from hell'.

⁸⁹ *MH*, April 1835.

In January 1834, having fallen ill, George Pearce returned to England to recover, entrusting the superintendence of the ‘village stations’ to Francis DeMonte, a ‘Portuguese’ convert accepted as a missionary in February 1833, and W.H. Pearce, who—along with three native preachers—took it in turn traveling back and forth between Khari and Lakhypore and Calcutta.⁹⁰ Whether because of George Pearce’s absence or simply a lack of interesting ‘intelligence’, the readers of the *Herald* heard nothing else about Lakhypore and Khari for more than a year. On Pearce’s return to India (in early 1835) he noted ‘a considerable change for the better’ at Lakhypore, ‘which is to be attributed, under God, to the zealous labours of Mr. Demonty [sic]’.⁹¹

More families, with over fifty adults, had attached themselves to the Christian community there, and even after three decades family religion was still a central concern for missionaries and was significant enough to merit a commendation in the pages of their published reports. On their visit in December 1833 the two Pearce’s had ‘noticed with particular satisfaction’ that the ‘female candidates’ in the church exhibited particularly great progress, which the missionaries attributed ‘in a great measure...to the instruction of their husbands: a pleasing circumstance, as it discovers a laudable concern felt by them for the salvation of their families’.⁹² The Pearce’s were also impressed with the ‘anxiety’ of the Christian women of Khari to participate in the spiritual life of the community and congregation, and were pleased to note that the women had even begun to bring their young children to worship services, ‘rather than stay at home’.⁹³

Indeed, not only was the topic of family religion still a significant ideological and rhetorical tool, the focus on ‘heathen’ women remained central to missionaries’ narrative and rhetoric. Whereas George Pearce had earlier lamented that ‘Hindoo females, whether idolaters or nominal Christians are sadly neglected, particularly in these villages’ and were ‘but a small remove from brute creation’, their circumstances had been steadily improving.⁹⁴ Indian Christian women were often presented to British readers as examples of the transformative powers of the Gospel, education, and civilization. ‘Among the most

⁹⁰ *MH*, April 1835. While in England, Pearce recovered sufficiently to address the annual meeting of the BMS in June 1834. See *MH*, December 1834.

⁹¹ *MH*, August 1835.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *MH*, September 1831.

⁹⁴ Journal of G. Pearce, December 1830-January 1831, *MH*, November 1831.

auspicious and blessed results of the Gospel in India', wrote one columnist in the LMS's *Missionary Magazine*, 'is the change...it has produced in the character and condition of the Hindoo female'.⁹⁵ 'In the native Christian villages', Joshua Russell observed during his tour of Bengal, 'there is a fair proportion of converted women, and the heathen women in those neighbourhoods cannot but see how much they are improved both in character and circumstances'.⁹⁶

The converts at Monghir, for example, were overwhelmingly female, and family worship was held every morning in one or another of the women's houses. They had established 'voluntary schools and a Sabbath school as well', and provided for the missionaries—and their audiences and supporters in Britain—prime examples of female agency.⁹⁷ While missionary polemics were often filled with anecdotes and images of 'heathen' women instructing their children in 'idolatry' and 'wicked ways', examples like those of the women at Monghir and elsewhere at once turned those images on their head while reinforcing the ideals of the Christian woman's and mother's benign influence.⁹⁸ One missionary wrote of the Christian women of Chitora, a missionary station near Agra, that 'a clear contrast could be made' between them 'and the heathens of the surrounding country': they did not practice child marriage, enjoyed equality with their husbands, and none had divorced. On Sundays they even went to church in 'Manchester print dresses' and enjoyed various 'other comforts'.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ *Missionary Chronicle*, February 1849.

⁹⁶ Russell, 'Thoughts', 19.

⁹⁷ *MH*, February 1843.

⁹⁸ After the death of one of the Christian women there in 1825, Andrew Leslie wrote to the BMS, 'Had our friends in England...witnessed the fullness of heart, and the tears that were shed by the poor woman [as she lay dying]...they would have felt themselves amply remunerated for all the money they have spent in missions to the heathen'. *MH*, October 1825.

⁹⁹ The Christian village at Chitora had been intended as both a refuge from persecution and a place for native Christians to learn 'habits of industry and domestic piety'. Furthermore, the missionary there predicted, the revenue from their work and handicrafts—and that of women like them—would create a desire for those 'comforts' and consumer goods; free trade, the abolition of American slavery by the explosion of the Indian cotton market, and the development of Indian transport would together spread them to villages across India which would then become just like Chitora. *MH*, May 1851. *Baptist Youth's Magazine*, new series volume 1, 1859, 121.

The difficulty is the climate...¹⁰⁰

George Pearce's next visit to Lakhypore, in January of 1836, offered him a number of encouragements.¹⁰¹ On Sunday he preached before a crowded chapel and baptized three people. At a prayer meeting he was introduced to a young man who, though not proposed for baptism, 'struck and delighted' Pearce and his wife with his knowledge of scripture, and the next day Pearce baptized him. The next day 'three persons, the heads of families in a neighbouring village' came to join the church. One of them, the brother of a member of the church—a widow—claimed that his own conversion had come 'partly by her conversation when he has occasionally visited her', and that he had come in spite of 'a severe beating' at the hands of his landlord. Lakhypore's church's numbers had increased, and the construction of a 'larger and more substantial' chapel was underway. This, Pearce hoped, 'will have a salutary effect on the heathen around, for it will show them that we intend our operations in these parts to be permanent'.¹⁰² Perhaps this point had earlier been in question, especially in light of the difficulties encountered at both villages, but it was certainly intended to reassure the Committee and Pearce's other readers at home of his determination and will to succeed. They still expected results, which Pearce was confident the villagers at Lakhypore could deliver.

The 1836 harvest was again poor, due to flooding during the planting season. This time, however, instead of abandoning their faith, the behaviour of the Christians at Lakhypore provided a sharp contrast to that of their 'heathen' neighbours, who 'when pressed with poverty, often have recourse to acts of dishonesty for the supply of their wants.' Indeed, among the Christians there was 'only a single case of dishonesty...the individual was only charged with suspicion [and] his guilt was by no means proved against him'. It was in this letter that George Pearce first directly appealed to his readers for aid for Lakhypore and Khari. He acknowledged the gifts of clothing and medicines donated by 'a few Christian friends in Calcutta', and related how the demand for both was great, 'from the heathen, as

¹⁰⁰ *MH*, May 1837.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² See Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton, 1996), 140. Chapels and schools provided visible signs of the missionary presence and the villagers' Christian identity—and they just as often served the same purpose for readers of missionary publications. As we shall see throughout, illustrations served to make such far-away and exotic locales like *Lakhypore* and *Dhan-Dhoba* more real and provided evidence that their contributions were being used for something tangible.

well as from our own people'. Medicine, he explained, did more than simply cure illness, it 'enables us to appear as the compassionate friends of the human race, and gives a face to our religion which Hinduism does not possess'.¹⁰³

At Khari, Pearce met with a slightly different scene. A good harvest was being marred by the continual encroachment of 'herds of wild buffaloes and wild boars, which...do immense mischief to the crops' and by 'the unusual ravages of tigers', which killed seventeen people during his visit.¹⁰⁴ In April Pearce returned, and though the tiger attacks continued, he noted optimistically that he and some of the native preachers had been able to speak to large groups of 'the heathen' at the local markets, and that 'an impression in favour of Christianity is also widely spread around: the effects of it we shall witness from year to year.' This led him to repeat his assessment from 1831, reminding the Committee that 'the people are already so numerous, that they require more efficient attention than it is possible to supply them at so great a distance from Calcutta. They need, indeed, a European missionary, residing with them on the spot'.¹⁰⁵ With this a new glimpse into the missionaries' reasoning, and into the realities of itineration, had appeared in their narratives of Khari. A later report explained:

For five months of the year [Khari], in consequence of the unhealthiness of the climate, and the exceeding difficulty of traveling hither, is necessarily left to the care of the native brethren, who, while they have much that is praise-worthy, are not equal to the management of a considerable number of people just emerged from heathenism'.¹⁰⁶

That same report complained 'that the Khari church and congregation are not in so happy a condition as we could desire. A spirit of laxity has appeared among them, and sin also has not been wanting.' The missionaries and native preacher had been required to severely enforce church discipline, suspending some and 'withdraw[ing] from all intercourse with others of the congregation.' There had also been no conversions or additions to the congregation in some time. Nevertheless, the missionaries hope that soon 'we may have

¹⁰³ *MH*, May 1837. The editor made a point to subjoin a list of the medicines 'chiefly used in these parts, including quinine, calomel, opium, epsom salts, and mercurial ointments and salves.

¹⁰⁴ It might be more accurate to say that the 'encroachment' was on the part of the villagers; this combined with the flooding made such contacts with 'wild beasts' inevitable! It is interesting to note that here Pearce wrote of the converts, 'One of theirs has been cut off by [the tigers], while the deaths among the heathen have been appalling indeed.' He went on to devote a sizeable paragraph to narrating his own fear of 'these monsters of the woods' and to describing his routes in the area. Pearce closed by saying, I mention all these things, partly to show the goodness of God in the preservation of the people, and partly that you may have some idea of the difficulties connected with the prosecution of our work in these parts'.

¹⁰⁵ *MH*, May 1837.

¹⁰⁶ *MH*, October 1837.

again to rejoice over this infant church, which has been in former years the cause of much hope and joy'.¹⁰⁷ Had Khari ceased to epitomize 'success' and independence? George Pearce wrote of Khari in May 1837, 'I regret I cannot speak favourably. A lamentable degree of indifference to spiritual concerns has generally prevailed.' He again ascribed this to Khari's physical circumstances, reasoning that 'we cannot expect, with our present limited means, that the people here can be equally in advance with those at the nearer stations. The station is so distant and so unhealthy, that the care of it necessarily devolves almost entirely on our native assistants'.¹⁰⁸

Things meanwhile had begun to improve at Lakhypore. A good harvest, the first in 'many years', relieved many of the temporal difficulties faced by the villagers there.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, Lakhypore 'had enjoyed more efficient superintendence than it was possible to bestow on Khari'. As Pearce had explained, Khari was often inaccessible, while Lakhypore could be regularly and easily visited and its needs attended to. Pearce was able to visit regularly, and DeMonte, his 'native assistant', lived at the village itself 'a considerable part of the time'. Around Lakhypore, the 'heathen' had developed 'a hopeful spirit', and 'no less than twenty families have forsaken idolatry and caste' and joined the church.¹¹⁰

*'We feel the need of someone to take oversight of this inquiring and promising people'.*¹¹¹

In December 1837 George Pearce wrote to John Dyer that he had fallen sick again (with 'giddiness' and 'a shuttered head'), interrupting his plans to winter at Lakhypore. He and his wife had 'indeed for a second time made arrangements for a permanent residence there', and those too had to be laid aside.¹¹² Within a few months George and W.H. Pearce both returned to England to recover their health, where the latter quickly became involved in raising funds and campaigning for ten new missionaries to be sent to India. Wielding an

¹⁰⁷ *MH*, October 1837.

¹⁰⁸ Letter from George Pearce, extracted from 'the last report of the Calcutta Baptist Mission Society', *MH*, February 1838. W.H. Pearce had written some years earlier that 'Native Preachers are seldom fit to be left alone', but properly trained and 'vigilantly superintended' they might be 'valuable agents' of the missionaries and the gospel. *MH*, August 1835.

¹⁰⁹ *MH*, November 1838.

¹¹⁰ G. Pearce, 1 August 1838, *MH*, December 1838.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² G. Pearce to John Dyer, 7 December 1837, BMS MSS, IN/29.

array of anecdotes, lantern slides, and other guest speakers, W.H. Pearce carefully balanced conventional tropes and imagery with specific examples of the challenges and ‘successes’ of the mission field—and the desperate needs he and his colleagues continued to face. There was certainly a disconnect between the rhetoric of this campaign and the realities on the ground in India, and Pearce’s material for his speaking tours, like his journals and reports, was unquestionably carefully tailored to his audiences, but here was an ample opportunity to appeal *in person* to large audiences with the hopes of alleviating some of the manpower-burdens. Transcripts and reports of the Pearce’s talks were published in a variety of journals and papers, and ‘his zeal, together with his prudence and affection,’ one newspaper reported, ‘so successfully recommended the cause, that his wishes were responded to, even beyond his own expectations’.¹¹³

Meanwhile, the village stations had once again devolved on Francis DeMonte and a handful of native preachers. DeMonte’s journal for the summer of 1838 more than adequately provided material for those home audiences, and his style and optimistic approach also served well to maintain the image the stations had built up under the other missionaries. At Lakhypore he found ‘much reason to bless the Lord’ and was ‘happy to inform our Society’ that circumstances there had exceeded ‘our most sanguine expectations’:

That our people are ameliorating in their moral character and are exceedingly desirous of gaining divine knowledge is apparent to all their neighbours... Religious subjects seem to have a good share in their conversation.... That many of them do pray with fervency and have family worship regularly in their houses is manifest to their Hindu neighbours too who behold their holy conversation with a degree of surprise... They give us every encouragement to hope that they are trying to walk as it becomes the gospel of Christ.¹¹⁴

At Khari DeMonte was holding three services every Sunday, which were attended with ‘seriousness and attention’. He regularly met with the church members and ‘admonished, instructed or encouraged [them] as their circumstances required’. There were also a large number of candidates for baptism, who, in the absence of any ‘ordained missionaries’, claimed to have been waiting ‘for years’ for the ordinance (DeMonte himself was finally ordained in 1840.¹¹⁵) Revealing the trying nature of combining the role of itinerant evangelist

¹¹³ Newspaper cutting, 20 June 1839, BMS MSS IN/29. Returning with Wenger were three new missionaries, Phillips, Morgan, and Tucker. The article was also quick to notice their wives, ‘who, like them, have willingly consented to leave their families and friends, and all the endearments of their native country’ to serve ‘in a far distant region of heathen darkness’.

¹¹⁴ F. DeMonte, journal, 1 August 1838, BMS MSS IN/23.

¹¹⁵ G. Pearce to J. Wenger, 3 July 1840, BMS MSS IN/29.

and local pastor, DeMonte lamented that for all those people he had only two catechists (native preachers) to assist him, and wondered ‘what could we do for so many considering the indolent habits of some, the dulness [sic] of the comprehension of others, and the greatness of the distance of some of the villages where they reside’. After consulting Carapeit Aratoon, the convert missionary who had worked at Serampore and Jessore, DeMonte ‘engaged two more catechists’ in August and set them to instructing ‘a certain number of promising men for the ministry’ in the hopes of eventually relieving some of the pressure.¹¹⁶

Aratoon had recently visited the village stations himself and was also pleased with the people’s spiritual health. At the recommendation of J. Williamson, who had visited earlier, Aratoon baptized five people ‘who had been waiting nearly a twelvemonth’. Why they had been waiting so long is something of a mystery—it certainly could not have been probationary. Was it that George Pearce had simply been unable to provide the ‘oversight’ necessary before his departure, and that the interim administration of such ordinances simply slipped by the wayside? He cited the efforts of Francis DeMonte and the native preachers, who were ‘active and zealous, and appear to meet with favour in the eyes of the people’. Indeed, DeMonte was ‘to be commended for the attention he pays to his own improvement, as it is this which makes him so useful to the native church, and to the native preachers’. Did this anticipate a shift in the organizational hierarchy of the Baptist mission? Aratoon certainly gave no hint at this; though he acknowledged the skills of the native preachers, he still emphasized the need for a European to come take charge of the stations. As all the other European personnel were fully occupied at the other stations, the letter lamented that they ‘must, therefore, wait patiently till someone arrives from England’.¹¹⁷

By this time Lakhypore’s congregation was at nearly four hundred members, and Khari’s at over two hundred. Night school was held twice a week at Lakhypore for men who were ‘anxious to read’, and the church had been showing ‘growth in grace...apparent to all their neighbours’.¹¹⁸ In September 1838 Aratoon and DeMonte visited Lakhypore with another ‘native preacher’, Ganga Narayan Sil, and remarked on the proficiency of the women in spiritual matters. Aratoon encouraged them ‘to talk on religious subjects in their leisure

¹¹⁶ F. DeMonte, journal, 1 August 1838, BMS MSS IN/23.

¹¹⁷ C.C. Aratoon, letter of August 1838, *MH*, January 1839.

¹¹⁸ *MH*, January 1839.

hours, and pray in turn, which they promised to do.¹¹⁹ Despite all this attention, the congregation at Lakhypore continued to wonder about George Pearce, their pastor and friend—How was he? When would he return? Would he be returning at all?¹²⁰



Figure 13—Baptist Chapel at Lakhypore
Missionary Herald, May 1840.

With that intelligence from the village stations once again disappeared from the pages of the *Missionary Herald*. The death of W.H. Pearce in May 1840 provided yet another blow to the Calcutta mission and the village stations alike, and their superintendence was duly handed over to John Wenger until George Pearce should return from England.¹²¹ Two native preachers had been assigned to Khari, but in Wenger's opinion the lack of any suitable supervision left the converts' spiritual progress 'by no means such as we could desire'. Three 'former native preachers' had been discharged from their positions and from the church for 'incantations', adultery, and 'covetousness and oppression', respectively. Again the distance of the station had proved a difficulty in superintending the station and its surrounding congregations, but other circumstances had contributed to the situation.

During George Pearce's four-year absence, tensions had arisen between the BMS and the SPG over the village stations. The large population of the region south of Calcutta, and the successes of the BMS and LMS missionaries there over the past decade naturally had caught

¹¹⁹ Journal of Gunga Narayan Sil, *MH*, March 1839.

¹²⁰ *MH*, August 1839.

¹²¹ A memorial appeared in the July 1840 *Missionary Herald*. See also *MH*, March 1841.

the attention of other mission societies, some of whom appeared to be poaching converts. Missionaries from the SPG, the Baptists asserted, had ‘wreaked havoc’ in the region, having ‘drawn off sixty families by bribes and promises’. Rumours had been circulating in the southern villages that SPG missionaries had been paying converts to come to their stations and join their churches, and had been offering employment to those who had been suspended or excluded from Baptist congregations. ‘To a poor Bengalee, who is proverbially attached to money’, Pearce later wrote, ‘their conduct is a great temptation’. He and DeMonte, though, were content at least ‘that things are not in a much worse state’ from ‘the exceedingly reprehensible conduct of the missionaries connected with the Episcopal missions’, who were ‘endeavoring to ruin our work’.¹²²

Though his colleagues had despaired of his ever returning to India, George Pearce finally returned again to India at the end of September 1841, and by November was back in the field with John Wenger. To a correspondent who had asked if he would return to Lakhantipore, Pearce replied, ‘Here I am...I begin to feel as though I had never been absent’. There he was welcomed with large crowds at the church services and, addressing his ‘dear people’, he was proud they had ‘stood their ground nobly’ against the SPG’s incursions.¹²³ Reaching Khari, Pearce found that the village ‘had not been visited by a missionary for twelve months before my visit,’ (Wenger’s poor health had prevented him from itinerating) and that ‘the confusion that has arisen in the villages is the consequence chiefly of the stations being left without the superintendence of a European missionary after my departure. I hope this may not occur again’. Pearce first attributed the earlier mixed reports to this, then to the ineptitude of native preachers.¹²⁴ This sentiment was repeatedly voiced by the General Baptist missionary Amos Sutton, who believed that native preachers and catechists could not ‘be depended on alone’. By extension, neither could native Christians be left to their own devices without fear of immediate backsliding, though Pearce’s own experience of these very communities had proved otherwise.¹²⁵

¹²² G. Pearce, Intally, 15 November 1841, *MH*, February 1842. *MH*, November, December 1841. In turn, the Baptists reported, ‘we shall, probably, find it necessary to make some things public, which will prove anything but pleasing to those connected with the Establishment who desire the spread of Genuine Christianity’. *MH*, November 1841. See also *FOI*, July and August 1841.

¹²³ G. Pearce, Intally, 15 November 1841, *MH*, February, April 1842.

¹²⁴ G. Pearce, Intally, 15 February 1842, *MH*, May 1842.

¹²⁵ Sutton, Cuttack, 5 June 1829, *General Baptist Repository and Missionary Observer*, March 1830. See Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries in India*, 34.

Some new faces appeared in Lakhypore and Khari in April 1843. ‘Anxious for a missionary ramble’ Andrew Leslie and young John Chamberlain Page made a visit to the villages from Calcutta, though they found themselves somewhat disappointed:

The churches were not all that [we] could have wished; but considering the state out of which they have emerged, and the trouble into which they have been brought by the Puseyite missionaries...they are perhaps in as good a state as could reasonably be expected.¹²⁶

Their expectations, however, may have been somewhat skewed, coming from the larger urban churches of the metropolis. John Wenger renewed his visits to the village stations in 1843, and in a lengthy letter to the BMS he returned to the imagery of the previous generation of missionaries, alluding to the experiences of the biblical Corinthians as mirrors of the modern mission field.¹²⁷ He then detailed one of the scriptural lessons he had sought to drive home to the native Christians under his care. Citing the eighteenth chapter of Exodus, in which Moses was joined by his wife in Egypt, Wenger explained to readers that

it is customary in this country for married couples to live separate for a long time together, because either the husband or the wife goes to work to another locality, often at a great distance. This practice leads to much sin and misery for alas! Bengal is a country of which the first chapter of *Romans* gives the truest moral description.¹²⁸

But this lesson, it seems, was more for a British audience than an Indian one. The message he left with the villagers was simply this: that husbands and wives ought not to live separately for any length of time unless necessity rendered it unavoidable. While his insistence on cohabitation is perhaps understandable, for both spiritual and pragmatic reasons, was Wenger aware of or concerned with the circumstances that had led so many families to live apart in the first place? Or was he more concerned with shoring up the structures of the Christian community to render any further temptations as ‘unavoidable’ as possible? It was precisely these issues that continued to challenge both missionaries on the ground and their superiors in Britain, but that home audiences were perhaps left to either figure out for themselves or simply take at face value. Wenger’s allusion to *Romans* almost negates the background of families’ circumstances and needs altogether: as ‘heathens’ they naturally had little regard for

¹²⁶ A. Leslie, 11 April 1843, *MH*, July 1843. Leslie, recently returned from England, was unsure of his future role in the mission. Formerly stationed at Monghir, he had a strong dislike for Calcutta and hoped instead for ‘a residence in the interior, where I can rove about on foot among the natives, as I have often done’. He hoped this trip with Page might provide him an opportunity to find a new place to be stationed.

¹²⁷ J. Wenger, 16 September 1843, *MH*, December 1843.

¹²⁸ J. Wenger, 16 September 1843, *MH*, December 1843.

family unity and cohesion, and even less for the sins associated with their separation. As Christians, however, the villagers at Lakhypore and Khari were expected to rise above that ‘nature’ and find ways to circumvent such circumstances.

Nearly another year passed in the pages of the *Missionary Herald* before more intelligence from Lakhypore and Khari appeared again. This type of time gap had become less remarkable, because of the continued logistical and time troubles faced by the Calcutta missionaries as well as the activities of the BMS elsewhere. However, it does again raise questions about the paths missionary narratives took from creation to publication, and about the criteria of interest the various parties involved applied to them. Logistics and time certainly continued to prevent much contact between the missionaries and the Christians in the villages—and between the missionaries and their home audiences. Pearce and Wenger may simply have had little new or interesting to say about Lakhypore and Khari for the time being. Perhaps the Home and Corresponding Committees found little of interest to pass along from the reports and journals submitted to them, or the editors of the *Herald* had found other, more engaging material. These are all valid and common reasons that regularly affected the publicity surrounding the various missions and stations—as well as the character of the narratives produced about them. As we have already seen, it was not only the mission itself, nor the missionaries or converts, nor ‘success’ or ‘failure’ alone, but a combination of all these factors that appealed to Committee members, editors, and readers.

In September 1844, when the village stations did return to the pages of the *Missionary Herald*, the missionaries reported that for some time the activities of the SPG in the area had remained the focus of their concerns, but with additional recent pressure from Catholic missionaries who were also suspected of poaching converts.¹²⁹ An incensed George Pearce wrote in October that ‘the papists...have invaded our southern districts, in consequence of which I have devoted a good deal of time during the last three months to the preparation of a tract in Bengali to enable our people to meet them’.¹³⁰

News the next year was more ‘encouraging’ regarding the village stations. Though Khari had been ‘severely tried...by the defection of a large and influential part of the Christian

¹²⁹ *MH*, September 1844. Besides a number of people excluded or suspended from the Baptist congregations, SPG converts were also rumoured to have gone over to the Catholics.

¹³⁰ G. Pearce, Intally, 17 October 1844, *MH*, January 1845. This sixty-page tract, entitled ‘*The Bengali Catholic Manual*’ was the beginning of something of a tract war between the Baptists and Catholics in the area.

community, who went over to the agents of the Propagation Society', some were 'seeking reconciliation and readmission'.¹³¹ At Lakhypore, meanwhile, two substations had been established and eleven members added (totaling seventy-three), bringing the Christian population to two hundred. At Moloyapore, another Christian village near Lakhypore, the 'ignorance and wickedness of the heathen in this area surpass that of elsewhere', but a new church, school, and other buildings had helped the community of converts to grow and thrive through 'discipline and regular individual instruction'. With a formula of strict church discipline and steady education, combined with weekly visits to the converts' homes, George Pearce had noted much improvement over the period of a year.

In July 1845 he wrote that he was planning to erect a pukka chapel at the sixteen-year-old station that would prove a 'salutary influence on the heathen population around' and also serve as a symbol of permanent presence to the SPG and 'papist' missionaries.¹³² The BMS had already given 1500 rupees, but Pearce lacked six hundred rupees to build it, and hoped that interested readers would provide it.¹³³ By the summer of 1846 the new brick chapel had been completed, at a cost of nearly three thousand rupees, and stood, as Pearce had intended, 'in the midst of heathenism as a beautiful monument of Christian superiority, and a token of love which European Christians have towards their poor native brethren'.

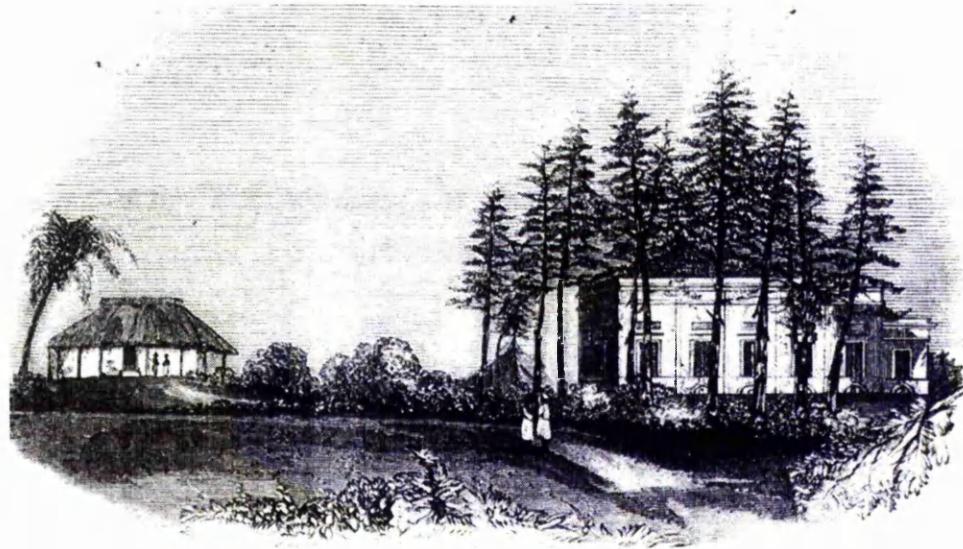


Figure 14—New Baptist Chapel at Lakhypore
Missionary Herald, July 1846.

¹³¹ *MH*, May 1845.

¹³² The running anti-Catholic and anti-Puseyite theme in Baptist (and other Nonconformist) missionaries' narratives reflects both a powerful influence from Britain as well as a sense of hostile 'competition'. See *Friend of India*, July 1841.

¹³³ George Pearce, *Intally*, 2 July 1845, *MH*, October 1845.

Pearce had written earlier to the BMS Committee that Lakhypore had ‘acquired, in my opinion, sufficient importance to receive and enjoy the undivided attention of a missionary brother’, and in addition to the chapel a new bungalow had been constructed in anticipation of the new and permanent resident.¹³⁴ Pearce’s original design to situate a missionary permanently at one of the village stations was becoming increasingly necessary as the numbers of members and ‘hearers’ had steadily increased over the last decade. The belief in the importance of pastoral superintendence had remained central to Pearce’s ideology, and underscored his petition for a new missionary.

The annual report for 1846 reinforced the desperation of the situation at Lakhypore, as the school there had closed and there had been no baptisms.¹³⁵ A number of ‘disorders’ had ‘crept in’ among the congregation and the Christian community at Lakhypore, but Pearce assured the Committee ‘they would yield to management’. The women of Lakhypore especially represented a group with much potential, and Pearce expected the ‘tolerable circumstances’ of most of the Christians to improve as well. But the key to their continued improvement was ‘training’: they had contributed a hundred rupees toward the new chapel, but ‘training would enable them to do more’, perhaps even ‘something for the mission’.

Even between several visits a year Pearce could not maintain such direction, and admitted frankly to the Committee that ‘at my time of life I question whether it be my duty to go to the station and live’. His church at Intally had grown, and both his and his wife’s health were ‘very feeble, and would not stand the climate, which is marshy’. Therefore, he concluded plainly, ‘I want the Committee to sanction the appointment of such a missionary as I have been asking for to the Lakhypore station’.¹³⁶ Though this had been his intention for the past decade, Pearce finally had results to back up his vision. In a return to his earliest assessments of the region, he added, ‘The country around is very populous, and presents a ample field of labour, which would be very productive’. Was this simply reinforcing what he had been saying all along, or was it perhaps with the hopes of attracting the support of new missionaries and new contributors?

Troubles with the SPG (‘more active enemies than the heathen themselves’) continued, but Khari had finally experienced some improvements in 1846, and the community was also

¹³⁴ *MH*, October 1837.

¹³⁵ *MH*, May 1847.

¹³⁶ *MH*, September 1846.

enjoying more ‘internal peace’ than it had for several years previous. Four members had been added to the church there, and the missionaries were pleased to note the ‘liberality’ of the converts there in supporting one another and the new chapel that was also being built there.¹³⁷ At the inauguration of the chapel in August 1847, six native Christians delivered addresses to the large congregation that had gathered. The first expressed his gratitude and stressed that they not attribute any sanctity in the new building itself, as the heathen did. The second remarked at the rapid progress of the Gospel in the area, while the third praised his fellow Christians for doing what they could for themselves and their neighbours on that point. The fourth and fifth, two ‘rustic’ fellows ‘with few advantages’, stressed the spiritual and temporal advantages of the Gospel—and reading—declaring, ‘The Gospel has made us men’. Khari’s pastor, Jacob Mandal, closed the service with prayer, and Pearce and Wenger left feeling completely ‘gratified’ with the scene.¹³⁸

With that the village stations once again retreated from the pages of the *Missionary Herald*. It seemed that the Baptists’ foothold and ‘permanence’ in the area had finally been established. With their new chapels and more native preachers, Lakhantipore and Khari were in relatively good shape, and were becoming less dependent on the Calcutta missionaries for their spiritual and material well-being. Though a few instances arose over the next few years requiring their attention, Pearce and the others generally remained pleased with the native Christian communities in the villages. Indeed, in response to more repeated flooding in 1849, which left ‘forty or fifty families...in urgent need of assistance’, the villagers at Khari had erected a granary to enable them to distribute food to the poor and affected in the area.¹³⁹

In the spring of 1852 Mr. and Mrs. Supper came from Dacca to the area intending to set up a station at Bishtopore, which was especially good as George Pearce and his wife had to return to England again at the end of the summer.¹⁴⁰ With them gone, John Wenger would once again assume the superintendence of the village stations, while Supper would manage them as much as possible from Bishtopore and Lewis would take Intally. The next April, the

¹³⁷ *MH*, May 1847. They had even collected and contributed eighty rupees (eight pounds) to build a new road to the chapel. *MH*, December 1847.

¹³⁸ *MH*, December 1847. How accurately their speeches were recorded and reported naturally stands in some question.

¹³⁹ G. Pearce, Intally, 27 July 1849, *MH*, May 1849; *Oriental Baptist*, volume 3, 1849.

¹⁴⁰ *MH*, October 1852. Pearce hoped to be able to return to India, but Wenger was not optimistic, writing ‘I hardly expect that, shattered as their constitutions are’.

missionaries' hopes for the native church were finally realized, as the congregations from Intally and Kalinga were amalgamated into an 'Independent Native Church'. After all their debates on native Christian agency and self-sufficiency, they would finally have the model they had long hoped for, and the Native Church continued to prosper throughout the next several years.¹⁴¹

George Pearce even returned in December 1854 and resumed the charge of the churches and stations in the southern villages, taking up a new residence at Alipore, on the south side of Calcutta and remaining there until his death in 1869. With many of the challenges of establishing the village stations and communities met, and with the Christian communities south of Calcutta thriving and largely independent of the Baptist missionaries, new areas, stations and missions began to occupy the interests of the missionaries and their home audiences, and the 'spotlight' of attention in the pages of the missionary journals was drawn east, to the Barisal district.

Barisal

Around the same time that George Pearce first encountered the villagers from Lakhypore and Khari, another mission station was being established almost two hundred miles to the east at Barisal, on the edge of the Sundarbans. The capital of the Backerganj district, with a population of almost a million people, Barisal itself was an important civil station, and came into its own as a 'spotlight' mission only as the prominence of the village stations began to wane in the late 1840s. Begun in 1828 under the aegis of the Serampore mission by Sylvester Bareiro, a 'Portuguese' Christian and government teacher, the station at Barisal was slow to get on its feet, though a small congregation was soon collected and Bareiro and his three native preachers made regular and wide itinerating journeys. Barisal barely found mention in the *Missionary Herald* or other periodicals for nearly a decade after its founding, especially as its conversion rate remained static and its congregation tiny.

¹⁴¹ In the July 1854 *Missionary Herald* the pastor of the Native Church, Gulzar Shah, reported that the members and native Christians 'dwell in harmony and love'.

In 1840, when journals from Bareiro and several of the native preachers were given an outlet, Bareiro proved himself a capable self-promoter. Bareiro's own journal from May 1840 provided readers with exciting glimpses of missionary work: discussions and debates with mendicants and maulvis, and home visits with Brahmins and native Christians.¹⁴² Bareiro certainly seemed to have a knack for narration, perhaps realizing its importance to securing support, and further extracts from his journals and letters are filled with images of dramatic scenes and characters, as well as a sanguine sense that heathenism was teetering—with the Gospel standing triumphantly in the wings. 'Light is gradually breaking through', he wrote in December 1840, 'though worldly-mindedness is keeping [the Hindus] from seriously inquiring after their salvation'. However, Bareiro believed, following the laws and strictures of Hinduism had become 'a thing impossible' as 'the Hindus have not the strength or power for it'.¹⁴³ Despite his optimistic tone, converts were still not noticeably forthcoming, and for the next several years Barisal was relegated to the annual surveys of the mission and a few scattered letters suggesting the prospects of large-scale conversions and providing a sense of the field, and remained merely a footnote to the more successful—and more interesting—missions in Bengal.

In November of 1844 the *Missionary Herald* published a letter from Bareiro in which he expressed a palpable expectation of a great change among the people. Two representatives from a nearby village had come to Barisal, explaining that the thousand villagers there hoped to find protection under the mission from their zamindar. The village had built up a small library of about a dozen books and tracts from the mission, and many had come under the influence of their contents. The representatives stayed with Bareiro for several days, visiting and worshipping with the local native Christians and listening to preaching, before returning home.¹⁴⁴ Unfortunately the readers of the *Herald* heard nothing more about this village, though another letter a year later presented another group of enquirers, this time a small band of eight men—'devotees', perhaps Kartabhajans—who had arrived at the gates of the mission.¹⁴⁵ After several attempts to gain entry and meet with Bareiro, they finally succeeded and proposed that he take some land and accept them as his ryots. This Bareiro declined,

¹⁴² *MH*, February 1840.

¹⁴³ S. Bareiro, 1 December 1840, *MH*, August 1841.

¹⁴⁴ *MH*, November 1844.

¹⁴⁵ *MH*, October 1845.

offering instead for them to remain at the mission for a time, but their poverty, ‘wild look’ and bizarre manner made the idea quickly untenable. Those eight, however, were soon baptized, and they assured him there were two to three hundred more of them back in their village ready to become Christians.

In a letter to the Calcutta missionaries, printed alongside this one, Bareiro described those eight as ‘first-fruits’ of a larger field, and petitioned them for help to build a bungalow chapel and a house for a native preacher to be able to minister to the prospective Christians. Indeed, a few weeks later Bareiro baptized twenty-four more villagers, but the ‘persecution’ many of them were seeking to escape seemed only to worsen as a result. Writing a few months later, Bareiro explained that a lack of education and ‘a religion which sanctions such practices’ left villagers vulnerable to extortion by police and incapable of legal redress, issues that would soon come to the forefront of the Barisal mission.¹⁴⁶ This letter, published in December 1845, also thanked ‘a distant benefactor’ for his ‘liberal donation’, which had enabled Bareiro to purchase land and erect a chapel and school in the village of Kotoalipara, and directly addressed ‘other disciples of Christ’ and their ‘purses and prayers’. Again, Bareiro was revealing his awareness of the impact his own personality and agency could have on the success—or failure—of the Barisal mission.

After another year of silence, the *Herald* presented in February 1847 some ‘cheering intelligence’ that the Barisal mission was ‘increasing in interest and importance’. The report A letter from James Thomas at Calcutta explained that Sylvester Bareiro had resigned his post with the Government school the previous spring to devote himself fully to missionary work, compelling him to draw his complete salary from the BMS. The previous October he had baptized one hundred and fifteen people of the ‘low and degraded’ Chandal [Santal] caste, and the various out-stations in the district were prospering.¹⁴⁷ Bareiro needed more native preachers to adequately cover the widely scattered communities of Christians but—in contrast to his colleagues in Calcutta—he insisted that another missionary from Calcutta was not necessary. That notwithstanding, such ‘intelligence’ had finally piqued the interest of the Calcutta brethren: J.C. Page and William Chill added Barisal to the itinerary of their month-

¹⁴⁶ *MH*, December 1845.

¹⁴⁷ W. Thomas, Calcutta, 7 November 1846. Martin found the Santals ‘a people of rude habits and uncultivated minds’, but with many good qualities as well. Indeed, they seemed to him to provide excellent examples of the transformational power of the Gospel.

long mission tour; John Parry was asked to travel down from Jessore to join them; and George Pearce expressed his obvious interest in visiting the district.

Before reprinting Sylvester Bareiro's letter detailing the baptisms and his continued work in Barisal, the editor of the *Herald* inserted a few 'judicious remarks' extracted from the previous October's number of the Calcutta *Missionary Herald*, drawing parallels to 'the day of Pentecost' and to conversions within the early Church 'among the poor and ignorant', and calling for readers to pray for the converts and the missionaries.¹⁴⁸ The author of those 'remarks' (assumedly Thomas or another of the Calcutta missionaries) was also careful to point out that 'an extension of labor, so cheering and unexpected, will involve an increase in expenditure, for which, in the present unfavourable state of the Society's income, it is difficult to provide adequately'.¹⁴⁹ Again the underlying tension between the mission's objectives and means found itself played out in the pages of the various journals. Beyond interest and prayers, missionaries and editors alike would continue to 'earnestly entreat' readers for funds to make up for the wants of the Society—wants that would become more serious in the years to come.

Following up on this 'cheering intelligence', the April 1847 *Herald* reprinted another encouraging letter from Bareiro published in the *Oriental Baptist* that narrated his itinerations the previous October and November. 'There is a feeling of love and a spirit of prayer' among the converts, he wrote, and he provided three cases of 'domestic discord set right', perhaps mirroring the earlier narratives of George Pearce and other missionaries. The August 1847 *Herald*, however, reported that Bareiro had fallen seriously ill, and that J.C. Page had recently relocated to Barisal to assist him. A long account by Bareiro of the 'remarkable movement' taking place around Barisal—reprinted from the Calcutta *Missionary Herald*—described large numbers of people coming for instruction and baptism, men and women desiring Christian marriage, and past persecutors expressing repentance and conversion. Despite all these prosperous indications—or perhaps as a result of them—he explained, the mission was still 'sadly crippled in funds', and he once again extended a direct plea to his audience: 'Will Christian friends withhold their mite', he wondered, 'from a mission here which is conducted, for the first time, [to] those whose name or denomination is literally the

¹⁴⁸ *MH*, February 1847.

¹⁴⁹ Reprinted from the Calcutta *Missionary Herald*, October 1846.

"publicans and sinners'" and whose ignorance and contemptibility 'point them out as a distinct and hopeless race'?¹⁵⁰

It was only a few months later that news from Barisal took on a decidedly different character altogether. In a short, but bold-faced, notice in the October 1847 *Herald* the editor expressed his concern over the 'mixed and perplexing character of accounts' from the station. John Parry, who had come down from Jessore, found that there were twenty-three 'Christian villages' with over two hundred families and almost a thousand individuals, of whom two hundred had been baptized.¹⁵¹ These he felt were in good standing, but Bareiro himself appeared to have fallen into 'questionable and suspicious' circumstances. James Thomas, who received this news, reflected grimly that it was now 'a time of reproof and reproach' and 'sifting time'.¹⁵² Persecution of the Christian villagers by their zamindars had continued, and Parry had attempted to intervene in court on their behalf, preventing him from making it as far as Barisal itself. He assured Thomas and the rest of the Calcutta brethren that he would try to keep watch on as many as he could from Jessore, but that it would be absolutely necessary for someone else to immediately assume the superintendence of the rest.¹⁵³

Perhaps in an attempt to maintain some sense of stability around the mission, a cheerful and optimistic letter from two American Baptist missionaries appeared in the January 1849 *Herald*. I. J. Danforth and A. H. Stoddard, on their way to Assam, traveled through the Sundarbans by boat, describing the thick swamps and jungles and the ubiquitous threat of tigers, and explaining that, though the region had previously been inhabited, it was 'now nothing but a solitary waste' whose atmosphere at certain times of the year is almost certain death to the traveler'. Under the heading '*Revival at Barisal*', they explained that after traveling four hundred miles by water from Calcutta, they finally reached Barisal and called on J.C. Page, who had been 'sent from Calcutta to gather in a harvest of souls which the Lord had been preparing'.¹⁵⁴

That 'remarkable movement' Bareiro had described had resulted in a 'revival among the lower classes' in which over a hundred fifty villagers had been baptized. All of Bareiro's

¹⁵⁰ *MH*, August 1847.

¹⁵¹ *MH*, October 1847.

¹⁵² The *Calcutta Missionary Herald* and the *Oriental Baptist* both noted shortly thereafter that Bareiro had been cut off from the Society. *CMH*, April 1847; *OB*, volume 1, 1847, 157.

¹⁵³ Thomas, Calcutta, 2 July 1849, *MH*, October 1847.

¹⁵⁴ *MH*, January 1849.

optimistic assessments—and hard work—had finally materialized just before the ‘painful events’ had arisen, but Danforth and Stoddard seemed to side-step that issue, pronouncing that, ‘the instrumentality was so very small (there being no missionary on the ground), that all were forced to acknowledge it was of God. What a field of promise!’ This relatively large-scale conversion was perhaps improperly identified as a ‘revival’, as these were assumedly new conversions from outside the established Christian community at Barisal, but the choice of the term ‘revival’ certainly held significance to Baptist readers at home.

The connotation of revitalisation and dedication within families, congregations, and communities found ready parallels between Britain and Barisal, especially in light of the previous persecutions and troubles described by Parry and Thomas. Perhaps this description as a ‘revival’ by the two new American missionaries was not solely rhetorical, nor misapplied, but hopeful and encouraging imagery directed at both missionaries and home audiences whose attention and devotion to Barisal (and indeed the rest of the India missions) had certainly been tried.

Later that year the *Herald* was able to present even more ‘pleasing’ news from Barisal.¹⁵⁵ In January George Pearce and John Wenger had gone to inspect the station and lend their aid, and found that many there seemed to be ‘truly converted’, surprising them with their knowledge of scripture as well as their power and sincerity in prayer. Just as in the districts south of Calcutta, however, the SPG had been making inroads in and around Barisal; in fact, Wenger explained, ‘measures were adopted by parties at the station to place it in connexion with the Propagation Society’. Whether this was the root of Bareiro’s ‘questionable and suspicious’ circumstances alluded to by John Parry, or simply another challenge facing the missionaries, Wenger was adamant that ‘whatever is done [for the station] must be done immediately, and nothing can be even attempted without considerable expense’. One of the Calcutta brethren (probably Lewis) would have to be sent straightaway; there was no house; more native preachers and an assistant missionary would be necessary; and the three to four hundred converts were distributed all across the Backerganj district. ‘I merely state these things’, added Wenger triumphantly, that you see we have no idea of retiring from this promising field’. Hopefully this reassurance to the Committee and the readers of the *Herald*

¹⁵⁵ Thomas, Calcutta, 8 February 1849, *MH*, July 1849.

would ease their anxieties about the future of the Barisal mission—and the extra call it placed on their purses.

Wenger's next letter, from December 1849, appeared in the March 1850 *Herald*, and maintained his tone of earlier in the year. 'I feel the Society ought to strike the iron whilst it is hot', he wrote, echoing Bareiro's assessments that the people of Barisal would soon be converting to Christianity by the 'hundreds if not thousands'. He also related a particularly relevant anecdote he had heard from J.C. Page at the annual Associational meeting in Calcutta. Several Christian villagers had been seized, bound, and confined by agents of their zamindar who hoped to force them to renounce their faith. For several days the villagers continued praying and singing hymns, even holding a worship service amongst themselves on Sunday. At this the zamindar's officer gave up and released them, declaring it was 'no use to think of their forsaking Christianity'. This testament to the villagers' faith was slightly marred however, by some of their neighbours, who afterward exacted some violent reprisals against the agent and his men and thus 'spoiled the case so far as the law might have remedied it'.¹⁵⁶ With this Wenger (and Page) summed up to the Committee and the *Herald*'s readers a number of challenges to the Barisal mission: persecution of converts continued and relations with the courts were often precarious, but hopefully more Christians would continue to stand firm in their faith and set examples and precedents for others to follow.

With the arrival of James Sale and his wife in the summer of 1849, the mission had finally been supplemented with another full-time missionary, as well as another voice to draw the attention of the Society and its supporters to its needs. In February 1851 Sale's first report appeared, full of interesting, if not terribly romantic, descriptions of his work there.¹⁵⁷ Responding to the Committee's questions about the geography of the place, he wryly responded that 'really if you expect anything interesting to be made of a district where there is not a hill three feet high, nor a stone to throw at a pariah dog, I am not your man'. Describing his travels through the swamps, jungle, and rice paddies of the district he could only remark that he wished he had 'some rising genius' to sketch the scenery and 'achieve for himself a triumph on new, if not romantic ground'.

¹⁵⁶ Wenger, 8 December 1849, *MH*, March 1850.

¹⁵⁷ Sale, 1 November 1850, *MH*, February 1851.

In all Sale considered himself ‘no admirer of the place’, except perhaps for the verdant foliage of the jungle, but considered it ‘no trial or discouragement’, concluding that ‘happy we should be if our real difficulties were as easily smiled away as all traveling adventures can be’. Zamindars continued to harass the Christian villagers, and the courts were ‘wicked and corrupt’, but all his ‘difficulties and perils’ had been ‘repaid with success’ among the Christian villagers as well as the people. Most of the stations and sub-stations throughout the district had small schools in which men, women, and children alike were taught to read the Scriptures, and Mrs. Sale’s own schoolchildren—girls and boys—were training up as tailors for Barisal’s European community.¹⁵⁸ The Committee had written to Sale with the impression ‘that the people are to some extent favourably disposed towards the reception of the true religion’, and he responded with one of his own: ‘unsettledness’ among the people of the region—was both the effect *and* cause of ‘that inquiring spirit which has led to the formation of new sects’ and to conversion to Christianity.¹⁵⁹

In December 1851 a new circular letter from Sale and Page appeared in the *Herald* with ‘much cheering information [and] happy results’ from their continued labours in Barisal.¹⁶⁰ The previous year’s expenses, as Wenger had anticipated in his earlier reports, had left a deficit of ten pounds, which the missionaries and editors both hoped would quickly be resolved by the publication of their circular. Addressed to ‘Christian friends’ and ‘to all interested in the operations of the Baptist Missionary Society’, it summed up the mission’s current statistics—ten stations, each with a grass chapel and a native preacher; twenty-one outstations; more than a thousand villagers and almost two hundred baptized members—and expressed the missionaries’ thanks and hopes for continued encouragement and support from congregations at home in England. The editors had noted with particular pleasure the ‘zeal’ with which they educated their converts in literacy and the Scriptures, as well as the converts’ ‘industry in learning’, and Sale and Page were happy to add that prejudice against Christian education seemed to be on the wane. The exercise of church discipline had been largely unnecessary and the pair were of the opinion ‘that the native Christian in Bengal is not so

¹⁵⁸ Mrs. Sales’s schools were praised later as ‘the most interesting female schools of the society’. She also had one hundred fifty women, as well, in six schools, where they learned reading and writing along with ‘ordinary household work’. *MH*, May 1854.

¹⁵⁹ Sale, 1 November 1850, *MH*, February 1851. Again Geoffrey Oddie’s discussion of the preconditions of conversion finds ample application here.

¹⁶⁰ Sale and Page, Barisal, 16 July 1851, *MH*, December 1851.

selfish, so carnal, so utterly godless as some would imagine', appealing to their readers to take a greater interest in the native Christians themselves.

The stock images of the heathen that some were so busy maintaining were again proving themselves less necessary, as Barisal's 'successes' seemed to Sale and Page (and perhaps even the Committee) the best means of securing continued support. Indeed, it was to the 'unique' character of Barisal's inhabitants that Joshua Russell attributed the apparent rapid spread of Christianity there. 'The most prospered of all our stations', he wrote upon returning from his 1851 tour of Bengal, Barisal was populated by people 'more athletic, laborious, and independent than in other parts of Bengal'. 'The men are more finely formed' [from their 'constant boating'] and when 'brought under religious instruction they act with courage and determination'. The area, traditionally considered the haunts of 'river-dacoits', still retained 'a character of that kind'—rough and mysterious. Russell's romanticized descriptions, clearly intended for British audiences—stood in stark contrast to the images of antagonistic Brahmins and Muslims, and to the sympathetic images of oppressed *ryots* that the missionaries on the ground had relied on. They also, however, introduced more of a British 'colonial' perspective, providing additional contrast to the 'effeminate' imagery commonly associated with Bengalis.¹⁶¹ Here, it seemed, were new 'characters' to interest and engage the readers at home—but introduced with familiar terms and themes.

An article some fifteen years later in the *Juvenile Missionary Herald* by J.C. Page presented the magazine's young readers with an intimate look at the 'Native Converts of Barisal':

You ask what these people are like *at home*. Well, look in, if you please. You will be welcomed with salaams, and by joyful countenances. You will be made to feel that you confer an honour by your visit, instead of being told that your white face desiles a Bengali hut! Doubtless, you will meet with people laborious or lazy, loving or quarrelsome, cleanly or dirty, neat or untidy, as all even in England are.¹⁶²

'Still, think a little', Page continued, offering some 'facts'. Women were no longer 'slaves', but respected by all. Though they still did not eat with their husbands 'for lack of servants',

¹⁶¹ Russell, 'Thoughts', 23. Recall Ian Bradley's point that missionary narratives often had all the 'romance and excitement of good adventure stories'. *The Call to Seriousness*, 77-79. See Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Effeminate' Bengali and the 'Manly' Englishman in the Nineteenth Century* (Manchester, 1995).

¹⁶² *JMH*, January 1864. Similarly, the villagers of the 'Christian parah' described above by Mary Leslie 'had their defects—what Christians have them not?—but they loved and served the Lord Christ, [which] made them different from their neighbours'. *Eastern Blossoms: Sketches of Native Christian Life in India*. 13.

'the blessing' was said over thousands of meals a day, and 'in hundreds of families' family worship was held regularly. The Bible was '*the book of the family*' and the Christians lived 'in love among themselves, and in peace with all men'. 'They are a marked people', Page concluded, 'strange and differing. The heathen know them not to be of their own'.¹⁶³

George Pearce picked up on this thread in 1852 in a letter (covering three pages in the *Herald*) narrating his six-week tour with DeMonte. Pearce's assessment of the situation on the ground was characteristically optimistic and well-presented, noting that they were 'well-received everywhere' and witnessed no real opposition. The people they encountered, Christians and 'heathens' alike, seemed eager to hear the visiting missionaries and to receive books and tracts, and Pearce was convinced that 'the confidence of the people in Hinduism is gone'.¹⁶⁴ One key element to this mentality, Pearce felt, lay in response to an emphasis on 'the future state' of the soul in the missionaries' preaching—the hope and promise of heaven contained in the Gospel was certainly one strong incentive for people whose present state was one of poverty, oppression, and ignorance, and whose religion offered no hope for a different future.



Figure 15—Chapel at Dhandoba, Barisal
Missionary Herald, July 1852

¹⁶³ *JMH*, January 1864.

¹⁶⁴ Local Muslims, Pearce admitted, had until lately been given up by the missionaries as unreachable, but also seemed to hold some promise of 'coming around' to Christianity.

The missionaries' annual associational meeting had taken place at Dhan-Dhoba, one of the principal Barisal stations, where a large pukka chapel (with room for four hundred worshippers) had been built. Pearce and DeMonte were joined at Dhan-Dhoba by John Wenger, and though they were the only missionaries to attend from 'abroad', several hundred native Christians and their families also attended. As in other cases, simple descriptions often did not suffice, and Biblical allusions and imagery were employed to render to home audiences in familiar ways the precise sense (and role) of such 'foreign' scenes. Comparing the responses of the native Christians to the prophet Isaiah's visions of the establishment of Zion, Pearce reinforced the idea that the mission was indeed successful, and that such a revival surely fulfilled eschatological expectations and settled debates on the effectiveness of mission efforts.¹⁶⁵ Repeating John Wenger's cry from 1849, the Calcutta missionaries urged the BMS to 'bend its energies to this area', as it was yet unoccupied by other denominations and the 'superior circumstances and intelligence of the people' made them appear all the more ready to receive the Gospel.¹⁶⁶

It was with this inspiring imagery, and the assurance that the mission's 'remarkable' native preachers had left him 'greatly pleased', that George Pearce closed his letter with the simple 'hope that the brethren will be sustained' in their labours. J.C. Page retained a more reserved point of view regarding his station. Writing in March about his own itinerating visits, he found that while several of the stations were maintaining their 'good reputation', others had begun to backslide.¹⁶⁷ Opposition from local zamindars continued to remain a constant issue for native Christians in the area¹⁶⁸, and like the southern villages sheer distance and inaccessibility often prevented regular instruction and supervision despite many more native preachers on the ground. The village of Kaligaon, for instance, had been 'long unsteady' and without a native preacher, and many of the Christians there had turned to a sect Page described as a sort of nihilism. They were 'not pleased' to see Page when he arrived, but after four days of 'reproving, expostulating, and teaching...*all* promised to do better'. Several other village stations, however, showed great promise and supported Pearce's optimistic evaluation.

¹⁶⁵ Isaiah 60 (KJV)

¹⁶⁶ *MH*, April 1852.

¹⁶⁷ Page, 4 March 1852, *MH*, July 1852.

¹⁶⁸ The BMS's John Johannes had recently spent fifteen pounds to clear land for a 'Christian village' in the jungle to provide a refuge from persecution from landlords.

At Pakhar and Saugaon Page found circumstances in ‘much healthier condition’, with entire families learning to read and large congregations of visitors at several worship services, and they continued to baptize converts. At Digaliya Page found everything ‘neat, clean, and tidy’, and spent five days teaching and baptizing. With assistance from the Circular Road Baptist Church in Calcutta and the Native Christian Social Advancement Society the villagers had constructed a ‘pretty little round *gola*’ (storage silo), which would hold three hundred *maunds* of paddy reserved for relief purposes. They had also established amongst themselves ‘bands of assistance’, assisting with planting here and construction there, leading a delighted Page to add that ‘this shows no little union and love among them’. Page closed with a direct address to his audience:

Will not the reader join me in thanking the Lord for the tokens of his favour so evident among some of his people?...Will he not join in prayer, too, for each one of these little churches...and for the heathen and Mohammedans, too, that they might turn to Christ?¹⁶⁹

The awareness of audience and purpose that had been developing over the previous decades was proving itself increasingly utilized—and useful—in these narratives. Page, like Pearce and Wenger and his other colleagues, was certainly quite conscious of and comfortable with the rhetorical role his journals and correspondence played in the continued life and success of the mission. He knew the importance of providing positive and ‘interesting’ images, and of utilizing the themes that his predecessors had relied on and built up in the previous decades.

In May 1852 the entire district was struck by a massive hurricane, causing destruction at Barisal and almost all of the stations and out-stations. Mrs. Sale, writing to a friend of hers in England, explained that the missionaries had already had to spend two hundred rupees (twenty pounds) to repair the damage caused by another storm the previous November, and now everything had been wrecked again. Many of the Christian villages’ crops had been utterly destroyed, and even with *golas* the threat of famine was very real. ‘Do you think that my dear Pastor could manage to put a paragraph in the *Herald* for us?’ Mrs. Sale wondered, as there were ‘many, I am sure, who would be glad to help us in this emergency, if they were only made acquainted with our wants’.¹⁷⁰ To this the editor of the *Herald* added, ‘It need scarcely be added that we shall with pleasure forward any donations we may be favoured

¹⁶⁹ Page, 4 March 1852, *MH*, July 1852.

¹⁷⁰ *MH*, September 1852.

with for these poor suffering fellow Christians'. Though this was one example of the type of direct appeal (and editorializing) that lent extra weight to certain stations and on-going narratives, in this case it seems to have backfired, as Barisal disappeared from the *Herald's* pages again for another year and a half after this letter.

After a few brief mentions of baptisms earlier in the year, the September 1852 issue of the *Herald* featured an engraving of the chapel at Chobikarpar, which lay to the northwest of Barisal and was 'one of the most interesting stations in the district'. With a large Christian community and the highest literacy rate of any station, the new chapel there had been built just after the storms, and featured a 'novel six-corner design' as well as a large tank for baptizing. The station was also considered fortunate for the addition of the elderly Sharon, from Jessore, as the new pastor.¹⁷¹

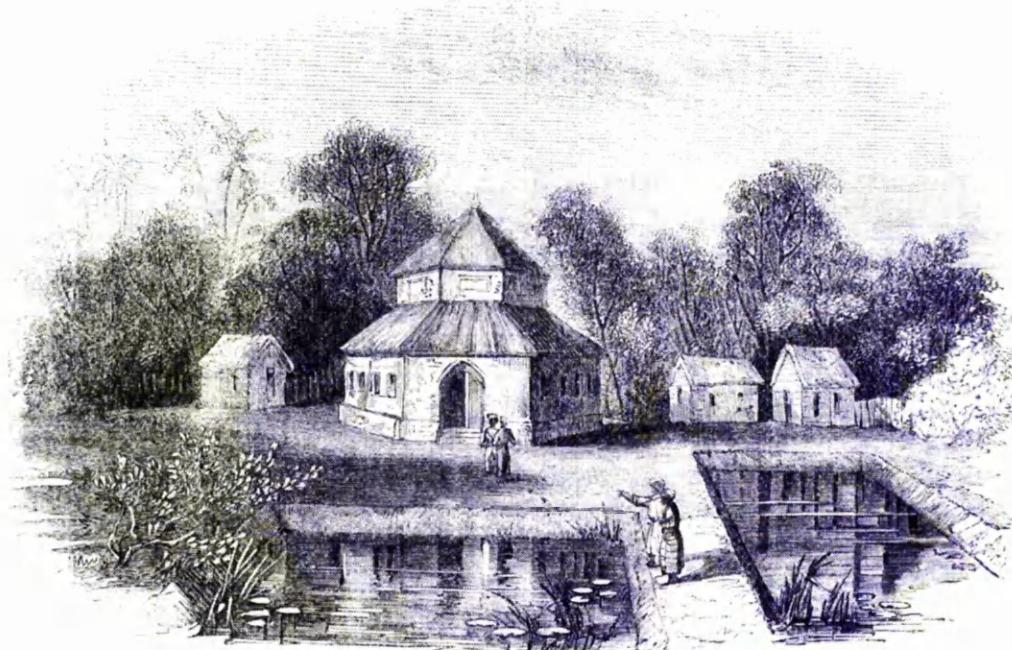


Figure 16—Chobikarpar Chapel, Backergunge
Missionary Herald, September 1852

Earlier in the year the Sales had been instructed by the Committee to move from Barisal to Jessore, which had occasioned some obvious disappointment, especially on the part of Mrs. Sale, whose boarding schools had been so successful, and whose three children in addition had left her 'weakened'.¹⁷² Their replacements, J. Martin and his wife, arrived at

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² *MH*, March, December 1854. Mrs. Sale's plea for 'a new young assistant' was at least partially answered when the Anderson family took up the nearby station of Khulna.

Barisal in January 1855, accompanying J.C. Page from the annual Associational meeting, held at Serampore.¹⁷³

Martin's first impressions appeared in the August and September *Missionary Heralds*, continuing the bright tone of his predecessors and admirably providing the 'charm of the freshness of feeling...in a scene which must in every respect be both strange and new'.¹⁷⁴ Several months later Martin's descriptions of preaching at markets and *melas* provided a rather different perspective than previous reports had. Martin's journal offered the Home Committee and the editors of the *Missionary Herald* with a fresh point from which to approach the narration of the Barisal mission—one less in line with the positive, successful accounts of the mission thus far than with the return to an emphasis on India's 'darker' spiritual features.

While Pearce and the other missionaries around Calcutta had emphasized the exemplary effects of the Gospel and the progress of the various congregations under their care, Martin's experience in Barisal seemed more in line with the experiences of the 'pioneers' at Serampore. He, too, was brand new to the Indian mission field, and was certainly well-familiar with journals like the *Periodical Accounts* and the *Missionary Herald*, as well as the extensive secondary literature on Indian missions. His youth, his personality, even perhaps his naïveté, all contributed to the tone of his writings, but it is also plain that Martin had a clear sense of purpose and audience.

In another clear example of combining missionary narrative with commentary and official rhetoric, the editor of the *Herald* reveled in Martin's 'freshness of tone' and 'graphic truthfulness of description'.¹⁷⁵ He explained that Martin's 'picture...of degradation, pollution and profligacy of the people' was 'affecting to the last degree', and had necessarily been related only in generalities as 'the naked truth would both shock and disgust'. If those scenes had been reduced to printability, the editor posited, just imagine if they were 'plainly and truthfully depicted!' With this idea hanging before his readers, he closed this latest report from Barisal with an appeal for their 'sympathy and aid in reaching this dark, wicked land'. The narrative character of Martin's journal, with its 'graphic' imagery, served a strong rhetorical role on its own by returning to the more traditional tropes of the 'heathen'.

¹⁷³ *MH*, April 1855.

¹⁷⁴ *MH*, August, September 1855.

¹⁷⁵ *MH*, August 1855.

Martin had already begun to tackle Bengali, and was in many ways fortunate to arrive just before the visit of Edward Underhill, the Secretary of the BMS, on his tour of India. Accompanying Underhill through the district, he was pleased to note their ‘warm receptions everywhere’, reflecting that ‘one could not help but be affected by the sight of so many open, cheerful, though dark, countenances’. More *golas* had been built, and one village had even established a sort of ‘legal fund’ to aid its members meeting the costs of litigation with their zamindars. Martin’s letter included several anecdotes of continued troubles between the Christian villagers and their landlords, including the imprisonment of a native preacher and seven others over the alleged theft of some fish following a dispute over boundaries of a local fishery, and the triumphal story of eight Christian families who had been run off by an under-landlord, only to be fetched back home after he heard an address by the missionaries and was himself converted. In spite of these difficulties, and those occasioned by the landscape and utter distances between many of the stations (not to mention the death of his son soon after their arrival), Martin was nonetheless decidedly ‘grateful that my lot has been cast here’, where ‘the prospect of usefulness is very encouraging’. He expressed his hope that his letters (together with those of Page and Underhill) ‘make their way to England and are pondered over well by our friends there’.¹⁷⁶

Of course, the predominant news from India in 1855, so far as the Baptist mission was concerned, was the first Conference of Baptist Missionaries in Bengal, held in Calcutta in September and published in excerpts throughout the next year. As I discuss in the final chapter, this conference represented something of a watershed, not only for being the first of its kind in Bengal, but in that it saw a serious restructuring of personnel and priorities in the region and established a more uniform and clear awareness of the state of the various missions and their needs.

Conclusions

In narrating their experiences with native Christians in the stations outside of Calcutta, missionaries like George and William H. Pearce and John Wenger were continuing the

¹⁷⁶ *MH*, August, September 1855.

tradition of William Ward and the others at Serampore. Informed by their own theology and background as well as the examples of their predecessors, their work in Lakhantipore and Khari and the neighbouring villages required them to balance the ‘realities’ on the ground in India with the expectations of their supporters and audiences back home in England.

A number of prominent themes emerged in their narratives as they sought on the one hand to explain those ‘realities’ while on the other achieve their own practical and rhetorical goals. Issues of conversion and identity were central to their descriptions and reports on the native Christians with whom they had developed relationships and connections. Their own concepts of what it meant to be ‘Christian’ and ‘heathen’ also quite naturally came to the fore. Native Christians and converts constantly had to negotiate these definitions as well, both among themselves and vis-à-vis their ‘heathen’ neighbours. The ways in which missionaries represented the differences and ‘transformations’ they expected to find among converts—whether or not they actually found them—was one key to explaining and reinforcing images of the mission field and the great challenges missionaries often faced in accomplishing their goals. Domestic and family themes, especially a focus on women, remained central to appealing to home readers and connecting trends at home and abroad. Maintaining this connection was essential to making the Indian missions real and relevant to those audiences and to reinforcing missionaries’ own visions and expectations.

Similarly, missiological issues occupied the attention of missionaries and metropolitan writers alike in missionary publications. The concept of Christian communities and the debate over the purpose and nature of ‘Christian villages’ raised fundamental questions about the nature of missionary practice and policy, and about the envisioned role of the Indian church itself. Though they had always been at the forefront of discussions about Indian missions, these two issues in particular intensified as the Baptists expanded their operations in Bengal and elsewhere. If the role of missionaries was an *evangelizing* one, it followed that converts—and the Indian church itself—would have to be responsible for their own spiritual growth and development; if a *pastoral* one, close supervision and regular instruction would (hopefully) ensure a firm and committed ‘kernel’ of Christianity in India, which would eventually be able to provide the intended example to their ‘heathen’ neighbours and continue spreading the gospel.

Experience, however, continued to show the Baptist missionaries that they would have to more carefully balance these roles if any future ‘success’ was to be expected in India. The supposed intrinsic nature of the ‘heathen’—including converts and native Christians—remained just as significant to missionaries’ descriptions of their work, and despite regular examples to the contrary, the firm belief that native Christians and new converts were simply unable to function fully free from the supervision of European ministers continued to dominate the discourse on missionary roles and the nature of these ‘Christian villages’ and the Indian church.

Close supervision and high expectations on the part of the missionaries, however, also served important rhetorical purposes. Whether they were completely accurate or not, their accounts at once provided brief glimpses into the lives of native Christians, especially regarding the ‘transformation’ of lives, families, and communities wrought by the Gospel. Whether ‘created’ by missionaries or established by converts, Christian villages were in many ways unconventional communities, and missionaries hoped to provide the alternative social order that would go hand in hand with native Christians’ new spiritual lives. Such contrasts between the former and current lives of converts, and between Christian villages and their ‘heathen’ surroundings offered readers glimpses of the exotic while reaffirming the ‘success’ of the Indian mission. Examples of families coming for instruction and baptism, of women learning to read and to sew, and of idolaters and sinners repenting and coming to Christ offered a return on the prayers and pounds solicited by the BMS and the very missionaries they were reading about. Similarly, reports of oppression and persecution were intended to engage readers’ emotions and spur them to action, while at the same time underscoring their own religious liberties.

Despite the continuity in themes and imagery throughout the period, missionaries in Bengal were gradually becoming more self-conscious about the power of their portrayals. For the Pearces, the weight of the public gaze was a major factor in the ways they constructed narratives of their life and work, especially as they spent their furloughs in England rallying support for the India mission. Similarly, Sylvester Bareiro and his successors seemed keenly aware of the role reports of success and progress would play in securing support for the Barisal mission. While this in no way suggests that Bareiro intended to manipulate the BMS

toward his own ends (even considering the later controversy surrounding him), it does offer some perspective on the relationship between *reality* and *perception* in missionary accounts and reports.

Much as was the case with Serampore, the emergence of such ‘spotlight’ villages as Johnnagar, Lakhypore and Khari, and Barisal was based on careful selection of material on the part of both the authors and the editors. It was important to balance the ‘successes’ with the ‘dreadful irregularities’ not only because they were deemed true, but because they provided audiences a stake in what was happening there. The trials and joys that occupied the missionaries also attracted and maintained the attention of readers, often for years at a time. It was thus not only the ‘facts’ that mattered in telling the stories of these village stations, and this is, I would argue, at the very root of the nature of missionary publicity and rhetoric itself. Thus we find in their stories converts and congregations alternately being eulogized and admonished, singled out and obscured, but always with the hope that conversion and transformation were possible, especially with the continued efforts of faithful supporters at home. ‘Success’ and ‘failure’ were certainly real concepts that affected Pearce and the others and manifested themselves in all of the daily aspects of their relationships with the village stations. Just as real, though, were the logistics behind maintaining their mission and their base of support. It was this balance that had to be maintained if the India mission—and the Indian church—was to survive and prosper, and which was contingent on managing both the expectations and the perceptions of the readers at home.

Chapter Five: Baptist Schools in Calcutta

That schools are instrumental to the conversion of the heathen few I think will doubt.¹

In December 1849, readers of the *Missionary Herald* were treated to a particularly detailed account of a young man named Denonath Bose, a student at one of George Pearce's schools at Intally. Stories of children and students who had converted to Christianity often found their ways into missionaries' letters and reports as examples of the civilizing effects of Christianity and the success of Christian education on the presumably weak character of the 'heathen'. Accompanied by a rather dramatic engraving, Denonath's story of conversion and opposition was a familiar one to missionaries and readers alike, but Pearce presented it as indicative of everything he and his colleagues had worked for—and had to face—in their previous decades in Bengal. 'This is a long narrative', Pearce admitted,

I am afraid it will tire you. I have written it because I am not aware that anything of the kind has appeared in the *Herald* of late. It opens to young Christians at home the state of things which we have to contend with here. They will see how much labour and anxiety the missionary has to undergo to win a soul to Christ, and how much more converts here have to contend with, and sacrifice, than young people at home generally have. All may learn, also, to sympathise with missionaries in their arduous work.²

Denonath was a student at the Native Christian Institution, one of the Baptists' boarding schools for the children of native Christians, and after several years there he had finally made the decision to convert to Christianity and be baptized. His father, however, kept close watch for any Christian influences on him, and kept Denonath from attending chapel and receiving extra instruction from Pearce. One day Denonath came to Pearce and explained that he felt he could no longer live at home, and wanted to 'live among the Christians' at the mission. Despite some hesitation from the missionary, Denonath was given permission to come and stay. His father, on learning this, rushed to Intally to either persuade his son from conversion or force him to change his mind. Rather than falling back in the face of this opposition, the young Denonath stood his ground, and resolutely declared, 'Father, I am a Christian'. His father, overwhelmed by the boy's force of will and dedication, 'left in great anger', and

¹ G. Pearce to John Dyer, 17 August 1831, BMS MSS IN/29.

² *MH*, December 1849.

Denonath remained to be baptized and stand as a hero to his classmates and George Pearce himself.³



Figure 17—‘Denonath Bose: “I am a Christian”’
Missionary Herald, December 1849.

Some twenty years earlier a report in the *Missionary Herald* had similarly offered encouraging accounts of female education from the Baptist schools at Cutwa, north of Calcutta, but in rather different terms. There the ‘Deakin’ and ‘Liverpool’ schools had seen ‘very satisfactory’ progress in the several years since they had been established, and the missionaries there insisted they remained undiscouraged ‘by the numerous impediments which lie in the way of female education’. If readers at home expected to see miraculous transformations and mass conversions sweeping the schools, however, the report could only say that ‘all the fruit that ought to be expected, is to be seen’:

Many of the children can now read, write, cypher, and sew: what more is to be expected of them? Some persons, perhaps, expect to hear of conversions to God among these children; but such expectations are rather the offspring of an impatient spirit, than of a mind whose judgment is formed from a knowledge of the condition of Hindoo children, and of the religious conduct of children in Christian countries.⁴

³ *MH*, December 1849. Another version of this story, more suited to younger audiences—and with a poorer illustration—was published in the *Juvenile Missionary Herald* the next month, and a few years later in the LMS’s *Juvenile Missionary Magazine*. JMH, new series volume 3, 1850, 1-4. JMM, volume 12, 1855, 205.

⁴ *MH*, October 1827.

Even from this relatively early date, several themes were appearing that reflected the attitudes of both missionaries and readers at home regarding the continuing state of missions in India. Missionaries' expectations about readers' 'knowledge'—albeit second-hand—of the characteristics that distinguished heathen from Christian in the mission stations and villages had all along been applied to children as well, and those same themes ran through their reports and narratives concerning their schools. The question of numbers of converts remained steadily at the forefront, but that of methodology, as we have already seen, was much more contentious and troublesome. But was there a shift in those attitudes and expectations in the two decades between this 1827 report from Cutwa and Pearce's 1849 story of Denonath Bose? Or was this simply a shift in portraying the various struggles and successes missionaries encountered in their work with the schools?

While conversions among villagers were steadily increasing and were rewarding in their own right, it was obvious to many (especially those with millenarian leanings) that such numbers represented mere drops in the bucket of salvation. Moreover, a large part of the debate over converts' positions and roles in the church rested on their capabilities to understand and disseminate the doctrines and beliefs of their new faith. George Pearce, writing to John Dyer in 1831, explained that in his experience adult converts would rarely 'attain to eminence in the church' because of their lack of education:

Experience indeed has proved this, for many native Christians while they have become acquainted with the essential doctrines of the gospel and likewise of its principal facts etc. have nevertheless retained many crude Hindoo notions, and made little or no progress in general knowledge and have thus remained incapacitated for much usefulness.⁵

Though preaching the Gospel was constantly argued as the primary role of the missionary, it was to be the youth of India who would be the key to the country's overall conversion. An entire generation brought up under Christian instruction would, like their counterparts in Britain, be able to assume the mantle of evangelization and church stewardship, and, as Pearce put it, be 'as giants compared with many of our present native Christian brethren'. Mission schools, like stations and villages, served as extended families as well, providing refuge, community, identity, and supervision, and in much the same way as the reports of the village stations served as 'spotlights' on the activities of the missionaries and native

⁵ G. Pearce to John Dyer, 17 August 1831, BMS MSS IN/29.

Christians, those of the Baptists' schools in Calcutta provided glimpses of the nature of 'heathen' and native Christian children and the transformative power of Christian education.

Thus, the same themes that emerged in missionaries' reports and narratives about the stations reverberated through those about their schools. The concept of the extended family found especial relevance at the day and boarding schools, and the ideological and practical debates over individual and corporate identities, boundaries and discipline, and the very purpose of mission schools continued to find fertile ground. Those themes and debates moreover allowed missionaries to more effectively develop and combine narrative and rhetoric to achieve more specific goals and reach more specific audiences, enabling mission schools, like the 'spotlight' village stations, to become a focal point for the emotional, financial, and in many cases practical responses sought for in missionaries' writings.

Early Efforts

The Baptists had begun establishing schools almost immediately they had settled at Serampore, but one of their marked achievements was the establishment in 1809 of the Benevolent Institution in Calcutta. The BI was for some time the largest of the Baptists' schools, with both day students and boarders, and catered particularly to the Eurasian community. Its students, 'the children of the most indigent inhabitants of Calcutta', studied Biblical history, the Parables of Christ, and James Watt's popular *Catechism*; the girls also learnt to do needlepoint and embroidery.⁶ It straightaway proved a popular school, especially because of the missionaries' policy of open enrollment, but the rapid growth put the BI into debt within two years. When Owen Leonard left for Dacca in 1817 to establish a similar school there, the Serampore missionaries invited James Penney, a protégé of the innovative educationalist Joseph Lancaster, to come to India and take up the superintendence of the Benevolent Institution.⁷ Under Penney the school presented 'a novel and interesting spectacle', drawing students 'from almost all climes' and 'the lowest order in Calcutta' and

⁶ *MH*, April 1824. In contrast, the girls at Mrs. Carey's Broadmead School did no needlework at all, and those at the Juvenile School at Chitpore were said to prefer books instead.

⁷ Penney had found himself drawn toward the mission field, particularly to India, soon after his marriage in 1816. A keen scholar and dedicated teacher, Penney built up a reputation among his colleagues for his 'goodness, uprightness, cheerfulness [and] activity' and his ready smile and easy temperament. Among his students he was said to be 'admired and loved' as both 'a master and a friend', believing, in his own words, that his was a 'most interesting and encouraging work'. 'Account of the Life of James Penney', *MH*, February 1840.

boasting ‘several pious youths’.⁸ Indeed, the goal of the BI was to turn out young people who could navigate ‘the vortex of all that wickedness which a Christian education tends so happily to counteract’, and the school remained for many years a fixture of mission reports and journals published in Britain and India, providing consistent notes of success as well as interesting contrasts between ‘heathen’ nature and Christian ‘nurture’.⁹

James Penney considered the overall role of mission schools as ‘preventing the implantation, or at least checking the growth, of those prejudices and dangerous errors’ that marked students’ ‘heathen’ environment, and girls were thought particularly susceptible to them.¹⁰ Joshua Russell, in his survey of the Bengal missions, explained that girls’ schools moreover transformed their students’ ‘slovenly, slothful habits and their strange soul-mastering prejudices’ so that the girls became ‘gentle and obedient [and] generally quick in learning’.¹¹ Thus they represented tiny islands of civilization that stood in contrast to the immense and faceless mass of ‘heathen’ women in India. Female education had long been a priority for the Baptists: Hannah Marshman had opened several girls’ schools at Serampore as early as 1801, and co-educational schools had cropped up throughout Bengal at the various mission stations.

In Calcutta, however, William Adam, the missionary-cum-inspector of schools, found that while many boys’ schools were operating, there were none solely for girls, leading him to write to John Ryland in March 1819 to propose one, for which he received the BMS Committee’s sound encouragement.¹² That year the Calcutta Female Juvenile Society was formed by the Baptist missionaries in the city, supported by fees from the girls’ boarding school run by Mrs. W.H. Pearce and Mrs. John Lawson at Intally. This was soon followed by

⁸ *Baptist Missionary Report*, 1819-26, 13. The profits and contributions arising from the publication of Joshua Marshman’s *Hints on Education* had allowed him to open over a hundred schools between 1816 and 17. Laird, *Missionaries and Education in Bengal*, 72.

⁹ Lawson, Carey, Yates, and Penney to BMS Committee, Calcutta, 17 April 1818. *MH*, January 1819. Attendance at the Benevolent Institution remained steady at around three hundred students, but tragedy struck in 1828 when, after a trip to Saugor Island, both Mr. And Mrs. Penney were struck with ‘jungle fever’. She died very shortly, prompting him to return to England for a time, temporarily leaving the Benevolent Institution without a head.

¹⁰ Jr. Brethren to Society, Calcutta, 22 July 1818, *MH*, March 1819. One report from the Female Christian Institution explained that their curriculum included tracts and books that were ‘free from allusions to the abominations of Hindoo idolatry’, as the girls were assumedly too impressionable, and any sort of ‘corrupting influence’ was eschewed. See *MH*, September 1839.

¹¹ Russell, ‘Thoughts’, 20. Echoing the increasing emphasis of female influence, one essayist in the *Evangelical Magazine* later added that female education ‘modifies society itself’. ‘Heathen Female Education, part III’, *MM*, April 1837.

¹² W. Adam to J. Ryland, 22 March 1819, *MH*, February 1820.

a number of similar ‘societies’.¹³ Eager to begin his own ‘experiment’ in female education, James Penney opened the Juvenile School, the Baptists’ first girls’ school in Calcutta, at his station in Chitpore in April 1820.¹⁴ He first ‘secured a qualified Hindoo woman as a teacher’, and within a few months they had fifteen regular students ‘reading and writing’, leaving them ‘highly gratified’.¹⁵

The growth of girls’ schools and the campaign for female education in India were quick to catch the public attention in Britain. The editor of the *Missionary Herald* boldly speculated that if the missionaries there were able ‘to collect thousands of female children into the schools, we are persuaded the requisite funds would not be wanting’.¹⁶ For example, one Ladies’ Association at Lyme, which according to the *Herald* had set an example for Christian ladies ‘in various parts of the Kingdom’, had been quite active and generous in raising funds and collecting materials for the girls in the native schools at the Baptists’ mission at Digah, subscribing nearly fifteen pounds a year.¹⁷

Mr. Rowe, however, had to qualify such optimism with his fear that ‘our Lyme friends are too sanguine in their expectations respecting native female improvement’, as there were yet only twenty-seven girls altogether between several schools. Though they had picked up the mantle laid down by the advocates for such schools, they were nevertheless chastised for not understanding the practicalities and logistics of the enterprise. This was yet another way in which the realities of the mission field often diverged from the aims of its publicists. Just like in the village stations, contact did not necessarily mean immediate conversion or ‘progress’. Though the number of girls’ schools in Calcutta and throughout Bengal had grown, many had only a dozen or so students, and missionaries complained that many of the girls were withdrawn as soon as they began to learn anything ‘useful’.

¹³ Laird, *Missionaries and Education in Bengal*, 133-154. The Calcutta Female Society for the Establishment and Support of Native Schools had also recently been founded, and had begun to patronize a number of the Baptists’ schools, like the one at Sheldah with fifty students. *MH*, December 1819. Likewise the Ladies’ Society for Native Female Education in Calcutta and its Vicinity was formed under the patronage of Lady Amherst, wife of the Governor General. The CMS’s celebrated Miss Cooke arrived with William Ward in 1822 to open her own day schools for girls, and in two years she had fifteen of them with over three hundred students.

¹⁴ Jr. Brethren to Society, Calcutta, 22 July 1818, *MH*, March 1819.

¹⁵ Penney, 2 July 1820; Jr. Brethren, journal, 19 August 1820, *MH*, June, October 1821.

¹⁶ *MH*, February 1822. Joshua Rowe wrote from Digah in April 1821 that he had applied the money sent from Lyme to their school in Daoodpur and ‘given it the name of “Lyme School”, but regretted that at present they were unable to create a girls-only institution. Rather, he wrote, some of remaining funds went to support the girls at their school in Manipur. See also the *Missionary Chronicle*, April 1822, 166.

¹⁷ *MH*, March 1819. The association was generally known as the Lyme Hindoo Female School Association.

Anna Pearce, niece of the renowned Baptist minister Samuel Pearce and cousin of W.H. Pearce (and soon Mrs. Jonathan Carey), had come to Calcutta as a single woman to teach in the female schools, and within a year of setting up the ‘Broadmead’ school at Durgapore in 1823 had thirty-one girls aged four to fourteen. The schedule and curriculum at girls’ schools was generally the same as those for boys: at Broadmead the classes met from six to ten each morning and four to six in the evening to study reading and writing (but, interestingly enough, not needlework).¹⁸ In 1825 George Pearce received a government grant of over five hundred pounds, enabling him to open several more schools and to establish a new ‘Native Female Asylum’ at Chitpore ‘for the support, education, and clothing of Native Christian and Heathen girls’.¹⁹ Thus removed from their ‘tainted’ environment and allowed to continue their education uninterrupted, those girls could thrive and excel. A native Christian woman and her husband opened their house for its use in July of 1826 and welcomed Piyaree, an ‘interesting, active, very intelligent’ five year old of Christian parents, as their first student.²⁰ A year later, however, the Asylum had yet to really get off the ground, and even little Piyaree had died, though the region boasted sixteen other schools overall, with over three hundred students.²¹ Around the same time (early 1829) Mrs. George Pearce and Mrs. Yates opened up additional girls’ schools at Durgapore and Intally, respectively.²²

¹⁸ *MH*, February 1825. The head of one LMS school explained that at Salem, ‘as in all India, the children, and especially the girls, grow up very ignorant and wicked’, but for the efforts of the missionaries and teachers there. The school at Salem was actually four schools in one: girls, boys, ‘infants’, and a vocational school. The students maintained ‘a rigorous schedule’ from 5 in the morning to 10 at night, which led one boy there to recommend ‘that it is very profitable for us to have such order, and so many privileges’. Mrs. Lechler, Salem, 1840. *JMM*, volume 6, 1849, 27; volume 13, 1856, 98-100. Some mission schools opted not to teach needlework to girls at all, especially in areas where Muslim tailors, rather than Hindu girls, were expected to do such work. See Laird, *Missionaries and Education in Bengal*, 133-54.

¹⁹ Trawin to Dyer, Kidderpore, 7 May 1825, *MH*, February 1826.

²⁰ ‘Sixth Report of the Female School Society’, *MH*, September 1827.

²¹ ‘Seventh Report of the Female School Society’, *MH*, November 1828.

²² *MH*, December 1829.

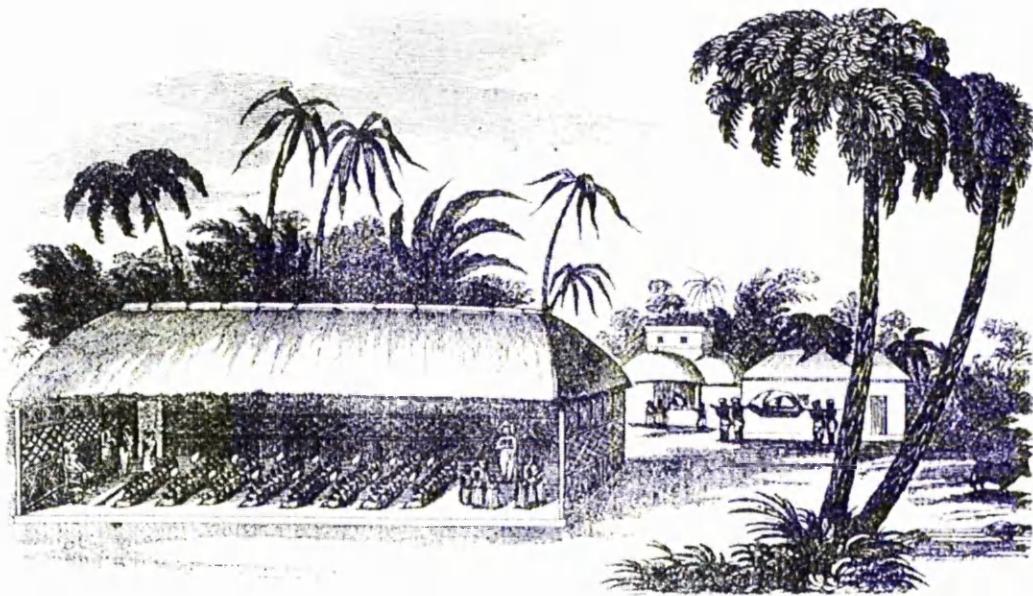


Figure 18—Native Girls’ School, Intally
Quarterly Papers No. 29, January 1829

By this time a growing sense of self-identity among Calcutta’s upper castes and emerging middle class contributed to a shift in the makeup and purpose of mission schools. No longer content to have their children mixing with ‘the rabble’ and learning Christianity upper-caste families often removed them altogether, and lower-caste students filled the vacuum. This also reflected a shift in strategy on the part of missionaries themselves, who had for some time abandoned the notion of upper-caste conversion as the means of converting India to Christianity. Even the idea of a ‘trickle-up’ effect—of children influencing their families—was only partially entertained. As much for practical reasons as for this shift in attention and attendance, missionaries throughout the area began to make a steady transition from large numbers of day-schools to more centralized schools, especially boarding schools.²³

In late 1828 George Pearce had formally established the Native Christian Boarding School at his mission bungalow at Chitpore, where for ‘a certain term of years’ children could be taught ‘Christian truths’ as well as gaining a general education and an apprenticeship in the ministry. The interest from a legacy of fifty pounds from a Mr. Berridge of Northamptonshire had provided enough money to operate the school for a year and enabled Pearce to employ a native Christian couple to superintend the school, and within a few

²³ Laird, *Missionaries and Education in Bengal*, 135-141. See CCO, October 1833 for an explanation of this consolidation by the Baptists in 1830.

months there were four students.²⁴ George Pearce's promised 'extended account' of the NCBS came in a letter from 17 August 1831, published in the *Missionary Herald* in April 1832. Besides the Bible and Watt's Catechism, the students studied a range of other subjects, including history, geography, astronomy, natural philosophy, geometry, and mathematics.²⁵ The number of students had increased to fifteen, including 'eight or nine' from Lakhypore and Khari, and a proper school-house and rooms for the children had been constructed. This allowed Pearce and the teachers to keep the students 'immediately under our eye', and the children were thus showing 'much improvement...especially in their morals'.²⁶

Just as missionary homes and 'Christian villages' served as a boundary between Christian families and the 'heathen' outside, mission schools too (especially boarding schools) established metaphysical as well as physical boundaries for their students.²⁷ Echoing James Penney's fears of 'the dreadful contagion of vice and immorality' that consumed 'heathen' culture, and Calcutta in particular, Pearce was quick to segregate his students from such baleful influences.²⁸ 'To avoid contamination from heathen boys,' Pearce explained, 'the Christian lads have a schoolroom and master to themselves; and association with the heathen is entirely disallowed. From this and the religious instructions which have been imparted to them, the most happy effects have resulted'. As an example of those 'happy effects', Pearce

²⁴ *MH*, June 1829.

²⁵ The students at Pearce's English-medium Heathen Boys' School also studied the Baptists' Bengali magazine *Digdarshun*, the *Book of Genesis*, William Yates' natural philosophy textbook and W.H. Pearce's geography textbook. They also had a number of globes and microscopes. *MH*, June 1829.

²⁶ Moreover, the students were characterized by a distinct 'diligence and the love of reading'. C.B. Leupolt, a CMS missionary at Benares, approached the management of his Orphan Institution similarly. By keeping the children under their 'entire control', Leupolt and his wife kept them 'uncontaminated by heathen influence'. The children were thus 'brought up as a Christian family' and 'natural affection and a new relation are created between them and us'. *Calcutta Christian Observer*, December 1855.

²⁷ See Marina Chanla Singh, *Gender, Religion and 'Heathen Lands': American Missionary Women in South Asia (1860s-1940s)* (New York, 2000), 77-103. Those boundaries applied equally—if not more so—to missionaries' own children. A letter in the LMS's *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* explained that missionaries often must send their children back to England, 'for if they kept them in those hot countries, they would not grow up strong, healthy children, and, what is still worse, in those heathen lands they would see a great deal that is wicked, and hear them talk in a way that no Christian child should hear, and they might get to learn some of their wicked words and ways; so it is best to send them away as soon as they understand what they see and hear'. 'The Story of a Missionary's Child', *JMM*, volume 22, 1865, 8.

²⁸ *Baptist Missionary Reports*, 1819-26, 13. In contrast to this, the students at the girls' school in Serampore were 'not in the slightest degree taken out of native habits...but live entirely like other Bengalee Christian children', though they were watched over by a matron and 'the ladies of the mission family'. All of them were, however, 'trained up in the habits of industry and cleanliness'.

described their usual sabbath-day routine:

At ten o'clock, all wearing clean clothes, they proceed to the house of God, where they have learnt to behave with decorum...Oh! how may some English children and youth be ashamed when they read that these Bengalee Christian boys rarely break the sabbath day by playing or idling away their precious time. It is true, they are not allowed to do so, but then they never manifest any dissatisfaction on that account, but appear as cheerful and happy on this as on any other day.²⁹

Likewise, James Penney wrote, the students of the Benevolent Institution, despite their abject poverty, made 'a more decent appearance than the children who attend schools of the same nature in England; nor are they far behind them in improvement or general deportment'. At one annual examination, though the children could 'merely be said to be clothed', all were 'cleanly' and displayed a remarkable 'cheerfulness and animation', while at another Penney found the hundred girls 'dressed in the plainest but neatest manner' and displaying an 'eager' and 'cheerful aspect'.³⁰ Just as cleanliness and order had been a key element of missionaries' expectations for their converts' homes and communities, it was perhaps more so for their schools.³¹ Whether they were residential or not, mission schools functioned in the same way as mission stations and 'Christian villages' in providing a closely-supervised community for their students and in separating and protecting them from the 'heathen influences' surrounding them.

Reaching 'the rising generation'

The centrality of education to the missionary enterprise reflected an internalization of the concept of the inherent 'weaknesses' of Indian children and their 'character', but it also presented multiple opportunities for targeting different audiences for support, especially

²⁹ The girls at the LMS's school at Bhowanipore went to chapel twice every Sunday, 'all dressed in clean white clothes [and] sit more quietly and pay greater attention to the minister, than some little Sunday-school children'. *JMM*, volume 8, 1851, 174-6.

³⁰ *MH*, September 1824; Junior Brethren to BMS Committee, Calcutta, 28 September 1828, *MH*, May 1829.

³¹ This was certainly a significant element to the ideology of transformation and the civilising effect of Christianity, but it was also a key factor in evangelicals' own conceptions of themselves and the roles of such institutions as schools in promoting these attributes. An early example of the transmission of such ideas between England and India is found in a review in the *Friend of India* for August 1824, entitled 'Infant Schools'. A Mr. Wilderspin, 'the master of the Spitalfields Infant School', had recently published a 'small volume' explaining the nature of his school and the numerous others based on its model that were cropping up in London and elsewhere. Notably, the rules outlined in his volume were set for parents and teachers rather than for children, such as 'Parents are to send their children clean washed, with their hair cut short, combed, and their clothes well mended'. They were also 'exhorted to give them good instruction and advice...to accustom them to family prayer...and set before them a good example'.

British children. Missionaries and other authors recognized early on the value of children and youth as an audience—one who could be catered to with relative ease and of whom they might expect a considerable return. To this end, various types of address began to be included in the standard periodical publications before an entirely separate set of periodicals emerged by mid-century. Whatever the source, the themes of *pity*, *pence*, and *participation* remained at the core of attentions directed toward young people by the proponents of the missionary movement. Children were constantly reminded to ‘pity the perishing heathen’, to offer up their prayers for them and for missionaries, to collect their farthings and pennies, and, if called, to offer themselves up to the mission field.

Sometimes, however, such simple appeals were deemed insufficient and even stronger methods employed. Fear of eternal judgment and damnation had long been considered an appropriate theme for addressing evangelical children, and it was no less so in connection with missions. ‘If I did not send my money, nor care anything about them’, one Sunday scholar wrote, ‘and I should not go to heaven, and they should be lost, how they would rise up in judgment against me, and say, “If we had had the privileges that you had, we should not be here!”’³² One missionary in south India, writing to the *Baptist Children’s Magazine*, cautioned Sunday school children to become involved ‘lest the Hindoos should rise on the day of judgment and condemn you’. Yet another writer challenged children to ‘ask, what effect has a Sabbath-school had upon me?’, and if it were good, to ‘rejoice in the hope of meeting these converted children, from heathen lands, in the kingdom of heaven; but, if not, I am in a worse state than they’.³³

It is clear that many missionaries and other authors did not feel that all ‘heathen’ qualities were innate; rather, it was the circumstance of ignorance that made and kept heathens what they were. This was very much in contrast to the types of assessments often given of ‘heathen’ children, like those discussed in Chapter Two. The Victorian idea of improvement-through-education was certainly a cornerstone of missionary literature, and was often revealed in comparisons between Indian and British students. George Pearce, always ready with an optimistic word, considered the students of his Native Christian Boarding School ‘as intelligent, apt to learn, moral in conduct, and as religiously disposed, as any English children

³² Scudder, *Letters to Sabbath School Children*, 38.

³³ BCM, volume 5, 1831. 249.

of equal circumstances that I have ever met with' and 'not a whit inferior to English children in point of intellect and capability of learning'.³⁴ Pearce's colleague John Wenger boasted that when heathen children 'are taught to read and understand the Bible and other things, they become much better; and indeed I think they are naturally quite as clever as English children'.³⁵

James Penney likewise considered many of the students of the Benevolent Institution 'not unworthy of a British youth'; indeed, reports of the BI regularly proclaimed it 'equal to any institution of a similar nature in England'.³⁶ Many former students, Penney wrote, 'maintained a high character for morality, probity, and virtue' and their employers testified to their 'industry, honesty, and punctuality'. In addition, many of the girls who had left or married had continued with their needlework.³⁷ Though the pupils of the LMS College at Calcutta were not Christians, they were 'very clever and willing to learn'. 'You would be astonished at their quickness and proficiency,' wrote one of the teachers, and 'they would, I think, exceed a great number of the children of Christian Britain, on some points. Take heed lest the educated Hindoo and Mussalman youth of India do not rise up in judgment to condemn you...Ah! that would be sad! sad indeed!'³⁸

This sense of comparison and competition was a regular theme, intended to encourage (or cajole) British children to evaluate their own spiritual state, improve their personal piety, and to give more liberally to missionaries. Such addresses also appealed to the sense of privilege that was being emphasized, and children were constantly urged not to squander their material and spiritual opportunities. Indeed, children's missionary literature often relied on contrasting scenes of 'happy British children' and 'heathen children' to encourage giving. 'You have many teachers', that same missionary in south India wrote, 'but the poor black children in India have very few. You live in a Christian land—they live in a heathen land.'³⁹ An article in the *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* entitled 'Shall I do nothing for the Heathen?' recounted many of the standard images of heathenism in India—infanticide, sati, the absence

³⁴ *MH*, June 1833. *MH*, May 1837.

³⁵ *MH*, February 1844.

³⁶ Although the BI did not feature in the *Herald* between 1830 and 1838 it did continue to operate successfully, but with declining numbers and increasing debt. *Calcutta Christian Observer*, January 1833. In the fall of 1837 the Bishop of Calcutta's school, practically next door to the BI was forced to close, and Penney accepted most of those students, raising his own numbers to almost 200—116 of which were 'regulars'. *MH*, January 1838.

³⁷ *MH*, March 1826.

³⁸ *JMM*, new series volume 5, 1848, 150-54.

³⁹ W. Bailyer, Conchoor. *BCM*, new series volume 2, 1847. 137.

of ‘natural affection’—and presented a ‘filthy village’ whose idolatrous inhabitants had no ‘furniture or clothes or food’ and passed their days with ‘corrupting conversation and debased habits’.⁴⁰ Privilege and duty were the most common and powerful themes underlying such contrasts between Christian and ‘heathen’ children. The development of evangelical identity was predicated in many ways upon the creation of ‘others’, and this was no less so the case as far as children were concerned. John Sugden, a missionary from Bombay soberly noted that children there

are now so taught as to mock and abuse when they are spoken to, and I am sorry to tell you that several times they snatch away tracts and tear them to pieces before us. They are taught to do all kinds of evil, and are ready pupils.

Christian children in Britain, on the other hand, were supposed to be superior to this, and had available to them the opportunities and means to affect change:

I am sure you will wish them to be taught better. They are so in our schools; and when some of you grow to be rich, I hope you will not forget the schools in India. But you must not wait till that time, but do as much good as you can now.⁴¹

New Faces, New Challenges

By 1832 the Baptists’ educational efforts in Calcutta had been well established and were meeting with consistent growth. The Benevolent Institution was flourishing under James Penney’s watchful eye; George Pearce’s Native Christian Boarding School was up and running; and their efforts at ‘female education’ continued to prosper. The constant addition and expansion of new mission schools for both boys and girls, Christian and ‘heathen’, however, presented a number of new challenges, not least the continual need for funding. Many schools were sponsored by and subscribed to by various individuals, groups, and congregations ‘back home’ who naturally expected their interests to be publicly acknowledged on one level or another. Hence we find not only the well-known Salem school, run by Mrs. Rowe at the Baptists’ station at Digah, but also Birmingham, Broadmead, Cheltenham, Glasgow, Leeds (and Leeds II), Maze-Pond, Monmouthshire, Nailsworth,

⁴⁰ *JMM*, volume 14, 1857. 139.

⁴¹ *JMM*, volume 4, 1847. 30-34.

Newcastle and the Potteries, Salisbury, and two Whitchurch schools, all named after their patron congregations.⁴²

Students, too, could be sponsored and ‘named’. For an annual subscription of five pounds or fifty rupees (or even twenty-four dollars) to the Native Female Asylum at Chitpore, individuals or groups were initially ‘entitled to have the child thus supported, called by any name he or she might direct’—some ‘destitute object of their compassion’ to call their very own.⁴³ At J.D. Ellis’ Christian Boarding School the question of names was already decided, as all the boys at the school received ‘Scripture names’ anyway, but for the same subscription, Ellis explained to one interested correspondent in 1834, a student at his boarding school could, however, be sponsored into the native ministry. Depending on his age, it might require four or five years (or more), but ‘intelligence’ on the student could be sent regularly, including correspondence in English.⁴⁴

This type of ‘adoption’ reflected a trend among many publicists and supporters of mission towards a more specific and individual responsibility, which nevertheless had been present from the beginnings of the missions movement. As a letter from a ‘Barnabas’ in the *Baptist Magazine* in 1818 put it, contributors should ‘consider the patronage of the Mission an *individual* duty, to think of it as their own mission, and not as the mission of the few’.⁴⁵ In much the same way as missionaries were often supported and encouraged by their home congregations and acquaintances as well as the Society, many hoped that individuals and small groups could be persuaded to take on some of the financial and moral support for missionaries, schools, students, and other agents of the Christian cause in India.

Something of a shakeup to the Baptists’ schools’ leadership came in 1832. In January Mrs. Jonathan Carey (née Anna Pearce), head of the Broadmead school and consummate

⁴² ‘Quarterly Report of the Female Department of the CBSS, 21 June 1825’, *MH*, June 1826; ‘Tenth Report of the Calcutta Baptist Female School Society’, *MH*, August, September 1832. There were added, in time, New York, Boston, and Philadelphia schools, though many of these schools were consolidated in 1830 into (initially) a pair of centralized schools. This consolidation rendered the schools much more efficient, as attendance became more regular and instruction could last longer.

⁴³ *MH*, September 1827. The re-naming of converts was a matter of continuing debate among missionaries. The Serampore missionaries had rejected the practice as unbiblical as well as impractical—but others made more a point of it in order to emphasize converts’ transformation and ‘new’ identity. Indeed, many converts and communities adopted ‘Christian’ names for themselves for the same reasons. Christian schools, however, presented an interesting context within which the debate took on new depth. See *MH*, February and July 1837 for extensive examples of sponsorship and ‘naming’.

⁴⁴ A girl could be sponsored instead for four pounds a year, and Ellis was sure ‘they will be helpers in the engagements of their husbands’. *MH*, October 1834.

⁴⁵ *BM*, volume 10, 1818, 153. See also Patricia Hill, *The World Their Household*, 62.

fund-raiser, died, and in August George Pearce's wife, Mary, and both of the Penney's were forced to return to England for their health. Hoping to leave in September, they finally departed from Calcutta in November along with 'the motherless family of Mr. J. Carey', arriving at Exmouth the following May.⁴⁶ In the meantime George Pearce resolved to move in with his colleague W.H. Pearce, and as Carapeit Aratoon had also fallen ill his responsibilities drew him back to the Calcutta native churches and the new village stations.⁴⁷ Pearce thus resolved to hand over superintendence of the Chitpore station and the Native Christian Boarding School to J.D. Ellis and his wife, who had arrived in Calcutta a year earlier and had since been making themselves useful in the schools and in preaching.⁴⁸ 'My connection with this institution', Pearce wrote, 'has been one of almost unmixed pleasure'. Indeed, the NCBS was enjoying quite a bit of success and Pearce was keen to share that with its supporters back home, suggesting in one letter that their 'friends in England deserve to hear more of [it]'.⁴⁹

When the Ellis's took over the Native Christian Boarding School in November 1832, it housed 'forty-five young people, the children of Christian parents', who were 'entirely separated from the heathen', and they found it 'particularly gratifying to observe the great difference of moral character presented by *these* children to that of those who reside within the depraving influence of heathen habits and conversation'.⁵⁰ Of those forty-five students, about a third were girls, who, in addition to reading, writing and catechizing, were also occupied with spinning, needlework, and much of the school's cooking, and presented 'a happy contrast...to the ignorance and moral character of the females of India'.⁵¹

As schools came to occupy more of the Baptists' time and attention (and resources) in Calcutta and further abroad, they also naturally came to occupy more of their communications with supporters back home. Mary Pearce's furlough in Britain in 1833 had afforded her many opportunities to describe their work and their goals and to rally more

⁴⁶ *MH*, March 1833; June 1833. While the voyage apparently did their health some good, the Penney's lost their only child on board, adding to the already sad circumstances that had accompanied the trip. Whilst in England, both Mrs. Pearce and the Penney's made the most of their opportunities to publicize their work with the schools and to encourage continued (and increased) support for native education—especially for girls.

⁴⁷ *MH*, June 1833.

⁴⁸ *MH*, May 1832. Ellis had trained as a printer in London before coming to India.

⁴⁹ *MH*, December 1834. He had earlier pointed out J. Williamson's school at Sewry, which was also doing well and deserved to be brought to the attention of those 'friends in England'. *MH*, June 1833.

⁵⁰ Ellis, 20 February 1833. *MH*, November 1833.

⁵¹ *CCO*, October 1833, 510. *MH*, October 1834.

support, as did her husband's furlough the next year. As the previous chapter discussed, the shifting nature of their work had constantly faced George Pearce and his colleagues with the dilemma of the missionaries' role, and the expansion of their educational efforts continued to compound the matter. Though he was a constant advocate of preaching, he nonetheless recognized the value of the mission schools, especially for girls.

While J.D. Ellis had charge of the boys at the Native Christian Boarding School and 'will do the Christian boys great good', Pearce wrote in 1836, his wife supervised the girls, and, he intimated, 'the influence of females we all know the value of'. Under her eye, Pearce hoped, 'many a Christian Hindoo woman, with her family, will have reason to bless God for this institution'.⁵² Here Pearce reminded readers of the ubiquity of such ideology—pointing out that female education was not designed simply to make Indian girls smarter and offer them opportunities, but to diffuse the transforming knowledge of Christ and the Gospel throughout Indian society via their influence. Female asylums and schools not only removed girls from the darkness of heathenism, but 'render them happy and useful in the circles of domestic life'. There the girls often assisted with and performed 'those domestic duties which will devolve on them as wives of native Christians, such as cooking, keeping their houses in order, etc.'⁵³ 'Many...as wives and mothers' proclaimed an essay in the *Missionary Magazine* in 1849, 'are exemplifying the advantages of mental and religious training'.⁵⁴

Literacy and access to the Bible, when combined with the positive influence of European models, were believed to transform not only individual women but their households as well. One spokeswoman for the LMS's Christian Institution at Chinsurah explained that education allowed Indian girls and women not only 'to rise superior to their countrywomen in intelligence, but...be an example to them of that industry and attention to domestic duties, which are so eminently calculated to endear and elevate the female character'.⁵⁵ Just as William Adam had alluded above, Christian education would replace the next generation of

⁵² *MH*, August 1837

⁵³ 'Papers on Missions', *CCO*, June 1847.

⁵⁴ 'Native Female Education', *MM*, September 1849.

⁵⁵ *CCO*, December 1836.

'heathen' wives and mothers; as one essayist in the *Missionary Magazine* later wrote:

'The salutary influence of the Gospel on the *Hindoo Mother*...claims to be regarded as one of the best rewards and strongest inducements to mental and religious culture of the female sex in that country. The animated hopes which the religion of Christ awakens, and the solemn obligations it imposes impart a strength to the maternal affections which could be supplied from no other source: thus transformed, the mother...now nurtures [her child] in her bosom, cares for its temporal well-being, and dedicates it to God'.⁵⁶

An article in the LMS's *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* in 1864 likewise explained 'All you dear children of happy, Christian England, who subscribe for the education of these poor children in dark, heathen India, are doing something towards making the future women of India better wives and better mothers than India has ever seen before'.⁵⁷

The 1827 report from Cutwa that opened this chapter lamented the position of girls who were 'necessarily so little under the care of a Christian lady, and before whose eyes so bad an example is constantly exhibited as a Hindoo family is known to present', but expressed the missionaries' optimism that 'through the instrumentality of well-trained females' Christian education and 'religious and domestic and social habits' would diffuse through the population and be instilled into individuals and families alike.⁵⁸ Reporting on the progress of his wife's school in 1846, George Pearce points out a group of young women who had formed a Bible class under her. All married and members of the local church, their 'appearance and general deportment' were

vastly different...from the heathen women who live around, and even from the Christian women who are illiterate. We have among them no brawls, nor violent ebullitions of passion, so common here. Seldom any quarrels at home, or estrangements from their husbands, nor a case of conjugal infidelity that has come to my knowledge, but an intelligence of appearance, a modesty of behaviour, a gentle, humble, yet cheerful demeanour and aspect which is peculiar to themselves, and for which they are indebted to scriptural instruction.⁵⁹

Mrs. Pearce had always been particularly convinced of the universality of women's influence,

⁵⁶ 'Cuddapah—The Christian Mother', *MM*, February 1849.

⁵⁷ James Dennis, 'The Magic Lantern in India'. *JMM*, volume 21, 1864, 149. Dennis, writing at the very end of the nineteenth century, reflected that 'whatever of dignity and consideration she has received in the modern transformations of non-Christian society has been the result, more or less, of the modifying influence of Christian teaching'. *Christian Missions and Social Progress*. 2 volumes. (New York, 1899), volume 1, 103.

⁵⁸ *MH*, October 1827.

⁵⁹ *MH*, September 1846.

and the positive effects of the Gospel on it:

[W]hen the day shall arrive, that the Hindu female shares the same advantages and becomes equally intelligent with the other sex...her influence will be felt corresponding with female influence in Christian countries, where it is acknowledged to be the nurse of virtue and the fosterer of piety.⁶⁰

Education made women ‘moral and accountable beings’ and produced not only conscientious mothers, but wives who were ‘conversable, mild, and affectionate; discreet, hospitable, yet saving and frugal’.⁶¹ ‘What help would a young Christian receive from an ignorant, idolatrous wife?’ Baptist Noel wondered in 1850: ‘rather what a fearful blight, a fatal chill, would almost inevitably ensue to his principles from so hapless a connection! Where then would be the lovely exhibition of family religion—the uniting influence of domestic piety—the intelligent training of a generation?’⁶² Companionate marriage had long stood as a determinant between Christian and ‘heathen’ families, and education was seen as the key to removing such a barrier.⁶³ Indeed, in many cases it was the wife who initiated such a shift in convert families. A student from Mrs. Sale’s school at Barisal had taught her husband to read. ‘Is this not a new and pleasing feature of Indian life?’ Mrs. Sale wondered. ‘The poor degraded female slave, rather than wife, raised to be the companion of her husband; and he, the lord and tyrant, condescending to acknowledge her as his teacher. In this I am sure you will rejoice with me.’⁶⁴

New Schools, Old Problems

By 1835, Ellis’s new secular English-medium school, the Hindu Youths’ Institution, had over a hundred students and was prospering, but the boarding schools were facing financial difficulties. The NCBS had around fifty boys, and its girls—who had dwindled from a

⁶⁰ *BM*, volume 29, 1837, 374-5.

⁶¹ ‘Female Education’, *Family Magazine*, volume 3, 1801, 144.

⁶² *Female Agency Among the Heathen, As recorded in the History and Correspondence of the Society for Promoting Female Education in the East. (Founded 1834)*’ (London, 1850), 6. M. Mohar Ali devotes an entire chapter of his study to ‘The Convert’s Wife and Children’, and cites one legal case in which the decision for custody of the children fell between ‘an intelligent educated Christian’ and ‘an ignorant, uneducated and degraded Hindu’. ‘In this case’, the *Calcutta Christian Advocate* resolved, ‘need we say who is the more competent to have the management of the children?’ *The Bengali Reaction to Christian Missionary Activities*, Chapter 5, 101-116. See the *Calcutta Christian Advocate*, 29 June 1844, volume 10, 388.

⁶³ See Walsh, *Domesticity in Colonial India*, especially Chapter 3, ‘Rewriting Patriarchy: Companionate Marriage’, 51-62.

⁶⁴ He told her ‘he was ashamed to see his wife reading, while he could not’. *MH*, May 1852.

hundred to about twenty-five (for lack of funds)—had been moved from Chitpore to Shibpore, under Mr. and Mrs. George Pearce, who had recently returned from England.⁶⁵ Notwithstanding Ellis' optimistic assessment, W.H. Pearce reported a few months later that the boarding schools were still desperate for funds, with more than a thousand rupees of debt. There were consequently 'large numbers' of children applying who could not be accepted and trained up, leading Pearce to appeal to beneficent Britons for four or five pounds annually to enable those children to attend and 'perpetuate' those blessings.⁶⁶ Well-trained and responsible native assistants and preachers were hard to come by, Pearce later explained, and hopefully some of the now thirty-seven boys at the NCBS would be able to fill such roles, supported by wives from the girls' boarding school, which aimed at making its students 'fit companions for our educated young men'.⁶⁷ In response, the *Missionary Herald* announced, within a month they had received several subscriptions for five pounds as well as a one-off contribution of a hundred pounds.⁶⁸

In late 1836 Mrs. Pearce wrote that the girls at her Native Female Boarding School, her counterpart to the NCBS, continued to progress in reading and Scripture and were organized into a Sunday school, and 'a spirit of seriousness has appeared...and appears to be spreading'.⁶⁹ Once again citing the 'exalted circumstances' of British women, Mrs. George Pearce begged the Committee 'to commend this seminary to the benevolent attention of Christian friends at home, particularly female Christians', as 'promoting the education and conversion of degraded Hindoo females' was the surest and best means of expressing their gratitude for the high status they enjoyed.

Mrs. Pearce had been a constant advocate for female education, writing from India as well as touring in Britain to appeal for more 'exertions on the part of [our] sisters at home' in supporting the mission schools.⁷⁰ In early 1837 she reported that she had 'so little to be displeased with and to correct' and that the girls' 'general good behaviour' and excellent

⁶⁵ *MH*, August 1835.

⁶⁶ *MH*, October 1835.

⁶⁷ *MH*, December 1835.

⁶⁸ Perhaps with an undertone of 'friendly competition', Pearce was happy to report that the LMS and CMS were busy establishing similar schools in Calcutta, and the American Mission in Ceylon had already enjoyed positive results from their own boarding schools, but the Baptists were still borrowing money just to continue operating. *MH*, December 1835.

⁶⁹ *MH*, May 1837. Mrs. Pearce also thanked the 'ladies at Nailsworth for their gift of "useful and fancy articles" for the girls.'

⁷⁰ *MH*, August 1837.

handiwork did them ‘great credit’, especially as their rigorous schedule left the girls with only an hour and a half each day in which they were ‘not occupied in some useful employment or other’.⁷¹ Later that year the number of girls had increased from thirty-two to forty-one girls, and George Pearce had recently baptized six from among them.⁷² By the spring of 1838 there were thirty-seven girls at Shibpore—several from the villages of Lakhyantipore and Khari—and Mrs. Pearce led a Bible class on Sundays of twenty girls and women, of whom eight more girls were baptized that September.⁷³ Such reports of baptisms offered occasional proofs that missionaries’ efforts were succeeding and were worth continuing, even if they did seem minuscule.

Testimonies from students, too, contributed to this sense of success. A letter from one Mark Dhara, a young man who had attended the NCBS, attached to a report and published in the *Missionary Herald* in 1837 provided a glimpse of the path many students took from the mission stations to mission schools and into Christian life. According to Mark’s story, he was born in Khari and orphaned at a young age, and was then raised by his two uncles, ‘who were fond of worshipping idols’. When the Gospel reached Khari via the villagers at Lakhyantipore and the subsequent visits of the Pearce’s ‘many became Christians’, including Mark’s ‘relations’. He was sent to the NCBS at Chitpore in 1830, and was baptized a few years later by J.D. Ellis. ‘I am thankful to God’, he wrote, ‘that he has separated me from the heathens who worship idols of wood and stone, and put me in such a place, where I may receive much good instruction and many good books’.⁷⁴ Such accounts could not but appeal to those who supported the schools.

In January 1837, Ellis and his family were forced to move from Chitpore across the river to Howrah because of the ‘damp’ and ‘excessive vegetation’, abandoning his day schools and moving the fifty boys of the Native Christian Boarding School with him (and renaming it the Native Christian Institution).⁷⁵ Ellis soon found that both the NCI and the Hindoo Youth’s Institute (soon to be renamed simply the Native Institution) were ‘never more prosperous’. He had hoped for the opportunity to expand them both, but a bout of cholera compelled the Ellis’s to take a river voyage to Saugor Island, and they returned ‘much better’, though their

⁷¹ *MH*, August, October 1837.

⁷² Thomas to W.H. Pearce, *MH*, February, 1838.

⁷³ *MH*, August 1838; March 1839.

⁷⁴ *MH*, February 1837.

⁷⁵ Thomas to W.H. Pearce, *MH*, November 1837; January 1838.

son Mark soon succumbed to the disease himself and died.⁷⁶ For the next year or so things continued to proceed smoothly at Howrah, but by the end of 1839 Ellis began to fear for the financial security of his schools, warning in a letter to the BMS Committee that money problems seemed imminent. ‘Could you remember our lack of funds?’ he entreated the Committee, writing that if ‘friends’ of the mission could only ‘see its abundant promise’, they would certainly rescue the Native Christian Institution from certain dissolution.⁷⁷

It was perhaps with high hopes on Ellis’s part that the NCI’s annual examinations were published just two months later in the *Missionary Herald*.⁷⁸ He eagerly described the students’ wealth of information and their ‘readiness to display it in full’, their ‘seriousness and feeling’ in answering questions, and ‘an earnest wish in all equally to excel’ instead of competing against each other. These were surely signs of an important transformation among ‘heathen’ youth, due to the Institution’s benign influence and rigorous training, and must have encouraged Ellis that his schools would continue to afford such opportunities.

Another encouragement, at least for those at home following the NCI’s progress, was the assessment of Francis Tucker, who had arrived with W.H. Pearce in 1839 and declared it ‘the most interesting object I have seen in India’. Echoing George Pearce’s description of the NCBS a decade earlier, he found that the fifty-four boys of the Institution were ‘kept apart from the corrupt heathen around them, and lodged in neat straw huts’ within the walls of Ellis’ compound, and attended daily family worship besides their studies.⁷⁹ George Parsons, visiting Calcutta from Monghir a year earlier, had similarly noted the ‘contentment and happiness’ of the students and the ‘excellent order’ they maintained, describing their ‘neat bungalows’ that kept them ‘excluded from the sight of heathen example’.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Thomas to W.H. Pearce, *MH*, January 1838; August 1838; September 1839.

⁷⁷ *MH*, May 1840.

⁷⁸ *MH*, July 1840.

⁷⁹ Tucker to Plymouth, April 15, 1840, *MH* August, September 1840. Unfortunately for Tucker, a collegian who had studied at Edinburgh and Stepney, India’s climate proved too much, and he and his wife returned to England in December 1840, after only a year in-country. *MH*, January 1841.

⁸⁰ G. B. Parsons, 7 March 1839, *MH*, July 1839. (George Parsons, a nephew of BMS Secretary John Dyer, died in November 1840, while his brother John was *en route* to India to join the mission.) John Wenger likewise wrote to Sunday school children in Liverpool in 1844 to describe ‘the circumstances of the girls, for whom your contributions are intended’. Thirteen new girls had recently arrived at the Girls’ Boarding School from the village stations, including Lakhypore and Khari, where they had lived in mud or thatch huts and wore little or no clothing, but the grounds of the school were enclosed by a large wall, and there the girls slept inside ‘pukka’ buildings (on planks with mats, instead of beds with sheets), and took their meals together (eating with ‘Adam’s utensils’—their fingers—instead of forks and spoons). In the villages, Wenger explained, the girls were ‘married generally by eight or nine’ and ‘do not become the friends of their husbands, but only their slaves. They are often beaten and ill-treated, and live in all manner of wickedness’. *MH*, February 1844.

By 1840 the Native Institution, Ellis's day school 'for the common street children', was growing, and thanks to a timely gift from 'a friend in England' of a thousand pounds, construction was underway on a new school-room measuring ninety by forty feet, which would hold four hundred students, with a verandah all around and two smaller flanking rooms. The continued demands of running the two schools and the Lal Bazaar Church were constantly wearing on Ellis, however, and Tucker noted that he was 'rapidly wearing himself out in the midst of his busy occupations'. James Thomas concurred, writing at the end of 1840 that the Native Christian Institution 'requires all the time and energies of Mr. Ellis'. While Ellis was occupied with his own two schools, Mrs. Pearce had left the girls' boarding school in the hands of Mrs. Penney and returned to England for her health; Mrs. Penney, however, was 'anxious to relinquish it'. The other missionaries were unsure of finding 'a suitable successor', so out of desperation they turned to Ellis, suggesting that he and his wife could move to Shibpore and take on the girls' school. This was flatly rejected, and Mrs. Penney was resigned to remain there 'a little longer'.⁸¹

In April 1840 the BMS finally advertised for a new superintendent for the Benevolent Institution to replace James Penney—who had died more than a year before—and soon secured W. W. Evans, a former teacher and clerk from London, who arrived in November that year.⁸² Besides the Benevolent Institution, Evans also took over the pastorate of Lal Bazaar Baptist Church from J.D. Ellis, and though he represented 'an unspeakable acquisition to the Mission', Thomas was afraid he would quickly 'sink under the weight' without someone else to take on some of his 'exceedingly onerous' duties.⁸³ That someone, fortunately, had appeared at the end of January 1841, in the person of Mr. George Small (and his wife), though he would not remain at Evans' disposal for very long.⁸⁴ Within a few months Evans had settled in at the Benevolent Institution, reporting in April that its numbers had quickly increased to 330 boys and 110 girls, with eight teachers and assistants in addition

⁸¹ *MH*, March 1841. By this time the Native Christian Institution had sixty students, the Native Institution between two and three hundred, and the Female Boarding School a meagre fifteen. *MH*, May 1841.

⁸² Penney had died on 2 February 1839, the day after his 48th birthday, after twenty-two years as a missionary in Calcutta, leaving behind his second wife (the daughter of Felix Carey) and three young children. *MH*, May 1839.

⁸³ Thomas, 13 Feb 1841, *MH*, May 1841.

⁸⁴ *MH*, July 1841. Small, who arrived in January 1841, had trained for the ministry at the University of Edinburgh and at the Baptist seminary at Bristol. He was notably the first BMS missionary to India with an M.A.

to himself and his wife.⁸⁵ The only lingering difficulty remained ‘the state of funds’, and in a letter of 4 July to the BMS Committee Evans admitted that he was moreover relying on BI funds and contributions from his congregation for his salary, thus drawing one hundred rupees less per month from the Society’s coffers.⁸⁶

By early 1841 the ‘chronic lung disease’ that had dogged Ellis his entire time in India, exacerbated by the demands of the schools and the ‘Bengali air’, had brought him low. After his ailing wife and their children returned to England in March, his condition worsened and Ellis moved in with the Smalls, who took charge of the Native Institution. With his health steadily declining, he pleaded the ‘immediate necessity’ of a new missionary to take up his duties, and reminded the Committee that the boarding school still stood 1500 rupees in debt.⁸⁷ It was with this hanging over his head that Ellis departed for England on 2 July. An exasperated Thomas, in a letter to the Committee the same day, pointed out that despite his condition, Ellis was anxious enough about the circumstances of the mission—and the finances—that he felt it necessary to secure a medical certificate to legitimate his journey!⁸⁸ In addition, Ellis’ removal had left no full time missionary at the Native Institution, nor a single ‘European master’ or separate Christian class. Its only steady source of outside income was from the Calcutta Ladies’ Auxiliary Missionary Society, though it was apparently not being put to its intended use.⁸⁹ The Smalls had taken over the Native Christian Institution, but Small had immediately taken a serious fever, leaving the other Calcutta missionaries in desperate need of pastors and teachers to supplement their numbers and forward their work. Thomas urged the BMS Committee to ‘think of us and see if something cannot be done’.⁹⁰

In September 1841, George Pearce finally returned to Calcutta and immediately assumed the superintendence of the NCI, leaving the Native Institution in Small’s hands.⁹¹ Despite his experience, and perhaps in connection with his other duties, Pearce found the task an

⁸⁵ Evans, 7 April 1841, *MH*, September 1841.

⁸⁶ Evans, 4 July 1841, *MH*, December 1841. Evans was disappointed, too, to be writing only on topics of ‘business’ rather than for leisure, of which he was quick to point out he had none. His one request on that count was that they might condescend to send more—and apparently better—letters of their own, as the ‘brevity’ of the last batches had been disturbing his colleagues, leading them to ‘complain much’.

⁸⁷ Ellis, 7 April 1841, *MH*, September 1841.

⁸⁸ Thomas, 2 July 1841, *MH*, October 1841.

⁸⁹ Report IV, ‘Schools’, by Lewis, Trafford, Thomas, Sampson and Denham. *Minutes and Reports of a Conference of the Baptist Missionaries of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1856), 47-8. See *MH*, September, October 1839.

⁹⁰ Thomas, 2 July 1841, *MH*, October 1841.

⁹¹ *MH*, January 1842.

'arduous' one, as did his wife, on whom fell 'all the domestic duties of the school'. Though he found things generally satisfactory, the 'religious character' of the boys was low and he was forced to expel two for 'immoral conduct'.⁹² By the new year, Wenger's annual report outlined, the NCI still had fifty-two students, of which five were in the theological class, preparing for the ministry. The trouble with the SPG missionaries in the southern districts, from which the school drew many of its students, had reduced its numbers somewhat as parents had 'gone over' to the other mission, and the fifteen girls in the 'female department' (which had been moved to Kalinga) had dwindled to seven.⁹³ Mrs. Wenger still oversaw the girls at Kalinga, few as they were. In January of 1842 she had nine students, six who could already read well, one fairly, and two who were just beginning. They began their day with morning worship with Mrs. Wenger and after breakfast began their lessons—New Testament, history and geography—with the native teacher. After a lunch hour from twelve to one, they spent an hour and a half with Mrs. Wenger at needlework, then another hour and a half 'writing and ciphering'. After dinner they did 'homework' with the native teacher, who ended the day with evening worship.⁹⁴

The Native Institution, now referred to by Small as the Native *Heathen* Institution in order to more clearly distinguish it from the Native *Christian* Institution, had re-opened in January. This change in nomenclature (though short-lived) reflected changes at the school as well. Though the school was intended to provide a basic education to 'indigent' Calcutta children, Small had insisted on better supervision and instruction, and Christian teachers, graduates of the NCI, had replaced all the 'heathen' ones. This caused a row among students and parents alike, and many of the boys were withdrawn. One teacher, too, took his entire class with him (though most returned directly).⁹⁵ The significance of the label 'heathen' was surely not lost on them, and certainly called into question the character and quality of the teachers themselves, and the new staff of Christian teachers introduced a more overtly missionary character to the curriculum and instruction. More than two hundred students remained, however, and the missionaries were content that the new teachers were better anyway.

⁹² G. Pearce, 15 November 1841, *MH*, February 1842.

⁹³ Mrs. Penney had left the 'female department' in the hands of Mrs. Wenger and gone to Serampore the previous November.

⁹⁴ Mrs. J. Parsons, Patna Native Female Orphan Refuge, *MH* January 1845. Besides literacy and numeracy the girls learnt needlework and spinning, as well as 'all kinds of native domestic work'.

⁹⁵ Small was particularly adamant about distinguishing between the two schools in his August letter to the Committee (see below).

Though supplemented by the efforts of the Ladies' Auxiliary, the school's funds still fell short of its expenses, though they were not as desperate as they had been not long before.⁹⁶ The Benevolent Institution, too, was 'flourishing', especially its Female Department, and in response, perhaps, to the inflated expectations of some members of the BMS Committee and the public, Wenger took the opportunity to reiterate the school's purpose. It was 'not an academical establishment, intended to produce learned scholars', he reminded them, but served only 'to provide poor young people with that amount of knowledge which shall enable them to become useful members of society'.⁹⁷

Nine months after reopening in its new facility, the Native Institution was averaging two hundred students in daily attendance, but had increased its debt to two thousand rupees. The contributions from the Ladies' Association were proving insufficient, and two teachers had already been let go, leaving Small to echo his predecessors in pleading for more funds from benefactors in England.⁹⁸ In the summer, however, in an addendum to John Wenger's January report, Small offered some 'not altogether pleasing intelligence about the school in general'. The two hundred daily students had lately dwindled to eighty-two, further affecting the school's dire financial situation, which Small seemed convinced the public did not fully appreciate. Indeed, he offered, the new Christian teachers from the NCI received a lower salary than their 'heathen' predecessors had, and no school in Calcutta of their size functioned on such low expenses. Moreover, the Native Institution had more Christian teachers than any other school of its kind, who were actively bringing the Gospel to their students rather than simply imparting a secular education, and this was certainly worthy of more interest and support from dedicated Christians at home.⁹⁹ In August a somewhat meeker Small wrote directly to the Committee, explaining some of his own activities in connection with the NI and expressing his hope that the reports he had submitted thus far would 'be made *use of* and *useful*' in generating interest in its needs.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ '23rd Annual Report on the Mission', *MH*, May 1842. See also 'Addenda to the 23rd Report', *MH*, October 1842.

⁹⁷ '23rd Annual Report on the Mission', *MH*, May 1842.

⁹⁸ *MH*, August 1842.

⁹⁹ *MH*, October 1842.

¹⁰⁰ Small to Committee, August 1842, *MH*, December 1842. Small lamented that the NI was 'often confounded with the NCI' and begged them to make clear the distinction between the two to the people at home. George Pearce would make a similar statement in 1851 (after changing the schools' names *again!*).

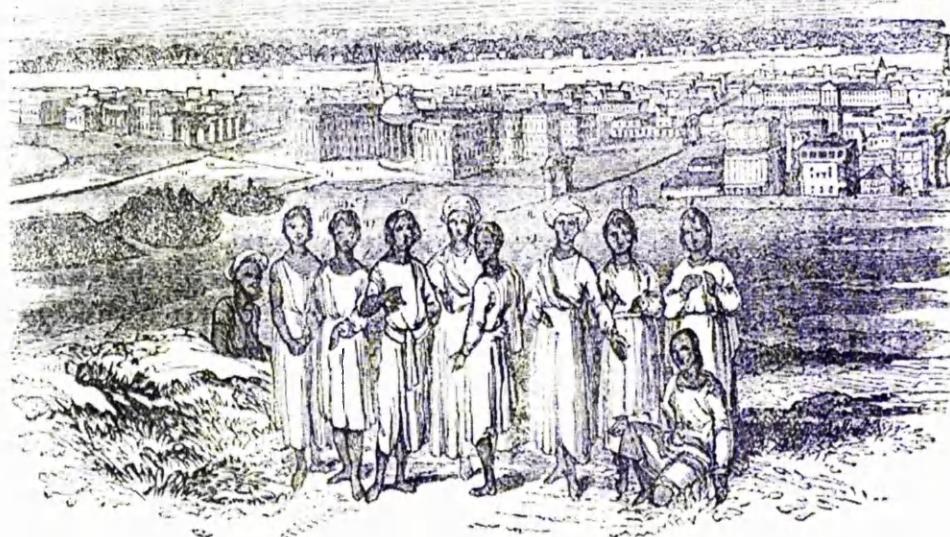


Figure 19—‘The Native Youth of India Pleading

with the Church for Christian Instruction’

Missionary Magazine, December 1847.

Meanwhile, when the students of the Native Christian Institution returned from their vacation, George Pearce took the opportunity to thank the ‘English friends’ of the school for their ‘liberal support’, though a considerable debt remained and the number of students had fallen. After describing the contributions of Ellis, Small, Yates and Wenger in training up the boys of his theology class, Pearce closed with a challenge: ‘Will the friends of native Christians allow it that the education of their offspring should be neglected? We trust not’.¹⁰¹ Indeed, plates like the one above featuring Indian students against a backdrop of Calcutta ‘pleading’ with home readers, provided yet another reinforcement of the imagery and themes that underscored missionaries’ accounts of the schools and their educational work.

By late 1842 Evans was increasingly busy at the Benevolent Institution, which had become ‘full and prosperous’, and he had even suggested that ‘subscribers and friends’ visit the BI to see for themselves. It had grown to include almost four hundred students and by the annual examination in December another sixty boys had been added to its number.¹⁰² Moreover, while the Institution had regularly faced serious financial difficulties, its ‘oppressive debt’ had been reduced to forty-nine rupees.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ *MH*, August 1842.

¹⁰² As was the general practice, the examination of the BI was a rather ecumenical affair, including missionaries of all denominations from around Calcutta. James Thomas was pleased to reflect that the Evans’ had worked ‘very hard’ to bring the school to its current state and have it produce such pleasing results as the examination provided. *MH*, January, March 1843.

¹⁰³ The Benevolent Institution had been a pet-project of William Carey’s in its early years, and in 1826 he was forced to appeal to the government for help in maintaining the school, for which he received a ‘generous’ grant.

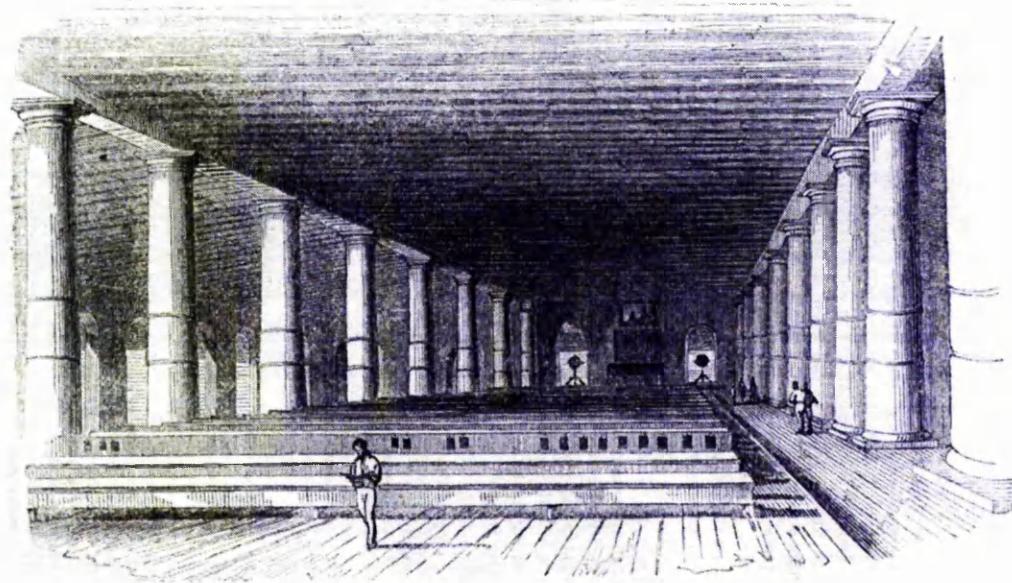


Figure 18—Interior of the Benevolent Institution, Calcutta
MH, August 1842.

That year ‘a correspondent in Liverpool’ provided a detailed account of how his Sunday school students exceeded all expectations in their campaign to collect funds to support a child at the Benevolent Institution.¹⁰⁴ He had been debating ‘the expediency of appealing to *poor* children for money’ when two pieces from a Mr. Thompson came out in print—an ‘Address to Teachers’ and a letter ‘to the children of Great Britain, on behalf of missions’—that persuaded him to proceed. He and the other Sunday school teachers breached the subject with the students, then sent each home with a copy of Thompson’s letter ‘for the two-fold purpose of interesting the children more effectively, and those to whom they would look for money.’ The following Sunday ‘it was proposed that an orphan or destitute heathen girl should be boarded and educated in the Benevolent Institution’, which would cost four pounds annually.

Finally settling on ‘two poor girls in India’ the teachers asked every Sunday thereafter for contributions and, mindful of the need to maintain the students’ interest and zeal in the project, distributed ‘suitable missionary publications among them’, gave regular addresses on

Smith, *Life of William Carey*, 14. The issue of ‘grants-in-aid’ to mission schools was much debated as the government became more liberal in its approach to funding religious institutions of all kind. As I discuss in the next chapter, the attempts in 1855 by the Baptist missionaries throughout India to resolve the matter were not entirely successful.

¹⁰⁴ BM, volume 34, 1842, 270.

the subject, read ‘extracts from such books as *What Have I to do with Missions?*¹⁰⁵, *Missionary Records*, etc.’, and held ‘an annual tea-party’. As a result, the teachers ‘sold monthly about twenty-five *Repositories* and *Heralds* amongst the boys only, who average about sixty in number’, and from all of the students together (‘about 160’) collected eight pounds in seven months. At that rate, the correspondent claimed, we may board and educate three instead of one, as at first proposed’, as it was ‘much better to propose a little and accomplish more, than to propose too much, and damp youthful ardour with the cheerless din of failure’.¹⁰⁶ Even though fund-raising and collecting was at the core of children’s expected role in the missionary enterprise, juvenile missionary literature also relied on a balance of emotional appeal and imagery, particularly to maintain children’s interest and dedication.

‘We may have read—but the reality!’

This was among W. Denham’s first impressions on arriving at Calcutta in July of 1843, and is very telling about the ways in which missionary ‘intelligence’ had been narrated and received at home in Britain, especially by those who had been encouraged to head to India themselves.¹⁰⁷ Calcutta’s size, noise, and—of course—its teeming population of idolaters were nearly overwhelming to Denham, but he seemed to find a respite on arriving at the missionary compound at Intally, which struck him as ‘beautiful’. Two factors contributed to this: its physical beauty as a ‘European residence’, embodied in its whitewashed walls, orderly layout, and beautiful gardens; and the sight of natives in white muslin dress with ‘intelligent countenances’ meeting him at the gates—‘Christian Hindoos!’ Denham exclaimed.¹⁰⁸ He (and his wife) enjoyed the ‘beauty’ of the Intally station for another year,

¹⁰⁵ ‘*Exhibiting the Miseries and Degradation of the Heathen Nations, and the Duty of all to Support Christian Missions*’, by the Rev. T. Timpson (London, 1841). See EM, new series volume 19, 1841, 527. This little booklet, consisting of a dialogue between two children and their mother on the subjects of Indian missions, clearly illustrated the ‘Three P’s’: (6-7)—Mary: ‘I should like you to give us all the information you can about the Heathen, and about the good which has been done by the Missionaries, that I may be able to persuade some who can afford it to give me their subscriptions and donations for the Missionary Society’; (41)—Mary: ‘These dreadful accounts are almost too shocking to hear! [T]hey make me unhappy in thinking of them!’

¹⁰⁶ This perhaps assumes that the children themselves had no idea how much was actually being collected, but this is most likely not the case, as the children were ‘presented with the quarterly papers on which their contributions are acknowledged’, which the correspondent was ‘pleased to find...better adapted to...youthful subscribers’.

¹⁰⁷ Denham, 8 August 1843, *MH*, November 1844. Denham had originally trained for the Roman Catholic priesthood, but had become a Baptist minister and teacher some years before deciding to become a missionary.

¹⁰⁸ Denham to a friend, 8 August 1844, *MH*, November 1844.

working in the Christian Institution and instructing the theology class, before finally removing to Serampore to head up the College.¹⁰⁹

That year, 1844, had proved to be a difficult year for the schools at Calcutta, however. The ‘female department’ of the Native Christian Institution closed in April because of low attendance, but the Pearce’s entertained the prospect that it would soon reopen. The Native Institution, too, closed for a while for want of funding, and Small thought he might relocate to Benares to begin a new school. George Pearce was finally able to reopen the school with a grant from the government, and nearly ninety students were examined at the end of the year, but the dynamics of the Calcutta mission schools were soon to change even further.¹¹⁰

In early 1845, after long lobbying the BMS for additional missionaries, Evans wrote to the Committee expressing a desire to be transferred somewhere up-country, away from Calcutta. His close friends W.H. Pearce and William Yates had died, his other friend Denham had relocated to Serampore, and Evans was feeling ‘depressed’.¹¹¹ The Committee refused his request, citing the continued needs of the BI, which was ‘still prosperous and well-supported’, but this was to be of little significance.¹¹² On 3 October 1845 Mrs. Evans died, leading John Wenger to immediately write to the Committee to explain that Mr. Evans could not stay on at the BI, though it may have been ‘profitable’ to the school, and that it would be a difficult task indeed to replace him. Like Ellis before him, Evans’ own bad health was only compounded by his grief, and he was left unsure of what to do. Mrs. Evans’ death was an ‘incalculable loss’ to the BI and the mission—they could ‘ill-afford to spare her’ and did not know what to say about ‘her broken-hearted husband’ but that he should perhaps just return to England.

Wenger was left in sole charge of the Benevolent Institution and the deeds were handed over to a conveyancer to be renewed in his name, with John Denham and John Clark

¹⁰⁹ Denham, 15 October 1844, *MH*, January 1845; October 1845.

¹¹⁰ *MH*, February, May 1845.

¹¹¹ W. Yates died in May 1845, leaving his wife a widow twice over. Within a year of W.H. Pearce’s death, in May 1841, his widow had married Yates in Calcutta, and ‘by amalgamation, the wrecks of two families have been absorbed, and one entire family is the result’, especially as they were the only two remaining from the ‘original’ ‘Junior Brethren’ at Calcutta. Thomas, Calcutta, 8 May 1841, *MH*, September 1841. As Mrs. Yates had spent her entire adult life there, and her children were all already grown, she determined to remain in India, and moved into the Pearce home, joining them and their niece, a Miss Parker, ‘form[ing] a nice family all together’. *MH*, March 1846. ‘Send help!’ Thomas wrote in October 1845, reminding the Committee (and the readers of the *Herald*) that he had himself ‘buried two wives’. *MH*, January 1846.

¹¹² *MH*, November 1845. Evans was particularly gratified with the ‘kind and affectionate’ response he received from the Committee, though communications between the Committee and Calcutta would soon become increasingly terse and harsh as financial issues between them intensified. See below, Chapter Six.

Marshman as co-trustees, but the prospects for the school remained ‘doubly uncertain’.¹¹³ A month later Evans was still ‘low’ but continued at the school, where J.C. Page had joined him to help out. Wenger still wondered whether Evans would be able to return to England, but within a fortnight he announced that passage had been secured and that the captain had graciously offered Evans his own cabin for the voyage. In the meantime new arrangements for the BI still had to be made and funds secured if it was to remain ‘prosperous and well-funded’, especially, Wenger quipped, as none of the brethren were particularly ‘good beggars’.¹¹⁴

Despite the losses of Mr. and Mrs. Evans the Benevolent Institution continued to operate, with two hundred boys and seventy girls in early 1846.¹¹⁵ George Pearce had also recently welcomed a new teacher to the Native Institution, a Mr. Chill, who was supported by the ‘parent society’ rather than the funds of the school, and together they had ninety regular students. Things at the Native Christian School were ‘gratifying’, and two young men from the theology class had recently been ordained. Mrs. Pearce’s plans to re-open the girls’ boarding school had gone ahead, and by June 1846 there were already twenty girls in residence. Mrs. Pearce was assisted by two of her nieces, Misses Parker and Easton, and together they also led a Bible class for the older girls and some local women, leading George Pearce to expect that with the ladies’ ‘discreet management and constant solicitude and vigilance they will carry their accomplishments to their villages and homes’. Money still remained a serious issue, prompting him to remind readers at home that ‘contributions will be acceptable, and are very much needed’.¹¹⁶

Now that several of the Calcutta brethren had died or left, and as the attention of the BMS and its supporters had been shifted to newer stations, and away from India to the West Indies and Africa, less and less information on the Calcutta mission and its schools was published in the *Herald*. The mission’s annual report for 1846 showed a slight decline in attendance at the

¹¹³ Wenger, 6 October 1845; Thomas, 7 October 1845, *MH*, January 1846.

¹¹⁴ Wenger, 7, 18 November 1845, *MH*, February 1846. The only exception might be George and W.H. Pearce, who had been consummate publicists and advocates of the mission on their sabbaticals in England.

¹¹⁵ These were described as ‘indigent Christian children’, and their education may have provided an important publicity issue much like the narrations of their annual exams in which they all performed so well!

¹¹⁶ *MH*, May 1846. Altogether, this letter stated, the Calcutta missionaries maintained eighteen day schools in the city, serving over a thousand children. An official ‘statement of schools’ from the BMS, published a few months later, numbered its schools in India at sixty-five, most of which were locally supported. In the previous year, twenty-nine pounds had been received for the Intally schools, thirty-eight pounds for ‘female education’, and thirty-eight for ‘general use’. Perhaps it was the assumption that those schools were locally funded that made people hesitant to give—or seem so. *MH*, August 1846.

Benevolent Institution, with only 160 boys and sixty girls. For the first time in several years, the school boasted a surplus of a thousand rupees, but Wenger was quick to note that all of that was necessary for repairs to the building. The Native Institution, now also referred to simply as the ‘Mission School’, had also fallen to about eighty students, ‘variable in character’, and was being supported largely by the Ladies’ Association of the Circular Road Chapel. Four of the theology students at the Native Christian Institution had taken various posts with the mission, but a lack of funds had reduced the number of boarders considerably, leaving Wenger to lament that ‘things look bad for now’. Attendance at the girls’ boarding school, however, remained consistent, and the year ended with twenty-five girls.¹¹⁷

The next year another incident at the girls’ boarding school provided excellent material for the *Herald*. That summer, the Pearce’s niece, Miss Easton, who had been teaching a little at the school, declared her intention to be baptized, and a number of the girls presently followed suit. In a suitably impressive scene, they were all baptized together in August 1848. Thus readers were reminded not only of the influence of teachers and missionaries, but of religious families on their own members, and the impression of their influences on those around them.¹¹⁸

By 1850 the boys’ and girls’ boarding schools had become more important than the ‘English school’ (for ‘heathen’ youth), especially for the children of the thousand-strong Christian community in and around Calcutta, a few of whom might otherwise only receive a little schooling at their own villages. George Pearce cited a number of notable former students, some of whom had gone on to work for the mission press, become preachers or teachers, gone into professions, or simply returned to their villages as farmers. ‘At present’, Pearce explained, ‘the school is low for want of funds’ and could not accept any more students. He hoped that a positive report would encourage folk at home to help out. Though so far everything that had been sent out had gone to the CBS, the English school also needed funds, and Pearce reminded readers to clearly designate their monies for either ‘the Intally Mission School’ or ‘the Intally Christian Boarding School’.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ *MH*, May 1847. In the fall, George Pearce wrote that a new teacher, a Miss Padre, and his niece Miss Easton were making good progress with the girls, putting the school in ‘an interesting state’. *MH*, December 1847.

¹¹⁸ *MH*, December 1848.

¹¹⁹ *MH*, July 1851.

In August of 1852 Mr. and Mrs. Pearce returned to England once again. As before, John Wenger took over the village stations from Mr. Pearce, though the newly arrived Francis Supper would manage them as much as possible. T.B. Lewis, who had transferred from Ceylon in 1847, was to assume Pearce's duties at Intally, including the schools. Though both the Pearce's expressed firm expectations of coming back to India, John Wenger frankly admitted, 'I hardly expect that, shattered as their constitutions are'. With the prolific Pearce already making the rounds in England, relatively little news from Calcutta reached the pages of the *Herald* (especially as it had lately been reduced to printing excerpts from its local counterpart, the *Calcutta Missionary Herald*), and for the next two years occasional tabular reports of the missions took the place of updates from the schools and stations.¹²⁰

The Pearce's returned in early 1855, and immediately instituted some changes in the Calcutta mission and its schools. They established a Native Christian Female Boarding School at Alipore with the help of a Miss Packer, and soon had thirty students.¹²¹ Lewis was to remain at Intally and oversee the Native Christian Institution with its one hundred boys, and Wenger was to take on the superintendence of Kalinga. The newest missionary, a Mr. Sampson, who came with Pearce, would be situated at Dum Dum and would cover north Calcutta.¹²²

It was only a month later, in the November *Herald*, that the plans for a conference of all the Baptist missionaries in Bengal were published, and it was this conference that closes out the period. In the next chapter I discuss how this conference represented not only the culmination of decades of labour, but also shifting attitudes toward the nature of the India mission. It therefore also served as a watershed in the ways the Bengal missionaries viewed their own roles and their relationship to the 'parent society' and their supporters at home.

¹²⁰ See *MH*, November 1852 for a table of protestant missionaries in India; another in *MH*, February 1853 lists twenty-two BMS missionaries in Bengal, 3500 native Christians—of whom one thousand were church members—and forty-two schools with over 1750 students.

¹²¹ Miss Packer's expenses and salaries were paid by the Society for the Promotion of Female Education in the East, but the expenses of the school itself were expected to run upwards of a hundred pounds a year, and Pearce and his colleagues were careful to assure contributors 'of our strictest economy'. The girls themselves, like at the other schools, could each be sponsored for three pounds a year. *MH*, August 1854; February 1856.

¹²² *MH*, April 1855. Sampson expressed similar first impressions as William Denham had done over ten years earlier on arriving at Calcutta, and knew for certain that he was in a 'heathen land' because of the 'wretchedness and degradation' around him. 'Much as I had thought of heathenism', he wrote, 'I had never pictured to myself such scenes as I witnessed...coming up this river.' Like Denham, too, he found a refuge at Intally with the Pearce's before making his way up to his new station and new life. *MH*, October 1855.

Conclusions

The Baptists' experiences with their schools in and around Calcutta provide yet another example of the ways their 'missionary intelligence' integrated both narrative and rhetoric to achieve a variety of ends. Just like the narratives of the Serampore mission and the village stations, the Baptists' reports, letters, and journals put together provide a comprehensive view of the attitudes, strategies, and challenges the missionaries faced on the ground and in relating to the Society and their supporters.

The issue of education stood alongside evangelization and native agency at the forefront of missionaries' debates over purpose and methodology, and their schools certainly paralleled the 'Christian villages' in terms of purpose and practicality. Reports of the schools provided glimpses into the lives of the students as well as their teachers, and constructed serialized narratives that readers at home could engage with and follow with sustained interest. Christian schools like the Benevolent Institution and the various day-schools promoted the kind of broad-based 'improvement' many missionaries considered the foundation of Christianity's future success in India. Boarding schools especially aimed to segregate 'Christian' from 'heathen' and provide an appropriately sheltered and structured environment in which young Christians—future leaders of the Indian church—could be raised up and effectively trained. Despite the occasional report and the near-proverbial corrupt nature of Indian children built up in contemporary literature, the hallmarks of harmony and order, discipline and industry, found at the schools were regularly highlighted. Ideas of 'appropriate' domestic and vocational expectations could be refined and put into practice, and 'progress' in all areas constantly evaluated. The 'constant supervision' that George Pearce and his colleagues had lamented lacking in the village stations and congregations was more easily maintained and effected in the schools, and the apparent benefits were thus more readily observed—and reported with pleasure.

But the schools also provided yet another vantage point for drawing attention to missions in Bengal and appealing for funds. Perhaps the stories of individual children and students were more easily conceived of and understood by readers at home, and sounded less exotic and vague than entire villages and congregations in the far-flung 'dark places of the earth'.

Texts, tracts, and hymns familiar to readers at home made their way into missionaries' classrooms in India and back into their letters and reports, further emphasizing similarities despite any lingering 'heathen' differences. Back in Britain, education—especially 'female education'—maintained its popularity as a rallying point for evangelicals and philanthropists, and the strategy of appealing to women and children as separate and discreet sources of income for the BMS and the missions found ample audiences.

Indeed, the introduction of material and appeals directed solely at juvenile audiences went hand in hand with an emphasis on education both in the mission schools and in Sunday Schools. The contrast between the 'darkness' of 'heathen' lands and the blessings of Christian Britain was utilized by missionaries and home authors alike to introduce a life-long awareness of (and hopefully attachment to) the missionary cause. The formula of *pity*, *pence*, and *participation*, whereby readers of 'missionary intelligence' were to connect with their subjects emotionally, financially, and practically, was effectively applied throughout the early nineteenth century to Sunday school children and other youthful subscribers. The same themes that had contributed to this formula all along—'heathen' and 'Christian' attributes, communities defined and distinguished by them, and the envisioned roles the students (especially girls and women) would play in the near future—were clearly present in missionaries' narratives of the schools.

Chapter Six: The Calcutta Conferences of 1855

*'We wish the supporters of our mission would think more of India, but we cannot stem the mighty current of public opinion'.*¹

Shifting Priorities?

At the outset of this study I stressed the idea that fund-raising, while not the exclusive role of missionary literature, was nevertheless central to both its purpose and message. The triple expectations of *pity*, *pence*, and *participation* were together means of involving the British public with the ongoing realities of the mission field, especially the needs that they could affect. The second quarter of the nineteenth century had been a busy one for the Baptists in Bengal. Several significant regions had been 'opened up' to the Gospel: Christian communities, churches, and stations had been established and maintained in Jessore, the Sundarbans, and Barisal. In Calcutta the major schools had been expanded and a large number of others built and operated. Christianity, it seemed, was on the cusp of sweeping Bengal and the rest of India.

Many, however, were not so optimistic about the future of the India mission itself. As the decades progressed, the generation who had seen (and shouldered) the emergence of the mission movement were replaced by those who had been aware of it all their lives. They had been confronted with imagery of the 'heathen' since childhood, and despite a spate of revivals in the 1830s simply lacked the enthusiasm their predecessors had. Even then, with new mission stations and fields opening up around the world and a broader variety and volume of missionary literature, the Baptist Missionary Society was suffering from a paucity of funds.

By the early 1840s, they had turned to selling the *Missionary Herald* instead of distributing it *gratis*, and even the 'low' price of a penny did not offset the cost of printing, much less generate any profit.² Likewise, when an 1855 investigation by the

¹ W. Robinson, 'An Appeal on Behalf of the Baptist Mission in India', *MH*, November 1847.

² *MH*, August 1841. Well into the next year various appeals appeared in the pages of the *Herald* and the *Baptist Magazine* urging liberality and increased efforts to broaden the magazines' circulation. See *BM*, volume 34, 1842, 84; 142.

BMS into the *JMH*'s popularity revealed a mediocre reception, they offered 'some new improvements in the new year' like a coloured wrapper and more illustrations. What more could readers expect for a mere half-penny, the editor of the *Baptist Magazine* wondered, pointing out that the Society had actually been steadily losing money on the magazine.³ Even in India, the demand for 'missionary intelligence' which had seen the publication of collections of circular letters as well as journals like the *Friend of India* and the *Calcutta Christian Observer* and *Calcutta Christian Advocate*, led to the introduction of the *Oriental Baptist* in late 1847. Indeed, such 'local' journals became the primary outlet for publishing the correspondence and reports of Baptist missionaries in India (at least, in Bengal), and often became themselves the sources from which domestic journals like the *Herald* would then excerpt their news and 'intelligence'.

This shift in publications was one way to address waning resources—in terms of both money and manpower—but there was also a discernable shift in tone by missionaries themselves, who were certainly more acutely aware of and directly affected by such difficulties. As Frederick Downs points out, 'The basic premise of missionary narratives and rhetoric was that no matter how difficult the challenge...conditions were not so bad that they could not be changed by sending more missionaries and giving more money to support their work', and there was certainly a distinct element of this in the Calcutta Baptists' writings.⁴ But they were not averse to a more direct approach when suggestions and reminders fell short. Always rather thin on the ground, especially as their itinerations and stations had incorporated such wide areas, they were constantly in need of additional hands. In late 1845 James Thomas wondered 'What are the young men at Bristol, Horton, and Stepney doing? Are they afraid of sickness and death? Cannot God take care of their health in India as well as in England?'⁵ Or was it that the Society's attentions had been drawn away from India, to the Caribbean and Africa? It certainly seemed like the latter.

³ *MH*, December 1855.

⁴ *Christianity in North-East India*, 2. George Pearce wrote that 'Other denominations at home seem to be alive to the importance of India as a field for Christian missions, and year after year we see many come to erect the banner of the cross; but Baptist Christians seem to intimate, by not sending any more to the field, that there are enough in it already, and those who are in it are immortal'. *MH*, May 1837.

⁵ Thomas, 7 October 1845, *MH*, January 1846.

Comparisons between the mission fields had been bandied about for years as large-scale conversions had swept Jamaica and the West Indies, and Thomas was quick to point out that periodicals like the *Herald* kept those comparisons popular, which was neither accurate nor helpful. ‘Do try to correct the erroneous views which appear to be gaining regarding the India mission’, he admonished the editors.⁶ William Robinson, of Dacca, cut right to the heart of the matter in a long and scathing letter to the mission’s erstwhile supporters in Britain:

You say, dear friends, that letters from India are not interesting; that they all contain nearly the same matter, which has now become so stale as to excite little or no attention; And this is the reason, I suppose, that so few of our letters are laid before the public. Those on whom it devolves to publish the letters of missionaries, must of course consult the public taste, and give what will be considered interesting matter; if they do not they fear they will lose your subscriptions.⁷

Missionaries in India were absolutely aware of the role publications played in their continued support, but were becoming increasingly aware of the fickle nature of ‘the public taste’ and consciousness. The formula of *pity*, *pence*, and *participation* could only carry so far: tropes of the heathen would only excite readers’ imagination and sympathy until something more interesting came along, and the relatively slow returns on their triple ‘investments’ simply would not do forever. It was clear, Robinson continued, ‘that those who will not read [missionaries’] letters, and who feel no interest in their labours. are not the persons on whose prayers they can depend’. At their annual meeting in 1846, the remaining eleven missionaries in Bengal who attended feared that ‘the interest English churches once held for India has much diminished’ in the face of successes elsewhere. ‘Their work is comparatively railway traveling to ours’, one of them spat, chiding missionary candidates for their excuses for avoiding India in favour of the Indies. ‘Is there no Carey among you?’ he railed, ‘Has his spirit quite forsaken our churches?

⁶ *MH*, April 1846. Even several years earlier Thomas and his colleagues recognized that theirs was ‘slow work’ compared to that of their counterparts in the West Indies. *MH*, February 1842. ‘Amidst all your praiseworthy efforts for Jamaica and Africa’, Evans reminded readers some months later, ‘do not forget the perishing millions of degraded India’. *MH*, December 1842. Even a decade earlier the Calcutta missionaries had been led to remind their patrons at home that ‘the character of the Hindoos’ and ‘the peculiar nature of those obstacles which impede the diffusion of divine truth among them’ made them quite different from ‘the Negroes of the West Indies’. Superstition, depravity, ‘levity in reference to matters of religion’ were inculcated ‘from their infancy’, and thus presented obstacles to the missionaries as significant as the ‘magnitude of the field’ that India was. *MH*, February 1830. See also *MH*, March 1831. ‘Levity’, ‘the great vice of the native mind’, was to remain one of the defining characteristics of the Hindus, in the eyes of missionaries. W. Adam to a friend in Bristol, 7 November 1818, *MH*, September 1819.

⁷ W. Robinson, ‘An Appeal on Behalf of the Baptist Mission in India’, *MH*, November 1847.

We will hope better things'.⁸ Manpower went hand in hand with money, and the combination remained at the roots of tensions between the missionaries in Calcutta and the Society.

In the eyes of some of the Calcutta missionaries, funds—and attention—desperately needed in India were being channeled instead to the West Indies.⁹ Another lengthy appeal in the November 1847 *Missionary Herald* by William Robinson questioned the prevailing wisdom regarding the two spheres. In his appeal, Robinson cited the ‘impudence’ of one of the Calcutta brethren in requesting the ‘enormous sum’ of a hundred rupees (ten pounds) for the construction of a native chapel, which had been refused.¹⁰ A missionary in the Indies, Robinson argued, would have got ten thousand pounds for the same object. Far from complaining about the Society’s liberality to the Indies, Robinson argued that they simply could not renege on the Indian churches. Though direct funding was at the core of this argument (the missionaries finally built the chapel from their own pockets), it revolved around their always-desperate need for more manpower, which Robinson was careful to emphasize rather than engaging in a petty squabble over cash. ‘Excuse my frank language’, he closed, ‘I am in earnest—send men to India’.

When E.B. Underhill became Secretary in 1849, he was faced with the fact that his predecessor Joseph Angus had simply stretched himself too thin: a combination of expanded operations and diminished contributions had continued to strain the BMS’s finances for several years, and the resulting deficit was growing. The supposed financial strains brought on by the ‘heavy claims’ made by the missionaries in Jamaica were intensified by the struggling new mission in the Cameroons and by Baptist efforts to establish other missions in places like Norway, Italy, and China. These were further compounded by a growing ‘general distrust’ among churches and other supporters concerning the operation and future direction of the Society’s efforts.¹¹

⁸ *MH*, June 1846. To excuses about the climate and the difficulty of the languages, he responded ‘Let not the heathen hear of this, lest they laugh you to scorn!’ Thomas wrote in February of 1849 to request that the BMS send laymen, not just seminarians. *MH*, July 1849.

⁹ See the Appendix for tables of BMS expenditure in the period.

¹⁰ The natives of India, Robinson supposed the argument went, didn’t need chapels as they could sit under trees. To this he countered that the West Indies was just as hot as India, and had sea-breezes at that!

¹¹ E.A. Payne, *The Great Succession: Leaders of the Baptist Missionary Society During the Nineteenth Century*. (London, 1938), 33.

Some suspected that a combination of economic and social factors had also discouraged contribution to the missionary cause, leaving the BMS's finances 'stagnant'. Inflation, unemployment, and taxation were influential factors, but the BMS also pointed to a general lack of 'disposition to give' and an increasing attention, instead, to 'show' and 'fashion' among the middle and lower classes.¹² Or was it instead the methods the BMS had employed to raise and appeal for funds from congregations and individuals? One correspondent of the *Herald*, noting a gift of two hundred pounds, suggested that it may have been instead the methods the BMS had employed to appeal for and raise finds from congregations and individuals. Calling for an end to the 'monotonous guinea scheme' of appealing for small subscriptions and collections, he contended instead that 'a certain class in our midst [must] by some means be reached' to make any significant impact on the Society's funds. 'The humbler classes', he argued, maintained their interest in the project because their giving affected 'their weekly expenditure', but 'a specific appeal' to the upper classes 'might prove beneficial'.¹³

But were the general receipts in such a shape that the Society must contract its operations in India—which had steadily stood as the paragon of Baptist missions?¹⁴ After repeatedly receiving instructions to cut costs, James Thomas had written from Calcutta as early as 1848 to question the state of the BMS's finances, but it was not until the next year that the matter came to a head when the Committee instructed his colleagues to do the same.¹⁵ Incensed, the Bengal missionaries collectively responded that they had only been drawing their salaries, with the remaining expenses of the various missions coming out of their own pockets or being raised in-country. In an essay entitled 'Retrenchment' in the January 1850 *Missionary Herald* the missionaries lamented, 'Must the lack of means compel the Committee in the face of these urgent and affecting necessities, to

¹² *MH*, May 1858. See also *MH*, August 1856 for the Society's perspective on funding the India mission in particular, citing the shift in Calcutta exchange rates and the avoidance of 'special appeals' for several years.

¹³ Robert Leonard, *MH*, November 1851. The only caveat, Leonard pointed out, was that 'it remains a difficulty how to effect it'.

¹⁴ Again, see the Appendix for a tabular statement of BMS receipts and expenses during the period.

¹⁵ *MH*, September 1848. Thomas was apparently responsible for the overall funds of the Calcutta missions, and regularly sent bills for their expenses to London for approval and payment, averaging several hundred pounds a month—over 8000 pounds between 1852 and 1855 alone. BMS MSS, Committee Minutes 1793-1910, Finance Committee Books, Volume 3, July 1852-August 1865.

persist in these contemplated reductions?' Was there not another way to encourage and organize sufficient funding for the India mission?

George Small, at Benares, suggested that the Committee get congregations to, as it were, adopt a missionary as their own to communicate with and support. If people knew 'more intimately' the circumstances and needs of individual missionaries, they would surely be more ready and willing to contribute to (and participate in) the India mission. This was no novel idea, having been encouraged a number of times by various groups and journals, but in these circumstances it also represented a radical attitude toward the BMS Committee itself.¹⁶ Though the intention of the various outlets of missionary 'intelligence' had all along been to present missions in the best light while bringing their needs to the public eye, this had always rested on the General Committee's editorial pens. By circumventing them and communicating directly with their supporters, missionaries would in effect be removing the Committee's powers of oversight and selectivity over the public sense of their missions.

The most obvious question underlying this whole debate was why it was played out in the pages of the *Herald* and other journals, rather than being kept private. Certainly this was not an issue of the BMS's framing the Calcutta missionaries as the antagonists, nor even of transparency on their part. Rather, it seems as if the Society was taking advantage of the drama of the situation and attempting to give it a spin that would attract the attention of a public who seemed to have become—even with the recent success stories from the West Indies—generally complacent, even cynical, about the mission movement as a whole. Indeed, William Robinson was afraid that his 1847 'Appeal' (see above) would 'draw little attention; it is not exciting enough; it does not dazzle; our churches will not respond to it; here is no numerous mention of conversions and baptisms, nor does it present the immediate prospect of any'.¹⁷

¹⁶ For example, the Rev. Thomas Lewis of the Union Chapel, Islington, suggested in 1812 that auxiliary missionary societies 'raise up funds in one congregation for *one* missionary: "OUR missionary" to be "our representative among the heathen". *EM*, volume 20, 1812, 286.

¹⁷ *MH*, November 1847. McLeod Wylie was similarly disappointed in public attitudes. 'We have been interested and have been willing to be interested', he wrote to the *Calcutta Christian Observer*, 'with pleasing records of individual experience, and of the serene and hopeful progress of some small favoured spots, [in which all the machinery of Missions has been set up, and some good men have gone on patiently labouring to their death]—the rest forgotten or neglected'. More prayer, he believed was essential, though 'the churches seem at times paralysed', and 'hollow gifts' were all too common. *CCO*, 1855-56, 284.

For the next two years the matter went to ground, and in February of 1853 the readers of the *Herald* were confronted with a new challenge from the missionaries in Bengal, this time to send twenty missionaries to India. Now with a native Christian community of 3500, including a thousand church members, and over forty schools with nearly two thousand students, there were yet only twenty-two Baptist missionaries in Bengal—a field, they believed, ready for the harvest. It was time to assess the current state of the India mission and determine its future course.

The Conferences

When the Society's deficit was finally cleared in 1853, E.B Underhill's first significant move was to propose to 'enlarge and consolidate' the India mission.¹⁸ Four years earlier, as the new co-Secretary, he had been placed in charge of 'Correspondence' and had thus become intimately aware of not only the scope and activities of the Bengal missionaries, but also their concerns. Indeed, Underhill's father and W.H. Pearce had been friends in their youths, and during his furlough in 1837 Pearce himself had challenged Underhill to 'follow me to India'. In October 1854 Underhill finally did so, bringing his wife and daughter along on the first ever visit by a BMS secretary to India.¹⁹

Underhill's visit was a result—as well as a signal—of the BMS's desire to exert more direct supervision and control over the mission, but this did not mean his was an unsympathetic presence. His plan was to make a circuit of all the Baptist stations in the country and to hold regional conferences to evaluate and address the missionaries' needs. The Baptist missionaries in Bengal had formed themselves into a proper Association in 1842 and had met annually at Serampore, but Underhill's proposed conference would provide an opportunity for them *all* to interact with each other and himself to discuss and decide on the most significant issues facing them. Between 27 August and 12 September nearly all of the twenty-two missionaries met together in Calcutta, and over that fortnight,

¹⁸ See *MH*, May 1853.

¹⁹ E.A. Payne, *The Great Succession*, 30-34. Underhill's visit to India raised questions of its own for the Finance Committee, who wondered whether the expenses should be charged to 'General Receipts' or 'Special Collections'. They eventually decided on the latter. BMS MSS Finance Committee Minutes, volume 3 July 1852-August 1865, 14 August 1855.

they delivered and discussed fifteen reports on various aspects and points of their work, ranging from evaluating their purpose and methods to education and their relationship to the government. The conference presented a forum where they could reflect upon and further engage in the debates, difficulties, and decisions that had shaped their missions and experiences.

At the same time the other protestant missionaries in Bengal, too, had it in mind to come together for the same purpose. Many of them (including the Baptists) had met together in Calcutta for monthly breakfasts for a number of years under the name of the Calcutta Missionary Conference, but the first 'General Conference of Bengal Protestant Missionaries', with more than forty delegates from the CMS, LMS, Free Kirk, the Church of Scotland, and the Cathedral Mission, was held between 4 and 7 September, in order to coincide with the Baptists' gathering. Their discussions were organized along similar lines as the Baptists', and their conclusions were likewise quite close. The overall question facing these Conferences, however, was what the future role of the missionaries and their converts was to be.

'Expecting too much is dangerous'.²⁰

One of the debates that had been central to missionaries' experiences in India since Carey's day—and certainly before—was the nature of native Christians themselves. How could their true conversion be assessed? Would they ever become self-supporting and self-sustaining as a body? Could they ever escape their heathen natures? Indeed, these were pragmatic as well as metaphysical questions. Though some considered their conversion 'little better than hypocrisy', others simply overestimated the circumstances:

Their standard is naturally a high one...They overlook the early training of a pious home; the influence of youthful acquaintance with the precepts and promises of the Word of God; the purer atmosphere of the social circle in which they have been nourished...All this and much more is wanting in a heathen land.²¹

²⁰ BM, volume 42, 1850, 73-84.

²¹ The LMS's T.L. Lessel, at Behrampore, was similarly defensive of his converts' circumstances, writing in 1842 that 'considering the depths of degradation from which the natives are beginning to emerge, it cannot be supposed that these new converts, under their Christian training, have the strength or the stature of European converts'. MM, November 1842.

The innate character of native Christians had always been a matter of ideological, theological, and practical debate among missionaries, and those qualities associated with the heathen and the ‘natural character’ of the native—especially Bengalis—had by the 1850s remained consistent in the public imagination. An 1853 essay in the *Missionary Herald* entitled ‘Character of Native Converts in Bengal’ asserted that although converts might have had ‘much to learn’ about their new faith, they still stood in ‘striking contrast with that of their heathen neighbours’ in terms of ‘moral character’. According to George Pearce, though their moral stature might appear ‘diminutive’, ‘when they stand side by side with idolaters they have immeasurably the advantage’.²²

But how far indeed were native Christians separated from their ‘heathen’ neighbours in terms of ‘moral character’ and other measures by which missionaries and the public judged them? Macleod Wylie attempt to discredit missionaries’ work among the Bengalis—‘the most contemptible race in India’—in fact expressed an opinion that was not far off from their own.²³ Wylie wrote in an article for the *Church Missionary Intelligencer* that ‘nothing has yet elevated the Bengali, leaving mission work there, indeed, a work of particular difficulty and trial’.²⁴ The LMS’s A.F. LaCroix, in a report for the General Conference, ranked Bengalis’ ‘natural character’ first in the particular ‘difficulties’ of their mission field. Their utter ‘unimpressibility’ combined with an ‘indifference and apathy’ toward religion led them at times to treat it—a serious topic for the missionaries—with ‘levity’.²⁵ Those who showed some interest or conviction or proclivity toward Christianity, however, could in the eyes of these missionaries hardly be trusted, as their natural ‘obsequiousness’ and merely ‘apparent sincerity’ clouded their true intentions or motives.

Bengalis’ traditional ‘timidity’ was further qualified with a ‘deficiency in nearly all those qualities which constitute manliness’, a charge seconded by the BMS’s J. Williamson, who argued that the profession of Christianity demanded ‘virtue and manly courage’. The Calcutta Baptist missionaries, in their annual report for 1855, maintained

²² ‘Character of Native Converts in Bengal’, *MH*, September 1853.

²³ ‘Cursory Remarks on Chapter II of “Considerations on the State of British India &c., &c.” By Lt. A. White. London, 1822’, *FOI*, Quarterly Series, volume 3, December 1823, 64-7.

²⁴ *CMI*, 1855-6, 276.

²⁵ The BMS’s Mr. Parson at Monghir similarly found ‘the general obduracy and levity’ of the people around him ‘very distressing to witness’. *MH*, January 1848.

that Bengalis had long been ‘a downtrodden race’ and now existed without ‘vigour and independence of character’—crucial elements to Christian character.²⁶ Rather than being free-thinkers and individualists, they remained ‘under the sway of the opinions of others’ and ‘easily affected and disconcerted by ridicule’.²⁷ Thus, how could a Bengali become a true Christian, actually be bold enough to declare himself before his fellows, and be trusted to remain steadfast?²⁸

In an essay published in 1850 entitled ‘Why Are Not the Native Churches in India Self-Sustaining?’ John Wenger identified several of the factors contributing to the still-tenuous position of native Christians. Poor and illiterate ‘new’ Christians had few opportunities to improve themselves: their homes had few comforts and little order, and the little privacy there robbed them of opportunities for ‘secret prayer’. Moreover—and perhaps more tellingly—Wenger pointed out their lack of ‘cleanliness’, ‘the value of time’, and ‘propriety in clothing children’. ‘These’, he argued, were ‘hindrances to evenness of temper, regularity of devotion, purity of mind, and other elements of piety’.²⁹ An attention to domestic matters, as we have seen in the previous chapters, was considered crucial to the development of the character of native Christians and their communities, but in spite of the missionaries’ efforts such behaviors and attributes could rarely be checked or enforced, much less modeled or encouraged. Though Williamson, Supper, and Page’s report to the Baptist Conference confidently expected ‘a gradual improvement’ in converts’ ‘domestic arrangements, houses, and dress’, they were certainly aware of the obstacles in the way.

Indeed, according to Wenger, those ‘hindrances’ were the results of insufficient pastoral superintendence. Due in part to their environment, there was supposedly ‘a deficiency of emotion, a want of energetic action, and a great self-distrust’ among Bengalis which kept them from showing ‘any prominent zeal to extend the gospel’ or ‘any wish to undertake any useful enterprise’ without the close supervision of a

²⁶ *MH*, May 1855.

²⁷ *Proceedings of a General Conference of Bengal Protestant Missionaries, Calcutta, 4-7 September 1855* (Calcutta, 1855), 25.

²⁸ Naturally some took issue with this assessment, notably the CMS’s Lal Behari Day, who dismissed it as indicative not of any national character, but of human character—and indicative of the lowest individuals at that. *Ibid.*

²⁹ *MH*, February 1850.

missionary.³⁰ E.B. Underhill echoed this in his report to the Protestant Conference, arguing that after two generations of Christian influence and teaching the native Christian community had yet to display the ‘zeal and liberality’ necessary to enable the Indian church to be self-supporting and independent—and to thus allow missionaries to resume their intended evangelizing roles.³¹

George Pearce was of a slightly different mind on this point, arguing in an 1852 essay in the *Baptist Magazine* that it was instead *too much* superintendence that had debilitated the native Christian community. In contrast to the prevailing ideology of the pastoral role in Britain—and the examples of earlier missionaries—the utter dependence of native Christians on ministers ‘generates negative character qualities’. ‘We ensure feebleness by treating them as feeble’, Pearce explained, ‘and childhood by treating them as children’.³² Though he had long argued for the increased presence of missionaries and ministers to ‘superintend’ converts and congregations, Pearce was certainly aware that it was both impractical and untenable in the long run.

He was moreover aware that ‘European pastors will never be as close to their flock as they need to be to be truly effective’, and that their ‘disparaging’ attitudes and policies often did ‘much to quench [the] affection’ of their congregants and hearers, but Pearce was unsure that ‘native preachers’ were yet up to the task of assuming the mantle of the Indian church. With missionaries still spread too thin on the ground, their primary task of evangelizing had been supplanted by pastoring, rendering them less effectual, and holding ‘native brethren’ to an admittedly low standard left them ‘simply not ready to assume the overall pastorship of the native church’.³³ Pearce conceded that more missionaries (on the level he had once envisioned) would not be forthcoming, and that those in place would

³⁰ ‘Character of Native Converts in Bengal’, *MH*, September 1853.

³¹ ‘Improvements Desired in Missionary Work in India’, *CCO*, November 1855.

³² *MH*, February 1850. The ‘serious deficiencies’ of the native Christians, including a ‘feebleness of piety’ and ‘weakness of character’, E.B. Underhill reported to the General Conference in 1855, would not improve ‘even under the best European superintendence’. *CCO*, November 1855. Underhill wrote to the missionaries in Bihar that the missionaries there ‘should continue to regard them [native Christians] with paternal affection, and watch over them as [their] own children in the Lord’. ‘Report 2’, *The Minutes and Reports of a Conference of Baptist Missionaries of Bihar* (Calcutta, 1856).

³³ ‘On The Pastorship Of Native Churches In India’, *BM*, April 1852, 202–216. See also Oussoren, *William Carey*, 280. W.H. Pearce had written some years earlier that ‘Native Preachers are seldom fit to be left alone’, but properly trained and ‘vigilantly superintended’ they might be ‘valuable agents’ of the missionaries and the gospel. *MH*, August 1835.

have to ‘make do’, gradually making the transition away from superintendence—especially in pecuniary terms.

What, then, would the role of the missionary be? Simply, Pearce argued, to return to the apostolic example of promoting the Gospel and then supporting Christian communities. They would provide training and literature, but pastoral roles would have to be fully assumed by native Christians. Indeed, Pearce pointed out, there were already traditional leadership roles within village structures (mandals, caste heads) which native pastors could assume, thus creating or maintaining at least some cultural continuity and syncretism in the community. Though this would all be difficult, Pearce concluded, it was in the long run absolutely necessary—and indeed possible.

The experience of the Baptists’ counterparts in Assam and Burma had provided additional perspective and input on the position of native converts and churches. In ‘A Pastorate for Native Churches’ Amos Sutton likewise argued that the missionary character had been lost to that of the pastor, and that men and funds had been ‘absorbed in the maintenance of present labours’ rather than in evangelisation and preaching. His solution was to gradually ‘transfer’ the orientation of native congregations ‘from the missionary basis to some settled ecclesiastical position’, and to shift funds and attention to the training of native pastors to replace missionaries there. Like George Pearce, Sutton supposed the only preventative for the ‘immaturity’, ‘evil habits’, and ‘ignorance’ among enquirers and native Christians was the regular instruction and ‘watchfulness’ of a missionary, but he also feared this would result in ‘feebleness and insufficiency if applied too long’.³⁴

But this debate over the character and proposed role of native Christians was at its core about the goal of the missionary enterprise in India. Was it to convert? To build an independent Indian church? These questions, of course, had long lain at the root of mission from its earliest days, but the conferences of 1855 certainly sought to define them more clearly—and conclusively. An ambivalence toward the role of the missionary vis-à-vis the native Christian was especially difficult given the changing nature of the factors involved. Despite urgent and continuing appeals, it seemed that men and monies were not

³⁴ MH, January 1853, April 1854. See also Andrew Porter, “Language, “Native Agency”, and Missionary Control: Rufus Anderson’s Journey to India, 1854-5” in Pieter N. Holtrop and Hugh McLeod, eds., *Missions and Missionaries* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: 2000), 81-97.

as forthcoming as they had been, and the ‘few brethren’ left in Bengal by the 1850s were both ‘weak in body’ and overburdened with their duties.³⁵

Hand in hand with this was the question of what the role of Christianity—and Christians—was to be in India: insular or transformative? The Baptist missionaries’ bottom-up approach had necessitated the precedence of Christians’ physical circumstances over such ideology, but it was an increasingly important (and delicate) situation that needed to be addressed. After his extended tour of the mission stations in Bengal, E.B. Underhill voiced his disapproval of these ‘Christian villages’, arguing that instead of promoting the spread of the gospel, they prevented the growth of the native church in the communities from which converts were originally drawn. Native Christians, he argued, generally no longer required asylum from persecution or excommunication from their families. Their faith, moreover, needed to be tested and developed and their dependence on missionaries removed.³⁶ In his report to the BMS upon his return to England, Underhill underscored this point, explaining ‘the state of dependence on Missionaries’ and the shelter native Christians sought from them ‘prevents self-reliance’, and that the missionaries shared and ‘exaggerated fear...about the effects of casting native churches onto their own resources’.³⁷

Though they had repeatedly experienced the varied ‘effects’ Underhill had speculated about, his opinions were echoed by Baptist missionaries in the field when they assembled in Calcutta in 1855. In their report on ‘Native Christians’, Williamson, Supper, and Page expressed their general disapproval of the concept of (artificially created) ‘Christian villages’, at least in the Bengali milieu, as by ‘isolating Christians from the heathen’ such villages were ‘thereby precluding them from letting their light shine before them’.³⁸ Indeed, as A.F. LaCroix lamented, native Christians were too often treated as ‘hot-house plants’ rather than fellow believers. Many missionaries relied instead on the concept of converts’ ‘sanctification by faith’, the process by which their inner, spiritual

³⁵ George Pearce, addressing the BMS’s annual meeting, *MH*, June 1853.

³⁶ Appendix 1, *The Minutes and Reports of a Conference of Baptist Missionaries of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1855), 104. Following up on the reports, Underhill explained that it was precisely the challenges and conflicts of daily life that native Christians needed in order to grow. It is the storm and tempest’, he wrote, ‘that make the tree root itself deeply in the ground’.

³⁷ *MH*, July 1857.

³⁸ Report 7, *The Minutes and Reports of a Conference of Baptist Missionaries of Bengal*, 61. The authors did admit, however, that such villages’ usefulness by way of providing asylum and communion for persecuted or thinly spread converts or communities in areas like Orissa and Bihar was perfectly viable.

transformation had conscious and visible external results, for proof of their ‘success’. The sanctified ‘native Christian’ thus became ‘upright and just in all his dealings...faithful to his promises...chaste and temperate, industrious and economical...[and] improved in both character and conduct’, while his counterparts remained mired in their ‘heathen’ lifestyles.³⁹ ‘Observing [the] difference between their present and their former selves’, George Pearce wrote in 1829, ‘cannot fail to afford us the purest joy, and enable us to bear their deficiencies with more patience’.⁴⁰ In short, those characteristics which William Carey and his colleagues at the Serampore mission had looked for in their very first Christian converts remained consistent as the Baptist enterprise spread throughout Bengal.

In their annual report for 1855, the Calcutta Baptist missionaries lamented that the treatment of converts still presented ‘great practical difficulty’ as they were often disowned by family and friends and continued to rely on the mission stations for their support.⁴¹ They agreed with Underhill that ‘Christian villages’ did more harm than good to their inhabitants, serving only to seclude them from their neighbours. Indeed, they noted, there were rumours circulating even among Christians of ‘new castes’ as well as all sorts of ‘jealousies and disputes’ that did little for their Christian ‘example’. Moreover, the Christians in those villages were ‘not stimulated to help themselves, but hang on like helpless children on the missionary’s hand’, which eventually would ‘corrupt their sincerity and destroy their influence’.

This was not the case across the board, however. Page and Sale had endeavoured toward the complete opposite at Barisal, helping the people ‘only to help themselves’. By establishing granaries and legal funds, the native Christians could ‘sidestep’ loans from their zamindars, avoid the ruinous interest, and apply the saved money to building chapels and making contributions to the maintenance of the mission stations and to each other. Moreover, when push came to shove with the zamindars and the courts, the native Christians ‘hung together for defense’. As shown above in Chapter 4, the representation of Christian villages, too, played an important role in this debate, and while they often overlapped, they revealed that circumstances often dictated the direction of the various

³⁹ CCO, November 1855.

⁴⁰ MH, June 1829.

⁴¹ MH, May 1855.

missions. Contrasting representations served similar purposes. Examples of independent villages and congregations who provided ‘bold testimonies’ to their heathen neighbors reinforced the value of the mission enterprise—preaching, printing, and education—and showed the promise of ‘progress’. The ‘refuge from persecution’ angle, utilised to great effect at Barisal, generated sympathy among readers for native Christians and their plight. Where persecution was minimal, however, missionaries could emphasize the ‘transformative power of the Gospel’ angle, like in the descriptions of the village stations south of Calcutta. This approach highlighted the changes in and positive influence of the villages, showing readers how successful mission efforts had been.

The issue of schools also remained one of great contention and figured prominently in the conferences. Whereas they had long been considered the most effective means of ‘overthrowing heathen superstition’, many in Britain complained that the schools were too expensive and more importantly diverted missionaries’ attention from the ‘Great Commission’. By focusing on education, they argued, missionaries had neglected making the Gospel known to as many people as possible. While Underhill and others conceded this latter point somewhat, he responded that they ‘must be careful not to abandon’ the methods that seemed to be ‘working’.⁴² The missionaries argued that they had not provided any higher education, and that they had never had to resort to BMS funds for their schools. They did however, concede to curtail their ‘secular’ teaching.

While a return to more preaching was admitted to be a good idea, they could not help but point out the benefits their schools had wrought over the last three decades, especially in conversions and ‘the general elevation of character’ among their students. Children of converts, they agreed, must remain—or become again—their priority, and the schools themselves wanted improvement in both materials and teachers if they were to continue successfully. (The Native Christian Institution had been without a ‘European master’ since Ellis’ departure in 1841.) The boarding schools, too, had to be reassessed. Though they provided education and skills, the missionaries were afraid that they made students ‘unfit for society’. Female education, too, could ‘not be overrated’. There were also rumors that the Baptist Missionary Society was looking to establish schools in India

⁴² Report 2, *The Minutes and Reports of a Conference of Baptist Missionaries of Bengal*, 36.

under its own aegis in order to reach the children of native Christians—or at least those of native pastors.⁴³ The Conference also decided on its position regarding Government ‘grants in aid’ to mission schools. Recent legislation had authorised such grants for all schools—some of which had earlier kept Baptist schools from dissolution—but the debate over the ethics of receiving funding from a Government who also supported ‘heathen’ schools resulted in the conference members’ resolving to refuse such monies, despite ‘a variety of opinions on the subject’.⁴⁴

At the conclusion of the Calcutta conferences—both Baptist and Protestant—a number of significant decisions had been made on the parts of the societies and missionaries alike. These were intended to streamline operations, maximize resources (human and financial), and reinvigorate what many at home were considering a flagging enterprise. For many of those missionaries on the ground, however, the conferences provided an opportunity not only to gather together and discuss shared successes and grievances, but to publicly acknowledge and confront them. For the Baptists, the Calcutta conference was quickly followed by others in Bihar, the North-West Provinces and Ceylon, concerning the same topics and generating for the most part similar results. The most resounding outcome of all the missionary conferences that autumn, however, was the unanimous emphasis on the theme that had constantly been at the forefront since Carey’s arrival in Bengal: ‘more men’ and ‘more means’. ‘All the reasons’, the report of the General Conference concluded, ‘cry YES to India’ as a sustainable field of missions, and it was with that that the missionaries and their parent societies looked forward to a turning point in their enterprise in India.⁴⁵

⁴³ *MH*, August 1856.

⁴⁴ ‘Home Proceedings’, *BM*, February 1855.

⁴⁵ *EM*, new series volume 34, 1856, 218.

Conclusions

The narratives of the Baptists in Bengal, composed by missionaries, edited by Society committees, and published in journals like the *Missionary Herald* tell us much about their activities, their relationships, and their beliefs. Reconstructing these stories, particularly those that reached over a period of years and decades, provides a valuable sense of how the Baptist missions in India developed over time, and where those missionaries' priorities lay. More importantly, perhaps, these narratives served as an important link between India and Britain. Throughout this study I have discussed how the discourse between the mission field and the home support base was created and shaped to achieve the overall goals of the missionary movement: to enable its agents to carry abroad the Christian gospel and to enable its establishment in 'heathen lands'.

As we saw in the Introduction, missionary writing fell into at least three categories: commentary, research, and appeals. Whilst informing audiences of the progress of missions—detailing struggles and successes, hardships and joys—their fundamental nature was to constantly reinforce the need and desire for supporting the missionary enterprise. Appeals to home audiences for their support came at three levels, which I have called the 'three P's': *pity*, *pence*, and *participation*. The practical realities of missions relied on constant contributions from a broad sector of the evangelical public, from philanthropists to Sunday school children. All could contribute their time and attention through reading and prayer, and fundraising was an equally accessible and practical means of support. The ever-increasing demand for manpower—especially as the various missionary societies were expanding their spheres of operations in the 1830s and 1840s—also found a regular place in mission journals, and the cry to 'come over and help us' echoed more loudly as the century progressed. These levels of rhetoric directed toward home audiences lent a distinct character to mission journals and underscore what I consider their core intentions.

The evangelical worldview that was developing as the missions movement emerged at the turn of the nineteenth century not only provided the basis for an effective rhetorical structure

but also left room for further growth and development. Thus there existed channels for evangelicals to examine themselves against a world of ‘others’. The evangelical preoccupation with the family had come to dominate its social discourse at home while at the same time lending a heavy influence to the development of missions discourse. Domestic themes and imagery had become commonplace in both theological and secular milieus, and had thereby gained ‘recognition value’ among speakers, writers and publishers of all shades. Adopted by missionaries and their supporters, and adapted to fit their unique needs, usage of familial and domestic imagery as rhetoric began to reach new levels of utilization and expression—in describing their circumstances and actions, and in ascribing certain characteristics by which they could at once reinforce their own identities and those of the ‘heathen’ around them.

‘Family’ was utilized and understood in the most practical aspects of missions: in the roles (and even terms) of ‘father’ and ‘brother’ and ‘sister’ expanded from the congregation to the mission; in the new family structures mirrored in the community, hierarchy, and supervision in stations and villages; and in the influence of Christian example and authority and its results. Just as Carey and others saw themselves as father figures to enquirers and converts, other missionaries, in the roles of itinerants, pastors, and teachers, assumed the same role. The supervision and structure they offered was rooted in their evangelical ideals of that very role, and this was clearly manifested in their work. The sense of ‘extended family’ offered by congregations, stations, Christian villages, and schools rested on these ideals and were played out accordingly. This in turn offered a clearly understandable vision of the ‘exotic’ and the ‘other’ for British audiences.

Those images of ‘the heathen’, while creating categories and constructs in attempts to rigidly define them, were in reality as much about evangelicals themselves and the characteristics they both identified with and abhorred. But to dismiss this discourse as itself simply a *construct*, an experiment in marketing, is to underestimate or even ignore its complex nature. Within each discourse are several levels of identity and agenda: missionaries themselves certainly held perspectives and aims different from their respective societies and supporters. They also were affected by and embodied an evangelical worldview that in many ways set them apart from the peoples with whom they interacted and spent their

lives. As we have seen it was in many ways possible for ‘heathens’ to achieve and even surpass the expectations evangelical Victorians had for them—or even for themselves. These examples reveal an awareness on the part of authors, publishers, and audiences alike that neither were ‘the heathen’ as monolithic and unchanging as they were portrayed, nor evangelicals as clear on the differences as they might have imagined. The perpetual (and increasing) demand for financial and physical resources prompted by the expansion of ‘the missionary endeavour’, however, meant that missionary societies—and their stables of authors, editors, and publishers—could ill-afford to stray from a formula that ‘worked’. Thus ‘the heathen’ remained regularly and clearly set apart from the Christians who were expected to contribute to their uplift.

That is the simple explanation that must be carefully negotiated and examined. Missionaries’ ‘narratives’ were created along a broad spectrum of content and tone, ranging from reflection and record to much more rhetorical, dramatic, even stylized reports and letters. But there are also clear examples, as we have seen, of missionaries and Society figures purposefully affecting the ways in which such narratives reached the reading public. William Ward’s self-conscious caveats to the Committee and his dialogues with Krishna Pal, for example, clearly show his awareness of the significance of the Serampore missionaries’ descriptions of the new Indian mission field and their work to the success of this new enterprise. The Pearces and their colleagues in Calcutta and farther afield struck a balance between presenting scenes of ‘heathen’ darkness and the light wrought by the Gospel. In choosing examples of ‘successes’ and ‘failures’, they not only revealed the challenges and difficulties of their work, but also maintained a sort of dramatic tension to hold the interest of potential supporters back home. In Britain, the selection, editing and annotation of their correspondence and reports before they were passed into public circulation also impacted where readers’ attention would be drawn—and kept. Committee members and journal editors thus provided another element in encouraging the responses of *pity, pence* and *participation* and reinforcing the key ideas and images of the missionaries’ narratives.

This, however, begs the question of whether such opinions and ideologies surrounding the identities and character of ‘the heathen’ were really as internalized and endemic as they are made out to be. Or were missionaries, society secretaries, editors, and even amateur

enthusiasts instead perhaps somewhat overeager in getting their message across? ‘In Europe’, Lt. A. White quipped in his 1822 *Considerations on the State of British India*, ‘too much reliance appears to be placed on the accounts of missionaries’, which he considered were ‘calculated to convey a false impression’ of India and its people. This drew a heated response from the missionary camp in both India and England. Such attacks, one article in the *Friend of India* asserted, served ‘not only to discourage others from engaging in the same undertaking, but to discourage the public from supporting them if they should, which must lay the axe to the root of missionary efforts’!¹

We might therefore ask, *Why so much on the heathen?* If evangelicals (even children) were already so aware of ‘the heathen’, their ‘degradation’, and the need for missionaries, why the thorough and continued utilization of the same tropes decade after decade? A letter from the Calcutta missionaries in 1827 provided one explanation:

With respect to the wretched state of the heathens, many strange things have been brought to your ears; but could we place these strange things before your eyes, we are persuaded...it would not fail to excite a greater degree of pity, and produce a greater degree of anxiety for their eternal welfare.²

‘God forbid’, read another letter in the CMS’s *Missionary Register* the same year, ‘that the familiarity of those scenes should cool our own affections, or the want of immediate success damp the zeal of our Christian Friends!’³ Simply put, ‘the heathen’ represented ‘big business’ so far as missionary publicity was concerned. The ‘horrors’ of ‘the dark places of the earth’ sold copies and generated revenue, which in turn generated more accounts (primary and secondary) of missionary successes and failures—maintaining the discourse. But as Ian Bradley has pointedly argued, ‘the interest which the British public came to have in the missionary cause...had a more important effect than the raising of funds or the activities of evangelical [activists]’; it created and popularized a worldview in which a corporate identity and responsibility could be utilized to great effect and a wider awareness.⁴ By taking

¹ White scorned William Ward’s *Hindoos* in particular for focusing on the Bengalis—‘the most contemptible race in India—and Ward himself for associating with ‘the greatest miscreants in the country’. ‘Cursory Remarks on Chapter II of “Considerations on the State of British India &c., &c.”’ By Lt. A. White. London: 1822’, *FOI*, Quarterly Series, December 1823, 64-7.

² ‘Calcutta, 11 November 1826’, *BM*, volume 19, 1827, 290.

³ ‘Misery of the Heathen’, *Missionary Register*, December 1827, 600.

⁴ Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness*, 80.

advantage of popular currents in evangelical and secular Victorian thought, missionary periodicals were particularly suited to and successful in drawing and holding the public attention with images of India that at once reflected those currents and provided exotic ‘others’ to be corrected and improved by Christianity. But was the reliance on such themes—domesticity and privilege, for example—a reflection of established evangelical values, or did authors utilize social trends for rhetorical ends? Perhaps by the middle of the nineteenth century secular forces were at once affecting evangelical publishers while evangelical values received a popular outlet through shifting Victorian sensibilities.

There certainly remains more to be explored in the connexions between the textual world created in missionaries’ narratives and the real world in which they (and their readers) lived and worked. Their overall influence on readers’ ideas, emotions, and purses is more difficult to judge. Even taking into account the ‘secondary literature’ of missions—stories, poems, hymns, and appeals by non-missionaries—as well as the obvious examples of individuals contributing to the missionary cause, conclusions about the ‘power’ of missionary narrative and rhetoric remain more ‘quantitative’ than ‘qualitative’. Besides affecting home audiences, this type of writing was certainly significant to issues beyond funding, staffing, and morale, impacting policy and strategy on the ground and even as far as the Society level. By using the examples of the Baptists in Bengal, I have attempted to address these types of questions, but it is with these questions in mind that historians must continue to explore—and hopefully explain—the nature of the relationship between propaganda and practice, rhetoric and reality.

Appendix

Table 1: BMS General Receipts, 1830-1856¹

All figures have been rounded to the nearest pound.

Year	Receipts	Year	Receipts
1830	11,451	1844	16,979
1831	10,879	1845	16,340
1832	11,777	1846	18,583
1833	12,282	1847	21,490
1834	12,051	1848	17,816
1835	9,774	1849	15,829
1836	10,048	1850	15,472
1837	10,339	1851	14,975
1838	12,144	1852	14,719
1839	16,233	1853	15,114
1840	15,236	1854	19,006
1841	18,097	1855	16,171
1842	18,221	1856	15,179
1843	15,280		

These ‘General Receipts’ are in addition to the designated funds for specific missions (see Table 2, below), as well as special appeals and collections like those for debt liquidation, the Jubilee, new missionaries, etc.

¹ Figures have been compiled from the BMS Financial Committee account books and reports, and from the published lists and tables from the *Baptist Magazine* and *Baptist Annual Register*.

Table 2: India and Jamaica funds, 1830-1856

All figures have been rounded to the nearest pound. Dashes indicate absent or unavailable figures.

Year	India Receipts	India Disbursements	Jamaica Receipts	Jamaica Disbursements
1830	---	5440	113	4547
1831	---	2851	499	6370
1832	---	3398	268	8099
1833	---	2048	53	4436
1834	---	4164	2434	6580
1835	---	2691	25,698	4187
1836	150	1917	---	19349
1837	145	1961	---	6872
1838	167	---	---	7453
1839	235	---	---	6514
1840	248	6054	---	6870
1841	195	6712	2000	9016
1842	74	6379	---	7702
1843	130	8124	---	5062
1844	107	7589	98	1619
1845	30	5919	457	2660
1846	179	8414	534	1008
1847	40	8333	533	435
1848	23	9206	162	448
1849	10	9846	35	551
1850	15	7222	130	149
1851	352	6953	181	217
1852	500	8535	448	380
1853	---	7072	---	354
1854	240	9825	265	307
1855	449	10394	81	111
1856	397	11 775	77	47
TOTALS	3,686	150,522	34,066	111,343

Expenditures for the India and Jamaica missions were roughly equivalent until the 1840s, when the BMS began to withdraw its missionaries from Jamaica. After 1846 disbursements to Jamaica had slowed to a trickle, while those to India continued to grow steadily. In the period under review the Indian mission cost the BMS half again what the Jamaican mission had, and the long-running argument of India's enormous size and demands relative to other mission fields continued to dominate the discourse of funding and resources.

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