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“MAY I AGAIN TASTE THE SWEETS OF SOCIAL
RELIGION”: THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL
DEVOTION OF WILLIAM CAREY

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“MAY I AGAIN TASTE THE SWEETS OF SOCIAL
RELIGION”: THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL
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Luke Andrew Waite

Read and Approved by:

Michael A. G. Haykin (Faculty Advisor)

Date_____

For Emily,

Thank you for going “there and back again” with me.

I love you.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BMS	Baptist Missionary Society
SFA	Serampore Form of Agreement

PREFACE

Elizabeth Elliot described the first year of her missionary career as “strange ashes.”¹ Everything she sought to accomplish among the Colorado Indians of Ecuador seemed wasted, and yet she recognized God had ordained these losses as an offering she was to render to him. In a very similar season of apparently wasted ministry in my own life, the idea for this thesis was born. Though it appeared mysterious at the time, I praise God for what he ordained and pray he will use the “strange ashes” of that ministry—and the resulting product of this thesis—for his glory.

Several people come to mind as I think back on this season of research and writing as the means by which God has helped me accomplish this project. The counsel and feedback of my supervisor, Dr. Michael A. G. Haykin, as well as his grading assistant Caleb Neel have proven instrumental in shaping this work. I am extremely grateful for their investment in this project.

Throughout the years, I have had the honor of serving with many godly pastors, such as Hopson Boutot, Drew Sparks, and Jon Knight. These men have encouraged me with their friendship, sharpened my thinking, and borne many of my burdens. Though the Lord has removed us to different stations at this point in time, I am grateful for the way in which my life has been influenced by these men: “They are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight” (Ps 16:3, NASB 1995).

Many people that I wish to recognize must remain anonymous due to their own missionary service overseas in sensitive locations. What a joy to know a growing

¹ Elisabeth Elliot, *Made for the Journey* (1998; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Revell Books, 2021), 165.

number of missionaries who, like William Carey, recognize the critical importance of proper ecclesiology regardless of where they live and serve. Thank you for loving the church as you seek to obey the Great Commission. Know that the Lord of the church sees the way you have valued his bride.

My parents, Mark and Nancy Waite, also deserve mention. Decades before this thesis was even a thought, the Lord used them to shape a young boy's heart in a godward direction. As I have worked on this project, you have been faithful to pray, encourage, and love me, and eternity will show these things have not been wasted.

I must also thank my two sons, Nathan and Caleb, for their love for their daddy as he worked on writing his "book." Thank you both for letting daddy do his work, and for giving me play breaks along the way. I pray the Lord will build in both of you a great love for himself and for his people.

Finally, I want to thank my wife, Emily to whom this work is dedicated. The strange ashes that God gave us to offer back to him were just as much yours as they were mine. Thank you for your willingness to lay everything on the altar for our Lord, even when it meant coming home. In so many ways, this thesis is a reflection of your encouragement, service, and love for me. As always, thank you for loving me, and know that it is a joy to be your husband.

Luke Waite

Manchester Center, Vermont

December 2022

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

William Carey (1761–1834) scribbled away in his journal. The hardships of his first two months of missionary service in India filled his mind, as well as the page in front of him. Financial instability; no place to call home; deprivation of many of life’s essential needs for his family; all these difficulties troubled the young missionary, who yearned for relief from these particular sufferings. However, as Carey concluded his journal entry on January 13, 1794, a different longing captured his heart. In an outburst of spiritual desire, he wrote, “May I again taste the sweets of social religion which I have given up, and see in this land of darkness a people formed for God.”¹

What was this “social religion” which Carey considered so sweet, had given up, and longed to experience again? Participation in a local church. “Social religion” was a common phrase among Particular Baptists in Carey’s day. It referred to the life and worship of God’s people in the context of a local assembly which had covenanted together as a distinct church.² Carey’s exclamation, therefore, revealed his desire to be reunited with the people of God in a church-community. Carey loved the church and continually endeavored to practice biblical ecclesiology.

Though an important aspect of his life, Carey’s ecclesiology rarely features as a predominant focus in the literature on the pioneer missionary. That is not to say that nothing is known of Carey’s church doctrine and practice. His association with the

¹ Terry G. Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 2000), 8, emphasis added. Unless otherwise indicated, all spelling, punctuation, and grammar has been modernized.

² For example, see John Ryland, Sr., *The Beauty of Social Religion; or, the Nature and Glory of a Gospel Church* ([Northampton]: T. Dicey, 1777).

Particular Baptists, his two pastorates in England, and his efforts to establish churches in India are well-known facts about Carey's life. Nevertheless, the specific ecclesiological convictions which Carey held and the impact these truths had on his ministry are often overlooked.

This gap of research with regard to Carey is not a new phenomenon. Though a plethora of books have been written on the father of modern missions,³ relatively few of these works examine aspects of Carey's theology.⁴ Rather, the vast majority of research done on Carey is biographical. On the one hand, this focus on Carey's life has greatly benefited the church. Carey's passion for global evangelization, his willingness to enter the mine of missionary life,⁵ and his faithful plodding⁶ over the course of forty-one years of overseas ministry all coalesce to form a beautiful mosaic of a life devoted to the Great Commission which continues to inspire Christians today.

On the other hand, the attention rendered to Carey's life has essentially eclipsed his biblical convictions from modern-day view. For example, consider George Smith's biography, entitled *The Life of William Carey* (1885). In this work, Smith dedicates entire chapters to different elements of Carey's overseas ministry, such as his work as a professor, translator, and scientist. Yet not one chapter is wholly devoted to any aspect of Carey's theology. Sadly, this omission repeats itself in the vast majority of works on the famous missionary. The result of such neglect is that many in the church

³ John Clark Marshman, the son of Carey's colleague Joshua Marshman, was the first to attribute to Carey this title "the father of modern missions." See John C. Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1859), 2:477. This epitaph has endured through time, honoring Carey's significant influence in the missionary task.

⁴ Bruce Nichols, "The Theology of William Carey," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 17, no. 3 (July 1993): 56.

⁵ Andrew Fuller, Carey's faithful friend, described Carey's venture to India like one entering a deep mine full of gold. See George Smith, *The Life of William Carey D. D. Shoemaker and Missionary* (London: John Murray, 1885), 57.

⁶ This imagery comes from Carey's own description of himself as a plodder. By this phrase, the missionary meant he was able to persevere "in any definite pursuit." See Eustace Carey, *Memoir of William Carey D. D.* (London: Jackson and Walford, 1836), 623.

today know what Carey did, but few know what he believed. Yet Carey's theology deserves inspection. His ministry achievements did not materialize in a theological vacuum but flowed from his doctrine. In order to fully appreciate the influence Carey has wielded on the Christian world, therefore, one must grasp these foundational truths that shaped him.

One such doctrine was ecclesiology. Early in his life, Carey understood the importance of the church and at no point did he regard the divine institution as a minor doctrine to be dismissed. From the streets of England to the bazaars of India, Carey was never far from the local church, and this commitment significantly shaped his life and ministry. Yet many questions remain unanswered regarding Carey's ecclesiology: What did Carey believe about the nature, worship, and governance of the local church? How did these beliefs shape the way he carried out his mission work? In what ways did they contribute to his success as a missionary?

This thesis centers on Carey's ecclesiology. It investigates the ecclesiological context in which he ministered. It explores his church practice while serving both in England and in India. It highlights his commitment to the covenant-community of believers, regardless of his ministry context. My primary purpose in examining all these elements of Carey's doctrine and praxis is to demonstrate that Carey's devotion to the local church fueled his effectiveness in reaching the lost. In other words, one of the primary sources of Carey's missionary success was his ecclesiological faithfulness.

The importance of connecting Carey's missional success with his ecclesiological devotion can hardly be overstated. Meaningful participation in a local church faces scrutiny among those who profess the name of Christ today, even on the mission field. In 2018, my family moved overseas to a war-torn country that was closed to the gospel, where we encountered missionaries who diminished the value of ecclesiology among themselves and the locals they were seeking to reach for Christ. By neglecting the doctrine of the church, however, these missionaries removed one of the

primary means through which God intended to bless their ministries. This dilemma need not be. It is my prayer that by demonstrating Carey's devotion to ecclesiology, as well as the impact it had on his ministry, Christians today—especially those serving on the mission field—will be renewed in their love and commitment to the local church and that they will, like Carey, seek to live in complete submission to the church's King, the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 2

“THE BEAUTY OF SOCIAL RELIGION”: THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF WILLIAM CAREY

When William Carey joined the Particular Baptists of the Northamptonshire Association, he entered a community defined by its ecclesiology.¹ From their earliest days, Particular Baptists were well-known (and often misrepresented) for their peculiar understanding on the doctrine of the church, a circumstance that led to disdain and persecution.² Yet, the movement continued to grow. In light of the opposition they faced, many Particular Baptist leaders toiled to define and defend their position on ecclesiology. The resulting works revealed the denomination’s deep love, reverence, and concern for the local church. Often referred to as “social religion,” these men viewed proper ecclesiology as a beautiful thing, a highly valued treasure.³ By forsaking the government-sanctioned Church of England to associate with the despised Baptists, Carey resembled the man in Christ’s parable who found a treasure in a field and sacrificed all to gain that treasure (Matt 13:44). Carey’s union with the Baptists signified his affirmation of Particular Baptist doctrine, including their ecclesiology.

Though Carey did not write any works on the doctrine of the church himself, many of his ecclesiological convictions may be determined by his denominational context. The following chapter will examine several key components of the Particular

¹ James Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, Studies in Baptist History and Thought (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2008), xx.

² Preface to the First London Confession, quoted in William Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 2nd ed. (1969; repr., Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2011), 141–143.

³ John Ryland, Sr., *The Beauty of Social Religion; or, the Nature and Glory of a Gospel Church* ([Northampton]: T. Dicey, 1777), 2.

Baptist doctrine of the church, as well as its expression within the Northamptonshire Association, that group of churches in which Carey served as a pastor before going to India as a missionary. This examination will illuminate the ecclesiological background of Carey’s ministry, both in his homeland and also on the mission field.⁴

The Church’s Authority

One of the primary factors that shaped Particular Baptist ecclesiology was the issue of authority. The early leaders of this movement sought to guide their congregations in submission to the One who possessed ultimate authority over the church—Christ. This commitment, therefore, prompted the Particular Baptists to lean heavily on their Christology. Their earliest confessions demonstrate that, in order to understand the church rightly, one must first understand Jesus’ relationship to his people. They declared, “Jesus Christ only is made the Mediator of the new covenant, even the everlasting covenant of grace between God and man, to be perfectly and fully the Prophet, Priest, and King of the church of God for evermore.”⁵

This focus on Christ’s three-fold office featured prominently in Particular Baptist writings, especially in their works on ecclesiology.⁶ Christ’s kingly office especially played a significant role in their ecclesiological doctrine and praxis because Christ’s kingship represented his supreme authority over the church.⁷ The denomination confessed,

⁴ For more detailed works on Particular Baptist ecclesiology see James Renihan, *Edification and Beauty* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2008) and Ian Birch, *To Follow the Lamb Wheresoever He Goeth: The Ecclesial Polity of the English Calvinist Baptists 1640–1660* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017).

⁵ First London Confession, art. 10 (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 146–147).

⁶ For example, see the First London Confession, art. 34 (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 154); the Second London Confession 8.9 (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 251); John Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, rev. ed. (London: W. Winterbotham, 1796), 3:226; Ryland, *Beauty of Social Religion*, 4.

⁷ Hercules Collins, *Believers Baptism from Heaven, and of Divine Institution. Infant Baptism from Earth, and Human Invention* (London: J. Hancock, 1691), 9.

Christ always has had, and ever shall have a kingdom in this world, to the end thereof, of such as believe in him, and make profession of his name. . . . The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the church, in whom, by the appointment of the Father, all power for the calling, institution, order, or government of the church, is invested in a supreme and sovereign manner.⁸

In other words, those who profess and believe in Jesus are part of his kingdom, the church, and Christ possesses all authority over the church as their King.⁹

Faithfulness to the King of the church demanded complete submission to his rule. Following in the path of the Puritans, the Particular Baptists looked to Scripture as the expression of Christ's ultimate authority over his people, providing the ecclesiological "blueprint" for what the church should be and do.¹⁰ The 1644 London Confession stated, "The rule of this knowledge, faith, and obedience, concerning the worship and service of God, and all other Christian duties, is not man's inventions, opinions, devices, laws, constitutions, or traditions unwritten whatsoever, but only the word of God contained in the Canonical Scriptures."¹¹ By this statement, the Particular Baptists intimated that man has no warrant in himself to determine how people should worship God. Scripture alone possesses such authority. For any person to act on his own initiative and promote his own pattern or regulations for worship denied the sovereign decree of the church's King as revealed in Scripture. As Hanserd Knollys (1599–1691) argued,

The churches of saints shall be ruled and governed by the holy, righteous and good laws of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Son over the house of God. . . . Christ is the Legislator, the Law-giver, the Bible is his and his church's statute book, and all the churches, ministers and saints of God are to be governed by his royal law of liberty, in obeying and keeping whereof there is a blessing promised.¹²

⁸ Second London Confession, 26.3–4 (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 284).

⁹ Hanserd Knollys, *The Parable of the Kingdom of Heaven Expounded* (London: Benjamin Harris, 1674), 6–7.

¹⁰ Michael A. G. Haykin, "The Baptist Identity: A View from the Eighteenth Century," *Evangelical Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (1995): 137–138. See also B. R. White, "The Doctrine of the Church in the Particular Baptist Confession of 1644," *Journal of Theological Studies* 19, no. 2 (October 1968): 579.

¹¹ First London Confession, art. 7 (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 146).

¹² Knollys, *The Parable of the Kingdom of Heaven*, 11–12.

Nearly a hundred years later, John Gill (1697–1771) echoed Knollys’ sentiment, looking also to the example of the early church: “The primitive churches, in the times of the apostles, first gave their own selves to the ordinances, and to be obedient to his laws, as King of saints; and to us, the apostles, pastors, guides, and governors, to be taught, fed, guided, and directed by them, according to the word of God.”¹³ As with the primitive church, every aspect of the worship of God was to be subject to the Word of God.

This emphasis on Jesus’ kingly role as exercised through his Word revealed the Particular Baptist contention with state involvement in ecclesiastical governance.¹⁴ The Particular Baptists defended a congregational form of church government like many of their Separatist contemporaries,¹⁵ for they believed Jesus had given authority to each individual congregation to order its own steps in accordance with his commands.¹⁶ Those who sought to assert control over local congregations, be they pope, king, or episcopate, denied Christ’s rightful lordship over his people, since he had vested this authority in the individual church itself.

This usurpation of authority demanded that Baptists break away into their own congregations where they would be free to submit to Christ’s Lordship as expressed through his Word. William Kiffen (1616–1701) conveyed this idea in a response to an opponent:

JESUS CHRIST is of the Father anointed to be the head of the church, which is his body and that we are commanded only to hear him; and that whosoever will not hear and obey him, the Lord will require it at his hands. . . . Now then, if we cannot keep faith and a good conscience in obeying all the commands of Christ, so long as we assemble ourselves with you, then are we necessitated to separate ourselves from

¹³ Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, 3:232.

¹⁴ Ian Birch, *To Follow the Lamb Wheresoever He Goeth: The Ecclesial Polity of the English Calvinist Baptists 1640–1660* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017), 34.

¹⁵ Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, 10–11.

¹⁶ Second London Confession, 26.6–7 (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 285–286).

you. . . . We are bound in obedience to JESUS CHRIST, to leave you, while you remain obstinate to him, and join together, and continue faithful in the order of the gospel.¹⁷

Kiffen reasoned that faithfulness to the King of the church demanded both a separation of believers from the corrupt congregations of those who sought to strip away Christ's authority for themselves, as well as the formation of true churches that are submissive to the authority of Christ's Word.

The passage of time did little to alter the denomination's position on Christ's lordship over his church through his Word. Throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, the pastors within the Northamptonshire Association sought to instruct their members regarding various doctrines in a series of circular letters. One topic these ministers saw fit to expound repeatedly was the doctrine of the church. In 1767, just two years after the association was born, they wrote to their members, confessing the same truths as their predecessors. "Your constitution [as a church] is not human, but divine; not founded on human assemblies, or councils, whether of presbyters or prelates, of nobles or princes, cardinals or popes, which are all fallible; but on the infallible rule of God's word."¹⁸ Ten years later, the association revisited ecclesiology in their circular letter to their congregations, explaining the characteristics of a true church, to enable their members to "subject [their] souls and consciences to [Christ] as [their] supreme head, king, and law-giver."¹⁹

The Church's Membership

Defining a true church was a prominent concern among Particular Baptists. The 1644 London Confession described a local church in terms of its people, saying it is

¹⁷ William Kiffen, *A Brief Remonstrance of the Reasons and Grounds of Those Commonly Called Anabaptists, for Their Separation* (London, 1645), 8, emphasis original.

¹⁸ John Brown, *An Epistle from the Minister and Messengers, Assembled at Kettering, May 19 and 20, 1767* (Kettering, UK: T. Luckman, 1767), 1.

¹⁹ Ryland, *The Beauty of Social Religion*, 2.

“a company of visible saints, called and separated from the world, by the Word and the Spirit of God, to the visible profession of the faith of the gospel, being baptized into the faith, and joined to the Lord, and each other, by mutual agreement.”²⁰ This definition contains three intertwining characteristics of the church’s membership which functioned as the Particular Baptist litmus test for proper ecclesiology: regenerate church membership, believer’s baptism, and mutual agreement.

Regenerate Church Membership

Particular Baptists considered an unregenerate person who was also a church member to be contradictory. Instead, they asserted that congregations should consist only of those who had personally placed their faith in Christ for salvation. In their defense of this conviction, many Particular Baptist authors referred to Christians as “living” or “lively” stones, who were the only proper material for the temple of God.²¹ Gill effectively communicated the prevailing sentiment of his denomination: “Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, of the grace of the Spirit of God, he cannot enter, of right he ought not to enter, and, if known, ought not to be allowed to enter, into the kingdom of God, into a gospel-church-state; none but such who are begotten again to a lively hope of the heavenly inheritance.”²²

This conviction regarding the only proper materials for a true church prompted

²⁰ First London Confession, art. 33 (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 153–154).

²¹ See, for example, Benjamin Keach, *The Glory of a True Church and Its Discipline Displayed: Wherein a True Gospel-Church is Described* (London, 1697), 6: “The beauty and glory of which congregation does consist in their being all converted persons, or *lively stones*,” and Andrew Fuller, *The Complete Works of Rev. Andrew Fuller: With a Memoir of His Life, by Andrew Gunton Fuller*, ed. Joseph Belcher, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1845), 1:433: “The proper materials for the Christian temple are ‘lively stones;’ else they will not fit a living foundation, nor unite with other living stones in the building.” For other affirmations for regenerate church membership, see the First London Confession, art. 33 (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 153–154); the Second London Confession, 26.4 (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 284); Knollys, *Parable of the Kingdom of Heaven*, 4; Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, 3:230; Brown, *An Epistle from the Minister and Messengers*, 1.

²² Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, 3:230.

two practices designed to protect the integrity of church membership. The first practice was an evaluation of those seeking admittance into the assembly. Benjamin Keach (1640–1704) explained, “Every person before they are admitted members . . . must declare to the church . . . what God hath done for their souls, or their experiences of a saving work of grace upon their hearts; and also the church should enquire after, and take full satisfaction concerning their holy lives.”²³ The Baptists recognized the church’s responsibility to examine a person’s profession of faith prior to accepting him into the membership.²⁴ Accordingly, only those whose lives demonstrated evidence of the Spirit at work were admitted.²⁵

The second practice designed to guard regenerate membership was church discipline. Though the Particular Baptists strove to admit only regenerate people into their congregations, they recognized the limitations of human wisdom in perceiving a person’s true standing before God. They readily confessed, “The purest churches under heaven are subject to mixture and error.”²⁶ This reality demanded a process by which an individual could be removed from the church’s membership if his faith was determined to be false. Looking to Scripture, the Baptists latched on to church discipline as the means to expunge the unregenerate leaven from Christ’s body.²⁷ Any church member who gave evidence of a lack of true saving faith would be warned and, if unrepentant, removed from the congregation.

Church discipline proved to be a common practice within the Northamptonshire Association. During a certain ten-year period, the churches of the

²³ Keach, *The Glory of a True Church*, 6–7.

²⁴ Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, 3:232–233.

²⁵ Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, 53.

²⁶ Second London Confession, 26.3 (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 284).

²⁷ Keach, *The Glory of a True Church*, 21.

association collectively excluded over one hundred of its members.²⁸ Yet these proceedings were not chaotic displays of unbridled power. The circular letter of 1799 outlines the process of church discipline, along with its reasons. Church members were only to be excluded if they embraced heretical teaching that corrupted the gospel or if they lived blatantly sinful lives.²⁹ Additionally, each element of the church discipline process was to be characterized by love, which they considered to be “the grand secret of church discipline, and will do more than all other things put together towards insuring success.”³⁰

Believer’s Baptism

Another important element for the Particular Baptist understanding of a true church—which diverged from their Separatist predecessors—was believer’s baptism.³¹ Many leaders within the denomination defended the notion that individuals should only be allowed into membership if they had properly received the ordinance of baptism,³² and that baptism should only be administered on those professing faith in Christ.³³ A primary support for their position was the scriptural pattern of conversion, then baptism, then admittance to the church.³⁴ The practice of baptizing infants, therefore, was seen as a perversion of Scripture’s teaching and an attack on Christ’s kingly role over his church.³⁵

²⁸ The total number of excluded members between the years 1784–1793 was 103. See the circular letters of the Northamptonshire Particular Baptist association for the corresponding years.

²⁹ Andrew Fuller, *Discipline of the Primitive Churches Illustrated and Enforced* (Olney, UK: J. W. Morris, 1799), 10–12.

³⁰ Fuller, *Discipline of the Primitive Churches Illustrated and Enforced*, 6.

³¹ B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century, A History of the English Baptists* (Didcot, UK: The Baptist Historical Society, 1996), 62.

³² Keach, *The Glory of a True Church*, 5–6.

³³ First London Confession, art. 39 (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 155) and Second London Confession, 29.2 (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 291).

³⁴ Collins, *Believer’s Baptism from Heaven*, 7.

³⁵ Michael A. G. Haykin, *Kiffen, Knollys, and Keach* (Leeds, UK: Reformation Trust Today,

Contrary to the New Testament pattern, infant baptism inappropriately applied the sign of the new covenant to the unredeemed and included unbelievers in the holy community of Christ.³⁶ For the Particular Baptists, it did not matter that infant baptism was an “ancient and laudable” practice, for it did not have the “stamp of Holy Writ,” and therefore, “Not one” infant should be baptized, since they could neither “believe nor repent.”³⁷ Thus, the Baptists considered the practice of believer’s baptism an essential component to proper ecclesiology.³⁸

This perspective on baptism defined the whole movement, distinguishing them from the state church, as well as those Dissenters that maintained infant baptism. As a result, Baptists often endured harsh persecution and scorn from the broader religious society.³⁹ Yet the Particular Baptists were not moved from their convictions. They continued to baptize only believers by immersion prior to receiving them into church membership,⁴⁰ a practice they perceived to be an appropriate result of the Reformation.⁴¹

Though the Particular Baptists felt that paedobaptistic assemblies had departed from the biblical practice of baptism, they nevertheless maintained their validity as true

1996), 31.

³⁶ Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, 3:230.

³⁷ Hercules Collins, *Some Reasons for Separation from the Communion of the Church of England, and the Unreasonableness of Persecution upon the Account* (London: John How, 1682), 6–7.

³⁸ The Baptists further distinguished themselves in their view of baptism by maintaining that total immersion in water, and not merely sprinkling, was the only proper mode to fulfill the ordinance. See the First London Confession, art. 40 (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 155) and the Second London Confession, 29.4 (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 292).

³⁹ Preface to the First London Confession (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 142).

⁴⁰ This was the practice of the majority of Particular Baptist churches; however, exceptions did exist. Some congregations practiced open membership, in which non-baptized persons were allowed into membership. Well-known Particular Baptist figures who practiced open membership were John Bunyan and John Collett Ryland. See Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1987), 82, and T. S. H. Elwyn, *The Northamptonshire Baptist Association: A Short History 1764–1964* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, 1964), 34.

⁴¹ Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, 16–17.

churches.⁴² This attitude enabled later Baptists to develop meaningful relationships and ministry partnerships with Christians across denominational lines. For example, the Baptists of the Northamptonshire Association regularly enjoyed fellowship with churches and ministers outside their denomination.⁴³ John Newton (1725–1807) serves as one example. Several ministers within the association developed deep friendships with this Anglican minister who practiced infant baptism.⁴⁴ The association even asked Newton to preach at one of their annual meetings of pastors, demonstrating the degree of respect that existed between these men with very different views on this ordinance.⁴⁵

Mutual Agreement

Particular Baptists understood church membership as two-sided, that is to say, both the receiving church and the joining individual must agree to the procedure.⁴⁶ This focus served as a rebuttal to compulsory church membership. A Christian's association with a church should not spring from government compulsion, geographic location, or familial relationship. Instead, it must be voluntarily. "No man," Gill argued, "is to be forced into a church, or by any compulsory methods brought into it."⁴⁷ Each individual was personally responsible to submit to the rule of Christ by offering himself to a gospel church for membership. By adhering to this principle, the Particular Baptists again sought to protect the purity of the church against unregenerate membership.⁴⁸

⁴² Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, 45.

⁴³ Michael A. G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, His Friends and His Times* (Durham, UK: Evangelical Press, 1994), 110.

⁴⁴ Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 77.

⁴⁵ Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 113.

⁴⁶ Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, 3:231–232.

⁴⁷ Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, 3:232.

⁴⁸ If the government were allowed to regulate church involvement and impose religious association, church membership proved little more than an extension of one's citizenship. If churches included infants of believers into the community through baptism, church membership simply became a familial association. Both practices compelled people who were not united to Christ in becoming part of the

The way this voluntary association often revealed itself was through church covenants. These covenants, or formal agreements, highlighted Scripture's commands for Christian living within the body of Christ and called the church's members to walk according to New Testament instruction.⁴⁹ In order for a person to be brought into church membership, therefore, they needed to submit to the requirements of such a covenant.

Keach wrote,

And when admitted members before the church, they must solemnly enter into a covenant, to walk in the fellowship of that particular congregation and submit themselves to the care and discipline thereof, and to walk faithfully with God in all his holy ordinances, and there to be fed and have communion, and worship God there when the church meets (if possible) and give themselves up to the watch and charge of the pastor and ministry thereof.⁵⁰

Keach's explanation reflects the concern Particular Baptists had for godly, Christian living. These covenants functioned like a code of conduct for church members, defining how they were to live together as the body of Christ.

While some Particular Baptists refrained from establishing a formalized covenant, many congregations did adopt this practice.⁵¹ One example is the covenant developed by Olney Baptist Church in 1763, a church that eventually rose to prominence within the Northamptonshire Association. The covenant contained thirteen articles that outlined the responsibilities of members within their congregation.⁵² These duties included submission to the process of church discipline, commitment to faithfully attend church meetings and worship services, loving association with like-minded churches, and

church community.

⁴⁹ Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 106.

⁵⁰ Keach, *The Glory of a True Church*, 7.

⁵¹ Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, 48.

⁵² The church later dropped the thirteenth article, which pertained to the freedom of conscience regarding the issue of singing within the church. See Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, 107.

intentional evaluation of ministerial candidates who would spread the gospel abroad.⁵³

The Church's Worship

Particular Baptists believed that worshipping God was a primary task of local congregations.⁵⁴ Concerning the nature of worship, the pastors of the Northamptonshire Association confessed,

Worship consists in a deep and powerful sense of the infinite perfections and glories of God, expressed in the most ardent and pathetic manner, with the highest veneration and love for the divine nature and subsistences, agreeable to the revealed idea of God, and in exact correspondence to our connections with God, and obligations to him as redeemed souls, called by his Spirit, and made heirs of eternal salvation through Christ's blood and intercession.⁵⁵

Baptist leaders understood worship to be an experience that engaged both the heart and the mind. God's glory should fill Christians with awe and love for God, conveyed with deep emotion. Yet this worship experience must express itself properly. "The acceptable way of worshipping the true God," stated the Second London Confession, "is instituted by himself; and so is limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations, and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representations, or any other way, not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures."⁵⁶ Thus, the Particular Baptists declared their conviction that God, and not man, determined the proper mode and expression for worship in his Word. Any departure from or addition to Scripture's explicit teaching or pattern reflected corrupt worship.⁵⁷ Whether they were singing, praying, confessing sin, or preaching the Word, Baptists sought to worship in

⁵³ Peter B. Gravett, *Over Three Hundred Years of God's Grace: A Short History of Sutcliff Baptist Church* ([Olney, UK: Sutcliff Baptist Church], 1987), 23–25.

⁵⁴ Keach, *The Glory of a True Church*, 6; Knollys, *The Parable of the Kingdom of Heaven*, 5–6.

⁵⁵ Ryland, *The Beauty of Social Religion*, 9.

⁵⁶ Second London Confession, 22.1 (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 276–277).

⁵⁷ Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, 120.

spirit and truth.⁵⁸

One example of this principle in action is the day of public worship being Sunday, also commonly referred to as the Lord's Day. At the 1689 General Assembly of Particular Baptists, representatives from more than one hundred Particular Baptist congregations considered many questions pertaining to the proper worship of God. Regarding the Lord's Day, they concluded that Christians should observe Sunday for both public and private worship, "Because we find that day was set apart for the solemn worship of God by our Lord Jesus, and his holy apostles, through the infallible inspiration of the Holy Spirit."⁵⁹ For Particular Baptists, observance of the Lord's Day was a matter of obedience to Scripture's teaching. One hundred years later, ministers of the Northampton Association continued to instruct their people on how to properly worship God on that revered day.⁶⁰

Another expression of Particular Baptist worship was the primacy given to preaching. Particular Baptists always manifested a high view of the ministry of the Word. Keach wrote, "The ordinance of preaching, or administration of the gospel, is a rich pasture . . . the opening and explaining the word of the gospel is like the opening the pasture-gate. . . . The preaching of the gospel is the feeding of the soul."⁶¹ Gill also observed that preaching is "the means appointed of God for . . . gathering in his elect ones, for the perfecting the number of them in conversion, and for edification of the body, the church, and all its members."⁶² Such a high view of preaching produced great seriousness

⁵⁸ Ryland, *The Beauty of Social Religion*, 9.

⁵⁹ *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly of Diverse Pastors, Messengers and Ministering Brethren of the Baptized Churches* (London, 1689), 16.

⁶⁰ John Sutcliff, *The Authority and Sanctification of the Lord's-Day, Explained and Enforced* (Northampton, 1786).

⁶¹ Benjamin Keach, *A Golden Mine Opened: or, the Glory of God's Rich Grace Displayed in the Mediator to Believers* (London: William Marshall, 1694), 131–132.

⁶² Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, 3:253.

for the task. Pastors were expected to preach only “sound doctrine,” and not “airy and empty notions, corrupt and poisonous.”⁶³ Pastors who failed to fulfill their calling in preaching Scripture sinned against God,⁶⁴ resembling “blind and ignorant watchmen.”⁶⁵ The Particular Baptists held their ministers to a high standard because preaching was the climax of the worship experience when God himself confronted his people with his Word.⁶⁶

The administration of the ordinances was also a chief concern for Particular Baptists regarding the church’s worship. The Second London Confession defined these ordinances as “baptism and the Lord’s Supper . . . ordinances of positive, sovereign institution; appointed by the Lord Jesus the only Lawgiver, to be continued in his church to the end of the world.”⁶⁷ As with baptism, the Particular Baptists gave special attention to the proper recipient of the Lord’s Supper.⁶⁸ Unfortunately, a great division took place within the denomination regarding who were proper subjects to receive the elements of the table. On one side were the open communionists, those who maintained that the ordinance was open to all believers and that no additional conditions should be required for participation. On the other side were the strict Baptists, thus designated by their strict position on believer’s baptism by immersion as a prerequisite for admission to the Lord’s Table.⁶⁹ John Bunyan (1628–1688) identified with the open communionists, reasoning

⁶³ Keach, *A Golden Mine Opened*, 132.

⁶⁴ Hercules Collins, *The Temple Repaired: An Essay to Revive the Long-Neglected Ordinances of Exercising the Spiritual Gift of Prophecy for the Edification of the Churches and of Ordaining Ministers Duly Qualified* (London: William and Joseph Marshal, 1702), 23.

⁶⁵ Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, 3:253.

⁶⁶ Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, 129.

⁶⁷ Second London Confession, 28.1 (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 291).

⁶⁸ Second London Confession, 28.2, 30.8 (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 291, 295).

⁶⁹ Peter Naylor, *Calvinism, Communion, and the Baptists: A Study of English Calvinistic Baptists from the Late 1600s to the Early 1800s*, Studies in Baptist History and Thought (Cumbria, UK: Paternoster, 2003), 94.

that the strict Baptists had elevated baptism to a degree not warranted by Scripture.⁷⁰ William Kiffen, who represented the strict view, responded that the open communionists directly contradicted the example and teaching set forth in Scripture by permitting unbaptized persons to partake of the Lord's Supper.⁷¹

While strict communion proved more popular among Particular Baptists initially, open communion steadily gained ascendancy as the internal debate continued into the following centuries.⁷² Disagreement existed even between prominent figures within the Northamptonshire Association.⁷³ In a personal statement of faith, Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) confessed, “I . . . believe baptism as administered according to the primitive plan [believer's baptism by immersion], to be a pre-requisite to church communion; hence I judge, what is commonly called strict communion, to be consistent with the word of God.”⁷⁴ By contrast, John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825) esteemed the restrictive position as imposing man's rules on the Lord's table.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, these two men, as well as many others within the denomination, were able to maintain Christian unity in the face of what was a bitter controversy.

The Church's Mission

A later, yet significant, development of the Particular Baptist understanding of ecclesiology was the issue of evangelism and missions. Though the denomination experienced substantial growth initially, their numbers suffered serious decline through

⁷⁰ John Bunyan, *Differences in Judgment about Water-Baptism, No Bar to Communion* (London: John Wilkins, 1673), 14–15.

⁷¹ William Kiffen, *A Sober Discourse of Right to Church-Communion* (London: George Larkin, 1681), 17–18.

⁷² McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 83.

⁷³ Naylor, *Calvinism, Communion, and the Baptists*, 218–219.

⁷⁴ John Ryland, Jr., *The Work of Faith, the Labor of Love, and the Patience of Hope Illustrated in the Life and Death of the Reverend Andrew Fuller* (London: Button & Son, 1816), 107.

⁷⁵ Naylor, *Calvinism, Communion, and the Baptists*, 119.

the first half of the eighteenth century.⁷⁶ Several factors contributed to this decline, such as the religious discrimination expressed toward Dissenting congregations. Being outside of the state church, English law sought to restrict the influence of Particular Baptist ministers to their own congregations, a restriction to which the denomination seems to have succumbed.⁷⁷ Another factor, theological in nature, also resulted in decline within the churches. Through the influence of theologians like John Gill and John Brine (1703–1765), many Particular Baptists adopted High Calvinism,⁷⁸ a doctrine that denied unbelievers’ obligation to believe in Christ, as well as the church’s obligation to call the lost to repentance and faith.⁷⁹ Essentially, this view taught that since unbelievers are incapable of responding to the gospel in their unregenerate condition, they are not accountable to respond to the gospel. Moreover, churches need not call the lost to repentance since unbelievers are incapable of this spiritual duty. Consequently, many Particular Baptists refrained from offering the grace of the gospel to unbelievers.⁸⁰

The second half of the eighteenth century saw a progressive shift in thinking among Particular Baptists regarding the offer of the gospel to the lost, fueled especially by pastors of the Northamptonshire Association. In 1773, Caleb Evans (1737–1791), President of the Bristol Academy for training pastors, charged gospel ministers to convince people that Jesus was able and willing to save sinners.⁸¹ Robert Hall, Sr. (1728–1791), pastor of the Particular Baptist church in Arnesby and a founding member of the

⁷⁶ Haykin, “The Baptist Identity,” 141. Haykin notes that in the year 1715 there were 220 Particular Baptist churches in England and Wales, but that number had diminished to 150 congregations by 1750.

⁷⁷ Haykin, “The Baptist Identity,” 140.

⁷⁸ Haykin, “The Baptist Identity,” 140.

⁷⁹ Naylor, *Calvinism, Communion and the Baptists*, 165–166.

⁸⁰ Naylor, *Calvinism, Communion and the Baptists*, 185.

⁸¹ Raymond Brown, *The English Baptists of the 18th Century*, A History of the English Baptists (London: The Baptist Historical Society, 1986), 115.

Northamptonshire Association, published a book titled *Help to Zion's Travellers* (1781) in which he sought to remove “stumbling blocks” to the Christian faith and invite sinners to come to Jesus.⁸² Shortly thereafter, a prayer summons was proposed by John Sutcliff (1752–1814), the pastor of Olney Baptist Church at the Northamptonshire Association meeting of 1784. “The grand object in prayer,” the association affirmed, “is to be, that the Holy Spirit may be poured down on our ministers and churches, that sinners may be converted, the saints edified, the interests of religion revived, and the name of God glorified.”⁸³ Remarkably, the scope of the prayer summons stretched far beyond their own association, and even their own country. “We trust you will not confine your requests to your own societies, or to our own immediate connection; let the whole interest of the Redeemer be affectionately remembered, and the spread of the gospel to the most distant parts of the habitable globe be the object of your most fervent requests.”⁸⁴ Andrew Fuller also contributed to the rebuffing of High Calvinism when he published his work *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* in 1785. Contrary to Gill’s assertions, Fuller argued that sinners are obligated to accept the gospel, and that churches are therefore called to make known the offer of God’s grace.⁸⁵

Through these means, Particular Baptists began to recognize the church’s obligation and opportunity to reach the lost. This recovery of evangelistic work is emphasized especially in the Northamptonshire Association’s circular letter of 1777, which declared that one of God’s purposes for the church was to “allure awakened and inquiring souls to Christ, to be happy in his great and precious salvation.”⁸⁶

⁸² Brown, *The English Baptists of the 18th Century*, 115–116.

⁸³ John Ryland, Jr., *The Nature, Evidences, and Advantages of Humility* ([Northampton]: T. Dicey, 1784), 12.

⁸⁴ Ryland, *The Nature, Evidences, and Advantages of Humility*, 12.

⁸⁵ Naylor, *Calvinism, Communion and the Baptists*, 208.

⁸⁶ Ryland, *The Beauty of Social Religion*, 15.

Nothing has a greater tendency to allure, to encourage, to animate the hopes of the convinced sinners than the holy, cheerful, godlike tempers and conversation of the members of a gospel church. Thus, we show them that there is a reality, a beauty, a pleasure, in the ways of God. We comfort their hearts with an assurance that the Master we serve is good and great, generous and kind, mild and gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, severity, or hypocrisy. He that wins souls is wise, and do you not long for this honor of being wise, to win precious souls to Christ? Next to the salvation of our own souls, what can be imagined more dear, more excellent, more desirable, than to be the instruments of the salvation of our fellow sinners? O! Christians, if you have any ambition, or gratitude, or justice, or compassion, you will rouse up all your powers to this great and good work!⁸⁷

The association's desire for the gospel to spread to the lost demonstrated that the seed for Christian missions had been sown among the denomination, though its full blossom would not be realized until the eve of the century.

Conclusion

Particular Baptists possessed a rich heritage of ecclesiology, a doctrine which they considered to be beautiful. Several key factors of their understanding of the church are especially noteworthy. They believed the church's final authority was Jesus, the King of the church, and that he exercised his rule through his Word, having given each congregation the responsibility to order its own steps and walk according to his statutes. Those individuals included as members of the church were to be living stones, believers who had been baptized by immersion after professing faith in Christ, united to each other by mutual agreement to be a gospel church. Moreover, worship was to be determined by God, not man. Finally, the church was to strive for the spread of the gospel among the lost. It was into this ecclesiological context that William Carey entered his pastoral ministry.

⁸⁷ Ryland *The Beauty of Social Religion*, 15.

CHAPTER 3

“MAY WE TAKE HEED TO THE MINISTRY”: CAREY’S ECCLESIOLOGICAL FORMATION AND PRAXIS

One of the most significant developments of Carey’s life was his transition as a young man from a devoted Anglican to a Particular Baptist minister. This ecclesiological shift not only impacted Carey, but also the whole Christian world. What might the church’s involvement in the Great Commission (or lack thereof) look like had Carey never joined the Baptists or become a Baptist pastor? Perhaps that question is impossible to answer, but what is certain is that the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society, Carey’s extensive work in India, and the impact of his ministry around the world depended on his union with the Particular Baptists. In a striking way, therefore, the modern missions movement was born out of Carey’s ecclesiology. This chapter will consider key events in the formation of Carey’s ecclesiological convictions, as well as their expression within the two churches he pastored prior to serving as a missionary, demonstrating the significant role ecclesiology played in Carey’s life.

Carey’s Ecclesiological Formation

Of the many circumstances that shaped Carey’s early life, two are exceptionally noteworthy for their ecclesiological association: his departure from the Church of England, and his acceptance of believer’s baptism. These events signaled the formation of Carey’s baptistic ecclesiology. The nature of Christ’s authority over his church, and the church’s expression of worship to her risen Lord loomed large in the young Carey’s mind, compelling him to consider the scriptural teaching of these important doctrines.

Embracing Dissent

The struggle for religious freedom dominated the English landscape throughout the seventeenth century. Nonconformity gained momentum as more ministers and churches embraced Separatist principles that drove a wedge between them and the national church.¹ The reaction of legislators was to enact numerous laws that “deprived [nonconformists] of all their religious and a great part of their civil rights.”² Much changed in 1689. With the passing of the Act of Toleration,³ a great deal of the overt oppression against Separatists ended, but not entirely. The following century continued to witness society’s prejudice and resentment toward Dissenters.⁴

As a young man, Carey encapsulated such resentment. The son and grandson of Anglican parish clerks, he was fervent in his support of the Church of England and scorned those who adopted nonconformity.⁵ Interestingly, when he started his apprenticeship as a shoemaker, Carey learned that his fellow apprentice—John Warr—was a dissenting Congregationalist. The two youths frequently conversed about religious subjects that often digressed into arguments.⁶ These disputes may have centered on their ecclesiological differences, such as the government’s role in the affairs of the church, a chief contrast between them. Regardless of the content, these conversations initially served to rouse Carey’s passion for the Anglican position. Within a few years, however, that devotion began to wane. “My opinions,” Carey explained, “insensibly underwent a

¹ Some historians estimate over 120,000 Nonconformists lived in England and Wales by the mid-seventeenth century. See Clive D. Field, “Counting Religion in England and Wales: The Long Eighteenth Century, c. 1680–c. 1840,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 63, no. 4 (October, 2012): 696.

² Henry C. Vedder, *A Short History of the Baptists* (1907; repr., Philadelphia, PA: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1951), 231.

³ The actual title of the legislation was “An Act for Exempting their Majesties’ Protestant Subjects dissenting from the Church of England from the penalties of certain laws.” See J. H. Y Briggs, “Baptists and the Wider Community,” in *Challenge and Change: English Baptist Life in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Stephen Copson and Peter J. Morden (Didcot, UK: The Baptist Historical Society, 2017), 124.

⁴ J. H. Y Briggs, “Baptists and the Wider Community,” 124.

⁵ Eustace Carey, *Memoir of William Carey, D. D.* (London: Jackson and Walford, 1836), 9–10.

⁶ Carey, *Memoir of William Carey*, 9–10.

change, so that I relished evangelical sentiments more and more.”⁷ His sentiments did not remain imperceptible for long. On a wintery Sunday, early in 1779, Carey listened as a Dissenting pastor exhorted his audience to render total devotion to Christ. The message seemed to speak directly to the young apprentice, and he immediately determined to leave the Church of England, in order to “bear the reproach of Christ among the Dissenters.”⁸

Some historians have interpreted Carey’s decision to leave the Church of England as evidence of his individualistic spirit.⁹ For example, the Dutch scholar A. H. Oussoren states, “[Carey] wants to be free. Free from the official Church. . . . He mentally takes the side of the ‘rebels’ in America. He likes their desire for freedom. When studying the Scriptures, he is individualistic. For he does not subject himself to the opinions of the Established Church . . . He wants to be free from their dullness.”¹⁰ This description portrays Carey as if he were a rebel seeking an occasion to buck against authority. The gradual nature of Carey’s ecclesiological shift, however, demonstrates that such a view is misleading. More than three years elapsed from Carey’s first significant interaction with Dissenters to his eventual departure from the Church of England.¹¹ A young man infatuated by notions of independence would hardly have waited so long to make such a change. What, then, prompted Carey’s parting with Anglicanism? He became convinced that the principles of the Dissenting church were more biblical—or as

⁷ Carey, *Memoir of William Carey*, 10.

⁸ Carey, *Memoir of William Carey*, 12–13.

⁹ For an excellent work that argues against the false perception of Carey as an individualist and instead illustrates his network of friends and how they influenced his life, see Michael Haykin, *The Missionary Fellowship of William Carey* (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2018).

¹⁰ A. H. Oussoren, *William Carey Especially His Missionary Principles* (Leiden, Netherlands: A. W. Sijthoff’s Uitgeversmaatschappij N. V., 1945), 16.

¹¹ Carey stated that he began his apprenticeship and met Warr when he was about fourteen years of age, but he did not join with the Dissenters until 1779 when he was seventeen years old. See Carey, *Memoir of William Carey*, 8–13.

Carey describes them, “more evangelical”— than those of the Established Church.¹² Submission to Christ’s authority as expressed through his Word, therefore, demanded a break from the religious community of his past. Carey’s ecclesiological transition, therefore, does not signify his revolt against authority, but rather his submission to the church’s greatest authority—Christ.

Baptistic Convictions

Carey’s ecclesiology continued to mature in the years following his union with the Dissenters. The most notable example of this development was his changing view on baptism. As an infant, Carey had been baptized within the Anglican community and had doubtless observed the administration of this rite many times within his childhood parish. Carey’s view of baptism, therefore, would have aligned with that of the national church. Ian Birch explains that the Church of England,

[Emphasized] the sacramental, soteriological dimension of baptism. According to the Prayer Book, a child was brought to baptism bearing the burden of sin and guilt inherited from Adam. Baptism, therefore, was understood to be an event of regeneration, an engrafting into the body of Christ. . . . Baptism was to be administered to every child in the parish, indiscriminately, on the basis that they belonged to the national church.¹³

Carey’s understanding of the ritual met little scrutiny after he left the state church. The Congregational gathering where he worshipped also performed infant baptism, a practice not uncommon among Dissenting churches.¹⁴ Only in Baptist circles was the tradition denounced, for they maintained that personal faith in Christ was a necessary prerequisite to the ordinance.¹⁵

¹² Carey, *Memoir of William Carey*, 12.

¹³ Ian Birch, *To Follow the Lamb Wheresoever He Goeth: The Ecclesial Polity of the English Calvinist Baptists 1640–1660* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017), 39.

¹⁴ Carey, *Memoir of William Carey*, 14.

¹⁵ Second London Confession, 29.2 quoted in William Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 2nd ed. (1969; repr., Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2011), 291.

Over time, Carey began to feel doubts regarding the baptism of infants. It is not clear what ideas first led Carey to question a practice he had always known, though he once stated that his mind was initially turned to the subject after hearing a sermon preached in support of infant baptism.¹⁶ His misgivings continued to increase, as evidenced by the fact that he refrained from having his own daughter baptized after her birth in 1782.¹⁷ Whatever the cause for his doubts, Carey resolved to search the Scriptures for himself, in order to settle the issue in his own mind. Eventually, his investigation convinced him that the proper subjects of baptism were believers, and the proper mode was immersion. Accordingly, Carey again sought to bring himself under the authority of Christ. He was baptized in the Nene River by John Ryland, Jr. on October 5, 1783.

Carey's adherence to Baptist principles set a trajectory for the rest of his life. Consider, for example, that when Carey was submerged in the waters of baptism, he was also immersed into a new society of companions and fellow gospel-laborers, such as John Sutcliff, John Ryland, Jr., and Andrew Fuller, men whom Michael Haykin describes as "utterly essential to Carey's achievements as a missionary on the Indian subcontinent."¹⁸ Haykin continues,

There is little doubt that Carey's friendship with a number of like-minded Baptist pastors and missionaries was indispensable to the transformative impact of his life. These men took the time to think and reflect together, as well as to encourage one another and pray together. . . . And so began in earnest the globalization of the Christian faith.¹⁹

Carey's acceptance of credobaptism, therefore, cultivated the soil of friendship between

¹⁶ Carey, *Memoir of William Carey*, 17.

¹⁷ James R. Beck, *Dorothy Carey: The Tragic and Untold Story of Mrs. William Carey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 41.

¹⁸ Michael Haykin, *The Missionary Fellowship of William Carey* (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2018), 5.

¹⁹ Haykin, *The Missionary Fellowship of William Carey*, 9.

these men that enabled them to labor together for the spread of the gospel.

Of course, Carey's newfound beliefs did not lead him to cut off relationships with non-Baptists. From their earliest days, Particular Baptists had recognized the need to balance a strong commitment to the scriptural teaching on the ordinance of baptism with a gracious attitude toward those who held a different perspective.²⁰ Though examples abound, many historians point to Carey as a model for maintaining that balance. Timothy George observes, "Carey was intensely loyal to his Baptist identity . . . [yet] he also knew how to distinguish minor and secondary matters of doctrine from the evangelical essentials to which all Bible-believing Christians are committed."²¹ The great English preacher of the nineteenth century, Charles Spurgeon, also recognized this quality in Carey. "He had none of that false charity which might prompt some to conceal their belief for fear of offending others; but at the same time he was a man who loved all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ."²² Indeed, Carey did love all true Christians. Nevertheless, by becoming a Baptist, Carey's ecclesiological foundation was set, defining his future gospel ministry.

Carey's English Pastorates

Following his ecclesiological formation, Carey served as a pastor of two Baptist congregations in the Northamptonshire Association. The records of his ministry are far from numerous, yet one thing is clear: the ecclesiological doctrines of Carey's Particular Baptist forebearers were not trivial notions to the shoemaker turned preacher.

²⁰ James Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, Studies in Baptist History and Thought (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2008), 47–48.

²¹ Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Worcester, PA: Christian History Institute, 1998), 176–177.

²² "C.H. Spurgeon's tribute to William Carey," *The Baptist Times*, Supplement (April 16, 1992), 1, quoted in Michael Haykin, "'To Glorify Christ:' The Goal of Spurgeon's Preaching," *Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies Blog*, November 14, 2005, <http://andrewfullercenter.org/media/blog/2005/11/first?rq=spurgeon>.

Instead, they became his own deep-seated convictions that shaped his pastoral ministry.

Moulton Baptist Church

Carey first preached for the Baptist church in Moulton in 1785. Conditions in the small congregation were far from ideal: for ten years the church had remained pastorless, resulting in sporadic services and discouraged Christians.²³ At Carey's preaching, however, the believers seemed to revive and even witnessed several conversions.²⁴ Eventually, the church asked Carey to become their own minister. Previously, Carey had only served as a lay preacher and had never been properly commissioned to ministry.²⁵ Carey's friend John Sutcliff advised him to join "some respectable church, and [be] appointed to the ministry in a more regular way" before accepting a pastoral position.²⁶ An extract from the Olney Baptist Church minute book reveals that Carey accepted his friend's counsel:

1785. June 17. A request from William Carey of Moulton in Northamptonshire was taken into consideration. He has been and still is in connection with a society of people at Hackleton. He is occasionally engaged with acceptance in various places in speaking the Word. He bears a very good moral character. He is desirous of being sent out from some reputable and orderly church of Christ, into the work of the ministry.²⁷

After Carey was accepted into membership at Olney Baptist Church, he preached on a Sunday night, so that the congregation could evaluate his adequacy for ministry. Though the exact reason was never recorded, the congregation refrained from commissioning Carey. Perhaps they sensed in him a tendency common to new preachers

²³ Mary Drewery, *William Carey: A Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 25–26.

²⁴ S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey* (London: Wakeman Trust, 2008), 42.

²⁵ This practice of lay preaching, common among Baptist churches, afforded laymen the opportunity to preach the Word of God without being formally ordained to ministry, "But only under specific and well-defined guidelines. Anyone who went out to preach on his own was disorderly." Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, 113.

²⁶ Carey, *Memoir of William Carey*, 17.

²⁷ John Taylor, *Biographical and Literary Notices of William Carey, D.D.* (Northampton: Dryden Press, 1886), 1.

to focus on abstract, spiritual realities devoid of beneficial illustrations. Robert Hall noticed this inclination in Carey and critiqued him, “Brother Carey, you have no *likes* in your sermons. Christ taught that the kingdom of heaven was *like* to leaven hid in meal, *like* to a grain of mustard, etc. You tell us what things are, but never what they are like.”²⁸ Nevertheless, the church encouraged Carey to continue lay preaching until his gifts and calling could be reexamined.²⁹

If this decision discouraged Carey, it certainly did not dissuade him from continuing on as a lay preacher for the believers in Moulton and may even have matured his perspective on pastoral ministry. The Olney congregation’s hesitancy to commission Carey reflects their serious outlook on the office of pastor. Not all men are called by God to preach and shepherd Christ’s flock, and the church took seriously its responsibility to evaluate ministerial candidates. Carey began to understand the seriousness of this task, as evidenced in a letter he wrote to a fellow pastor, John Stranger (1742–1823):

The importance of those things that we have to do with ought always to impress our minds, in our private studies, our addresses to God, and our labors in the pulpit. The Word of God! What need to pray much and study closely, to give ourselves wholly to those great things, that we may not speak falsely for God. The Word of truth! Every article of it infinitely precious. O, that we may never trifle with so important things. The souls of men! Eternal things! All of utmost moment; their value beyond estimation, their danger beyond conception, and their duration equal with eternity. These, my dear friend, we have to do with; these we must give account of.³⁰

The following year, Carey’s ministry at Moulton seemed to bear fruit. In a letter to Sutcliff, Carey described the spiritual growth of the believers and expressed his desire that the church at Olney revisit his case and commission him to ministry. His disposition, however, was one of submission to the church’s wisdom and authority. “If they want more trial of my gifts, I shall be willing to wait till they are satisfied; if they are

²⁸ Carey, *Memoir of William Carey*, 625–626, emphasis original.

²⁹ Taylor, *Biographical and Literary Notices of William Carey*, 2.

³⁰ Taylor, *Biographical and Literary Notices of William Carey*, 80.

satisfied already, I should be glad if they would avoid delay. I wish, however, to leave it to their discretion.”³¹ After hearing Carey preach again, the church unanimously granted his request in the summer of 1786, sending him to “preach the Gospel, wherever God in his providence might call him.”³² The following year, Carey was officially ordained as pastor of the church in Moulton, with his friends Sutcliff, Ryland, and Fuller all taking part in the ceremony.³³

Chief among Carey’s priorities for the Moulton Baptists was the establishment of a church covenant. On October 1, 1786, he presented a seven-article document,³⁴ outlining the doctrines and conduct expected of the congregation’s members, which the church readily accepted.³⁵ Article seven of this covenant demonstrates Carey’s devotion to Particular Baptist scruples regarding church membership: “To receive such and only such into our communion as in the judgment of charity are, we think, born again, have been baptized according to the primitive mode of administering that ordinance, and profess their hearty approbation of and subjection to this our solemn church covenant.”³⁶ The church carefully observed such requirements, and in the span of two years admitted sixteen new members.³⁷

³¹ Taylor, *Biographical and Literary Notices of William Carey*, 36.

³² Taylor, *Biographical and Literary Notices of William Carey*, 2.

³³ It was not uncommon in the 18th century for men to function as the pastor of a church for one or two years prior to their official ordination to ministry.

³⁴ These articles called the members, 1: to adhere to the fundamental doctrines of Scripture, 2: to seek the good of the church, 3: to highly regard their pastor, 4: to love their fellow members, 5: to diligently fulfill Christian duties, 6: to live in a way that magnifies the gospel to unbelievers, and 7: to only accept into church membership baptized believers who agree to live according to the church covenant. For the full text of the church covenant, see Appendix 1.

³⁵ William Carey, “Moulton Baptist Church Minute Book,” October 1, 1786. The text of the minute book was provided in digital format by Margaret Williams, curator of the museum at Carey Baptist Church in Moulton.

³⁶ William Carey, “Moulton Church Covenant” (Northampton: October 1, 1786). The text of this covenant was provided in digital format by Margaret Williams, curator of the museum at Carey Baptist Church in Moulton.

³⁷ Carey, “Moulton Baptist Church Minute Book.”

With new growth came new struggles. In particular, Carey was required to lead the church in the unpleasant task of confronting the sins of different members. Article two in the church's covenant addressed this task, stating, "If called to the painful work of executing the penalties of Christ upon the breakers of the law of his house, we will endeavor to exercise it in the spirit of the gospel, without respect to persons."³⁸ The first instance was that of Elizabeth Britain, who was "charged with uttering passionate and unbecoming words."³⁹ The church at Moulton had not practiced church discipline for many years and was at a loss to know how to respond to the sins of its members. Carey made it a point of instruction, explaining that the church was to confront the offending party and call her to repentance. Thankfully, the believers responded positively to such instruction, as described by Carey in a letter to a friend, "Through the good hand of our God upon us I trust that it has been useful; and our people, who knew little or nothing of [church discipline's] utility, begin to see both its necessity, propriety, and usefulness."⁴⁰ In the case of Elizabeth Britain, she was restored to fellowship following her repentance. Not all experienced such restoration, however. For seven months, the church examined the case of Deborah Wood, who continually refused to attend public worship. Though repeated attempts were made to restore her, the church unanimously voted to exclude her from membership in May of 1788.⁴¹ The united decision of the church to exclude one of its own testifies to Carey's wise and loving leadership amidst this difficult task, two characteristics that Carey's friend Andrew Fuller described as essential for pastors leading their flocks through gospel discipline.⁴²

³⁸ Carey, "Covenant for the Church at Moulton."

³⁹ Carey, "Mouton Baptist Church Minute Book," February 1, 1787.

⁴⁰ Taylor, *Biographical and Literary Notices of William Carey*, 80.

⁴¹ Carey, "Mouton Baptist Church Minute Book," May 29, 1788.

⁴² Andrew Fuller, *The Complete Works of Rev. Andrew Fuller: With a Memoir of His Life*, by Andrew Gunton Fuller, ed. Joseph Belcher, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1845), 1:481.

The hard seasons were tempered by great affection between the pastor and his flock. The overall health of the church continued to improve, shaped by the ecclesiological principles of the Particular Baptists. In a letter to the Northamptonshire Association, the church rejoiced that “through the abundant mercy of God, peace and unanimity have prevailed amongst us through the year and we have reason to be thankful that we have the Word preached to our satisfaction, and we hope to our edification.”⁴³ Carey relished this ministry, stating that he considered the office of pastor as “the highest honor upon earth.”⁴⁴ His time with the small Moulton Church, however, soon drew to an end.

Harvey Lane Baptist Church

While Carey cut his teeth on pastoral ministry in Moulton, Harvey Lane Baptist Church in nearby Leicester found itself in grave straights. In the previous century, Benjamin Keach had warned that the church that neglected discipline would soon “lose its beauty and be polluted.”⁴⁵ Such was the condition of Leicester congregation. Certain members—including two deacons—were frequently intoxicated, yet the pastor failed to lead his church in confronting the offenders.⁴⁶ This hesitancy may have resulted from the minister’s own struggles with drunkenness which eventually led to his resignation from ministry in 1788 and his exclusion from the church in 1789.⁴⁷ During this time, twenty-three ministers assisted the troubled congregation by occasionally filling its pulpit. Eventually, the church set its eye on one man in particular, whom they hoped would

⁴³ Taylor, *Biographical and Literary Notices of William Carey*, 5.

⁴⁴ Carey, *William Carey*, 45.

⁴⁵ Benjamin Keach, *The Glory of a True Church and Its Discipline Displayed: Wherein a True Gospel-Church is Described* (London, 1697), vi.

⁴⁶ Carey, *William Carey*, 53.

⁴⁷ Sheila Mitchell and Graham Lee, *Not Disobedient: A History of United Baptist Church, Leicester including Harvey Lane 1760–1845, Belvoir Street 1845–1940, and Charles Street 1831–1940* (Leicester, UK: Mitchell, 1984), 20.

become their new pastor: William Carey.⁴⁸

Carey seriously weighed this possibility. He was inclined to accept the ministry in Leicester, since the poor congregation in Moulton was unable to financially provide for the needs of his growing family.⁴⁹ He knew, however, that the struggle to resettle the Harvey Lane Baptists on biblical principles demanded a cost. Sutcliff himself confessed that the difficulties of this ministry would discourage most pastors.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Carey accepted the invitation of the troubled church, starting his ministry among them in the summer of 1789.

As at Moulton, Carey immediately threw himself into the work of ministry at Leicester. He preached several times a week, including an exposition of the book of Revelation that lasted more than a year.⁵¹ He also allocated certain evenings to preach in the surrounding towns and villages. While his efforts seemed to produce fruit initially, division began to characterize the fellowship. “Far from enjoying harmony and peace, we are divided three against two, and two against three.”⁵² Many members also continued in sinful lifestyles. After two years, the situation became so horrendous that Carey resorted to an extreme course of action. John C. Marshman (1794–1861) explained,

Mr. Carey made the most strenuous efforts to root out these errors; but, meeting with little success, he formed the bold plan of at once dissolving the church and constructing a new association, into which none should be admitted but those who agreed to subscribe a declaration that they would in future adhere with rigid fidelity to the doctrines and the discipline of the New Testament.⁵³

Carey’s plan sheds light on his doctrine of the church. He knew, as the

⁴⁸ Carey, *William Carey*, 54.

⁴⁹ Michael A. G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, His Friends and His Times* (Durham, UK: Evangelical Press, 1994), 189.

⁵⁰ Carey, *Memoir of William Carey*, 34.

⁵¹ Drewery, *William Carey*, 33.

⁵² Carey, *William Carey*, 56.

⁵³ John C. Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1859), 1:13.

Northamptonshire Baptist ministers had explained in a previous Circular Letter, that “in the church, God is made known; and it is the highest duty, honor, and privilege of the people of God to represent his pure and perfect character to the world.”⁵⁴ The Baptist Church in Leicester, however, offered a poor representation of their God. The leaven of disunity and antinomianism so characterized the church that its pastor saw no hope for reviving its testimony apart from the drastic action of dissolving the church, reestablishing it on gospel principles, and refusing to admit any who declined to abide by such tenets. Yet, such radical action was necessary for the sake of God’s honor among his people.

Remarkably, the majority of the church followed Carey’s lead. The church was dissolved, a church covenant based on an older version was drawn up, and a new congregation was born.⁵⁵ God favorably answered Carey’s prayer included at the end of the Leicester church covenant, “We look up to the strong for strength and daily influence—Hold thou us up, O Lord, and we shall be safe, Amen.”⁵⁶

The reestablishment of Harvey Lane Baptist Church marked the turning point in Carey’s ministry at Leicester. The bitterness of Carey’s first two years among them blossomed into a sweet communion of joyful saints. Carey was formally ordained as minister of the revived congregation in 1791, and a great spirit of love prevailed. Carey later described the newly reformed church as his “dear charge,”⁵⁷ his “dear, dear

⁵⁴ John Ryland, Sr., *The Beauty of Social Religion; or, the Nature and Glory of a Gospel Church* ([Northampton]: T. Dicey, 1777), 14.

⁵⁵ Mitchell and Lee, *Not Disobedient*, 25. See Appendix 2 for Leicester Church Covenant.

⁵⁶ William Carey, “Leicester Church Covenant,” quoted in Haykin, *The Missionary Fellowship of William Carey*, 135.

⁵⁷ Terry G. Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 2000), 25.

friends,”⁵⁸ and as “very near my heart.”⁵⁹ The members also felt great affection for the one who had led them out of such shameful conditions, referring to him as their “dear and beloved pastor.”⁶⁰

As the church experienced greater peace internally, Carey emphasized its need to reach beyond its walls with the gospel. Throughout his time at Leicester, Carey travelled to surrounding towns to preach the gospel, but he was not content to do this task alone. He saw the proclamation of the gospel as the task of the church, not simply the minister. Hence, he constantly taught the Leicester Baptists to “care about Christ’s kingdom,” and to pray for the salvation of the lost.⁶¹ The church listened to the admonitions of its pastor and joined in his endeavors to pray for and proclaim the advancement of God’s kingdom. God honored the prayers and efforts of the small congregation, for more than sixty people were added to their number in the time Carey was pastor.⁶² Additionally, following the reestablishment of the church, Carey was never required to exclude a member for sinful living.⁶³

Thus, Carey’s ministry in Leicester bore much fruit. Many sinners experienced conversion and believers were strengthened in the faith. Sheila Mitchell and Graham Lee note,

Carey’s stay at Harvey Lane was not a long one, yet the ministry of a man so well-informed, so dedicated to a cause...could not but be effective. The membership had become strong and cohesive; it had benefitted from good organization and from Carey’s regular, well-prepared and sound—if unspectacular—preaching of the Word of God.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 27.

⁵⁹ Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 45.

⁶⁰ Carey, *William Carey*, 102.

⁶¹ Carey, *William Carey*, 101.

⁶² Mitchell and Lee, *Not Disobedient*, 30.

⁶³ Mitchell and Lee, *Not Disobedient*, 30.

⁶⁴ Mitchell and Lee, *Not Disobedient*, 27.

Yet Carey never measured his success by the amount of people converted or the number of Christians who experienced spiritual growth, though both ambitions were close to the pastor's heart. Instead, he measured his success by faithful obedience. Such was Carey's concern, as he stated in a letter to a friend,

May we take heed to the ministry that we have received of the Lord, that we fulfill it. May we reprove, rebuke, exhort, be diligent, in season and out of season, always abounding in the work of the Lord. For things so great, who is sufficient? Yet we need not be discouraged, since Christ has said, "Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world!"⁶⁵

Conclusion

As it has been demonstrated, Particular Baptist ecclesiology shaped Carey's life in a variety of significant ways. His acceptance of Christ's authority over his church as expressed in his Word and exercised through individual congregations prompted him to abandon his Anglican heritage, while his transformed view on believer's baptism paved the way for him to join the Particular Baptists. The formation of these ecclesiological convictions reached full maturity while serving as a pastor in the Northamptonshire Particular Baptist Association. His devotion to the preaching of the Word, the authority of Scripture, the purity of the church, and the importance of evangelism reveal that the doctrine of the church taught by the Particular Baptists resided deep in Carey's own heart. These ecclesiological convictions soon traveled with him to the other side of the world.

⁶⁵ Taylor, *Biographical and Literary Notices of William Carey*, 80.

CHAPTER 4

“I CAN WITH PLEASURE INFORM YOU THAT A BAPTIST CHURCH IS FORMED”: CAREY’S ECCLESIOLOGICAL FOCUS ON THE MISSION FIELD

When Carey embarked on his missionary venture in 1793, he recognized in new ways the importance of ecclesiology. Carey was keenly aware of his own need for involvement in a body of believers—a conviction that drove him to pursue church fellowship on the mission field. Furthermore, Carey believed one of his primary tasks as a missionary to be the establishment of gospel churches. Such was the example of Christian history. In his work, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (1792), Carey noted that both in the times of the apostles and in subsequent ages, the advance of Christ’s kingdom to unevangelized lands was accompanied by the foundation of new churches.¹ Faithfulness to the task of missions, therefore, demanded devotion to ecclesiology. The following chapter will examine Carey’s commitment to his ecclesiological convictions while serving in India. This examination will demonstrate that in spite of the changing circumstances of his life, Carey’s zeal for the local church remained steadfast throughout his missionary career.

In Pursuit of Church

Carey’s initial years of missionary service were marked by the absence of ecclesiological involvement. This absence was neither Carey’s desire, nor his choice. The transitory nature of sailing to India, as well as the difficulty in finding permanent

¹ William Carey, *An Enquiry in the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (Leicester, UK: Ann Ireland, 1792), 18–37.

residence in a foreign land hindered his ability to faithfully participate in the life of a local church. Such circumstances produced great sorrow in the new missionary, who yearned for fellowship with the people of God.² In time, however, Carey again experienced the joys of social religion.

Isolation from a Local Church

On June 13, 1793, Carey embarked from English shores aboard the *Kron Princessa Marie* for missionary service in India. Accompanying him were his wife Dorothy (1756–1807) and their four sons, along with his sister-in-law Kitty Plackett and fellow missionary John Thomas (1757–1801). Throughout their five-month voyage, this party of eight attempted to maintain their spiritual devotion in the midst of a trying environment. Carey faithfully led his household in family worship and also conducted two worship services each Sunday for those on board.³ Attendance rarely exceeded a few people in addition to their own company, a great cause of lament for Carey. “Sometimes,” he wrote, “I am quite dejected when I see the impenetrability of the hearts of those with us—they hear us preach on the Lord’s Day—but we are forced to witness their disregard for God all the week—O may God give us greater success among the heathen.”⁴

As their ship weathered turbulent swells, dark clouds formed over Carey’s own soul. Carey recorded these spiritual struggles in his journal:

² Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Worcester, PA: Christian History Institute, 1998), 104.

³ *Serampore Letters: Being the Unpublished Correspondence Between William Carey and Other with John Williams*, edited by Leighton and Mornay Williams (London: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1892), 33. Family worship was an important element of personal religion in the Particular Baptist community. In 1787, the ministers of the Northamptonshire Particular Baptist Association (including Carey) sent a circular letter to their congregations, instructing their people on the importance and practice of family worship. According to the letter, the essential elements of the spiritual discipline were to read Scripture, sing, and pray together as a family. See Richard Hopper, *The Nature and Importance of Family and Closet Religion* ([Northampton]: T. Dicey, 1787).

⁴ Terry G. Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 2000), 6.

July 5, 1793: A most unprofitable creature. I have need to read the Word of God more and above all I want a heart to feed upon it.

July 22: A wretched day full of chagrin: discontent and pride, no heart for God nor for divine things; spent the day in reading, but to no purpose.

July 23–Aug 2: I have in general reason to mourn that I have no more of the spiritual warfare maintained in my soul, and no more communion with God. I feel myself to be much declined upon the whole in more spiritual exercises of religion.

Aug 20: I have reason to lament over the barrenness of soul, and am sometimes much discouraged, for if I am as dead and stupid, how can I expect to be of any use to the heathen.⁵

As these entries testify, Carey perceived in himself a waning of Christian devotion.

Lethargy in the things of God and constant temptation darkened his spiritual horizon.

It is interesting to note that the advent of Carey's struggles coincided with his first significant season of church absence in more than twelve years. For the previous eight years, he had faithfully served as a Baptist minister, and the four years prior to his union with the Baptists his membership had been among the Congregationalists. Sailing toward India, Carey sorrowfully found himself in the undesirable predicament of a Christian without a church. True, he was able to worship with his family and fellow shipmates. Yet, Carey did not consider these gatherings as constituting a local church, as evidenced by the fact that throughout the entire voyage, this little band of worshipping Christians never partook of the Lord's Supper.⁶ Additionally, the transitory nature of their voyage made the constitution of a church inadvisable. Carey was forced to wait to formally organize a congregation until he obtained more permanent accommodations. His struggle with isolation, however, was only beginning.

After five months at sea, the missionaries arrived at India's populous port city of Calcutta. Carey's initial joy of arriving in India diminished as he faced numerous

⁵ Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 5–6.

⁶ George, *Faithful Witness*, 114. As a Particular Baptist, Carey maintained that the Lord's Supper was not a private ordinance, free to be administered in any setting. Rather, it was a public ordinance to be administered only in the context of a local church. Thus, by refraining to partake of the Lord's Supper, Carey demonstrates that he did not view this gathering as a church. See John Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, rev. ed. (London: W. Winterbotham, 1796), 3:327.

concerns for the welfare of his family. Thomas' wife, having arrived in India on a different vessel one month previously, had arranged for housing accommodations for the two families, which quickly depleted the group's small financial resources. Carey faced the decision to either borrow money to meet their expenses or to part with Thomas in order to find separate—and less expensive—living accommodations. He chose the latter.

Carey soon realized this plan of action was easier said than done. In less than three months, the new missionary moved his family four times in an attempt to find a home.⁷ The repeated transitions did little to help his family, who constantly struggled with sickness and bemoaned their lack of the “necessaries of life.”⁸ Carey had known similar deprivation in England eleven years earlier. In 1782, the Careys had faced deep poverty, along with ague fever that took the life of their firstborn daughter Ann.⁹ Perhaps the memories of these past sufferings fueled Carey's desperate attempts to provide for his family in their current circumstances.

A haven for his family was not the only yearning Carey felt during this season. Among his chief desires was the longing for church fellowship. He wrote in his journal, “O, may I again taste the sweets of social religion which I have given up, and see in this land of darkness a people formed for God.”¹⁰ Carey mourned his isolation from fellow Christians, which he saw as one of the primary sources of his spiritual struggles: “Felt much remains of dullness and indisposition to the things of God. I see now the value of Christian society.”¹¹ “A day of business, hurry, sorrow, and dejection; I seem cast out of

⁷ Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 7–8.

⁸ Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 8.

⁹ James R. Beck, *Dorothy Carey: The Tragic and Untold Story of Mrs. William Carey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 39–40.

¹⁰ Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 8. When Carey employs the term “social religion,” it should be understood in light of the Particular Baptist usage of that phrase, indicating the life and worship of a gospel church. See John Ryland, Sr., *The Beauty of Social Religion; or, the Nature and Glory of a Gospel Church* ([Northampton]: T. Dicey, 1777).

¹¹ Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 18.

the Christian world. . . . I have no friend to stir me up. . . . I have not the blessing of a Christian friend to sympathize with me.”¹² Though he found comfort in his missionary calling, he still confessed, “I never felt the loss of social religion so much as now.”¹³

A Baptist Church is Formed

Providentially, Carey received an offer to manage an indigo factory owned by the East Indian Company in the city of Mudnabati. Seeing this opportunity as a way to provide for his loved ones and establish his ministry, Carey gladly accepted the offer, though it meant a 250-mile journey for his family.¹⁴ This move provided more than stability and income. It also put Carey in proximity with a number of European believers. A group of nearly twenty people within a range of 100 miles gathered for worship from time to time in this region, though their distance from one another often proved a hindrance.¹⁵ Nevertheless, when they were able to gather, the effect on Carey’s soul was profound.

June 16, 1794: This day I preached twice . . . and though our congregation did not exceed sixteen yet the pleasure that I felt in having my tongue once more loosed I can hardly describe. Was enabled to be faithful, and felt a sweet affection for immortal souls.

June 17–18: Had much serious conversation and sweet pleasure these days; I feel now as if released from a prison, enjoying the sweets of Christian fellowship again.¹⁶

Carey immediately made plans to organize a formal church among this group of believers. In a letter to John Sutcliff, dated August 9, 1794, Carey reported, “We are

¹² Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 23.

¹³ *Serampore Letters*, 42.

¹⁴ George, *Faithful Witness*, 105.

¹⁵ Eustace Carey, *Memoir of William Carey, D. D.* (London: Jackson and Walford, 1836), 191.

¹⁶ Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 33–34.

now just upon the point of forming a gospel church.”¹⁷ This brief comment bears great significance. While Carey benefited greatly from his time with these Christians, he still believed that a gathering of believers—even for the purpose of worship—did not automatically constitute them as a local church. Like his Particular Baptist predecessors, Carey believed that a church consisted of baptized believers who were united to each other by mutual agreement to be a visible representation of Christ’s body in a specific location.¹⁸ Furthermore, Scripture taught that a church was to consist of officers and members, as well as observe the ordinances, neither of which characterized this Christian gathering. Carey, therefore, again sought complete submission to the church’s Lord by pursuing such a community among these believers.

Carey’s letter to Sutcliff proved more optimistic than realistic. For more than a year, Carey strove to covenant into a church-state with some of the believers around him, yet without success due to their great distance from one another.¹⁹ Yet Carey persisted in his purpose, and in December of 1795, he could write to the Baptist Missionary Society:

I can with pleasure inform you of our welfare and that of our children, and further, that *a Baptist church is formed in this distant quarter of the globe*. Our members are but four in number: Mr. Thomas, myself, a Mr. Long, and a Mr. Powel. . . . Mr. Long had been baptized by Mr. Thomas when he was in India before; and on the first of November this year, I baptized Mr. Powel. At this place, Malda, we were solemnly united, that day, as a church of Christ, and the Lord's Supper has since been twice administered among us.²⁰

Particular Baptists taught that when church members transferred to a new location, they should request a letter of dismissal from their previous church in order to

¹⁷ Carey, *Memoir of William Carey*, 193.

¹⁸ See First London Confession, art. 33, quoted in William Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 2nd ed. (1969; repr., Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2011), 153–154.

¹⁹ Carey, *Memoir of William Carey*, 237–38.

²⁰ Carey, *Memoir of William Carey*, 250, emphasis added. This occasion was the first in which Carey partook of the Lord’s Supper since leaving England more than two years previously. See George, *Faithful Witness*, 114.

join with another faithful congregation in their new place of residence.²¹ This practice helped pastors maintain accountability over those souls in their care. Sometime after the establishment of this church in India, Carey requested his own letter of dismissal from his congregation in Leicester, asking them to remove him from their roles so he could be added to the registrar of the church in Mudnabati. Earlier in his Christian faith, Carey had not seen such action as necessary. As a new believer, he had joined a Congregational church in Hackleton, yet had departed from that fellowship with no request for dismissal.²² Having grown in his understanding of the importance of church accountability and membership, he wrote to the church of Harvey Lane, explaining his desire for dismissal. When the church received his request, they noted in their records:

By a letter from Mr. William Carey (our former, worthy pastor whom we resigned to the mission in Hindostan in Asia) we were informed that a small church was formed at Mudnabati and he wished a dismissal from us to it, that he might become a member, and have also an opportunity of becoming its pastor. We, therefore, agreed not only to send his dismissal but also to insert it at large in our church book, to preserve to posterity the memory of an event so pleasing and important; the planting of a gospel church in Asia.²³

Carey remained in Mudnabati for five years, during which time he continued to serve as the pastor for this Baptist church. Unfortunately, detailed records of this church do not exist. Nevertheless, the first Baptist congregation of Mudnabati stands as evidence of Carey's devotion to proper ecclesiology. He was not content to lay aside his convictions due to his changing circumstances. Rather, he sought to form a society of baptized believers, united in faith, properly observing the ordinances, and living under the authority of the church's King.

²¹ Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, 3:285.

²² James Culross, *William Carey* (New York, NY: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1882), 12–13.

²³ John Taylor, *Biographical and Literary Notices of William Carey, D.D.* (Northampton: Dryden Press, 1886), 7–8.

Expansion and Struggle

Carey never again found himself in such a prolonged season outside the context of a local church. Instead, opportunity to participate in congregations continued and even expanded to other cities. He and his friends also began to witness the conversion of many Indian people, as well as the formation of native churches. Along with this expansion, however, came struggles.

The Church in Serampore

In 1799, the Baptist Missionary Society appointed four new missionaries and their families to join Carey in his gospel labor in India. Among these ministers were Joshua Marshman (1768–1837) and William Ward (1769–1823), men who served alongside Carey in a sweet union for decades.²⁴ This group originally intended to join Carey in Mudnabati but was forced to seek refuge in the Danish city of Serampore—nearly 250 miles away—due to the imminent threat of being deported by the British-owned East India Company. Thus, in January of 1800, Carey made the hard decision to uproot his family in order to join his new co-laborers in Serampore.

Though unexpected, the shift to Serampore proved a great benefit to the small band of Baptists in a number of ways. In Serampore, for example, the missionaries received the favor and support of the city's Danish governor, Colonel Bie. While British authorities outright refused the new missionaries' admittance to British territory, Governor Bie enthusiastically welcomed them, longing to help establish a Protestant church and mission.²⁵ Thus, by settling in Serampore, the missionaries experienced a security that was previously unknown. Greater opportunities for ministry were also waiting in Serampore. While Carey occasionally preached to crowds of several hundred

²⁴ Also in this group of missionaries were Daniel Brunson and William Grant. Sadly, Grant died less than three weeks after arriving in India, and Brunson died within two years. Another missionary, John Fountain, had joined Carey in 1796, but he also died in 1800.

²⁵ S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey* (London: Wakeman Trust, 2008), 177.

at his former residence, the large population of the Danish settlement guaranteed that “more would hear the gospel in a week in Serampore than in six months in Mudnabati.”²⁶ In addition to preaching, the missionaries developed plans for establishing schools and printing the Bible in the local language.

Perhaps the greatest advantage for the missionaries, however, was ecclesiological in nature. Now that numerous believers resided in a common location, distance no longer impeded the gathering together for worship. Accordingly, the small company consecrated April 24, 1800, as a day of thanksgiving, in which they united themselves together into a church-state. The group later recorded the events of the day:

Met at 6 o'clock in the morning, when Brother Ward began by reading the 23rd and 103rd Psalms, after which he read out a hymn and prayed. All the brethren followed in the same exercises. This meeting lasted two hours.

Met again at 10 o'clock. Brother Fountain began by reading 1st Timothy 3rd. Singing and prayer. After this the dismissal of the brethren and sisters from their respective churches were read by Brother Carey, and the right hand of fellowship given to each by him and Brother Fountain as a token of acceptance. . . . Agreed that Brother Carey be the pastor of this church and Brethren Fountain and Marshman the two deacons.

Agreed that the Ordinance of the Lords Supper be administered to us the first Sabbath in every Calendar Month. After this business the brethren related the manner in which they were brought to the knowledge of the truth. Brother Carey concluded in prayer.

Met again at 4 o'clock p.m. Brother Marshman read the “Address of the Committee of the Baptist Society,” delivered May 7, 1799—a letter from Brother Pearce of Birmingham—and an address by Brother Booth of London. May the Lord impress their sentiments on our minds. Brother Carey concluded in prayer. . . .

Met again at 8 o'clock in the evening for more public worship. . . . Brother Carey . . . preached an animating sermon from Romans 12:12, “Rejoicing in hope.”²⁷

Particular Baptist ecclesiology shines through this account in numerous ways. By agreeing as a community on its officers and the observance of the Lord’s Supper, the little church signified its conviction that Christ imparted authority to each congregation to

²⁶ Carey, *William Carey*, 183.

²⁷ *Serampore Letters*, 48–50.

properly order its steps according to Scripture. Additionally, by hearing the testimonies of each new member, Carey and his friends displayed their commitment to the necessity of regenerate church membership. Far from abandoning their ecclesiology on the mission field, the Serampore missionaries continued to submit to their understanding of what Scripture taught on the nature and practice of the local church.

The establishment of the church in Serampore was a day of great pleasure for Carey and his new companions. They came to celebrate this occasion annually in the years that followed.²⁸ Remarkably, Carey served as the pastor of this congregation for more than thirty years.

Indian Converts and Congregations

When Carey and his companions arrived in India, every aspect of social and religious life was dominated by the caste system. This system, Mary Drewery observes, “Separated one group of people from another from birth to the grave without any possibility of change through education, marriage, or by any other means.”²⁹ Additionally, strict rules were imposed to prevent any association of people from differing castes. To “break caste” by disregarding such regulations—entering the same house or eating together, for example—guaranteed that one would become an instant outcast of society.³⁰

The Serampore missionaries viewed these societal expectations as antithetical to the Christian life, especially with regard to ecclesiology.³¹ Believers, they reasoned, were called to worship together as a church and to share the meal of the Lord’s Supper.

²⁸ BMS, *Periodical Accounts Relative to the Baptist Missionary Society*, vol. 3, no. 15 (London: J. W. Morris, 1806), 29.

²⁹ Mary Drewery, *William Carey: A Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 66.

³⁰ Carey, *Memoir of William Carey*, 297.

³¹ A. H. Oussoren, *William Carey Especially His Missionary Principles* (Leiden, Netherlands: A. W. Sijthoff’s Uitgeversmaatschappij N. V., 1945), 178.

Maintaining caste rendered these two elements of social religion impossible.³² Thus, Carey and his friends “determined to boldly require every convert to abandon caste.”³³

Though many people articulated to the missionaries that no Hindu would ever discard their social order to become a Christian, within five years Carey and his companions witnessed forty Indians reject the caste system and profess faith in Christ. Upon their profession and baptism, these new believers were added to the membership of the Serampore church.³⁴ As such, they participated in every aspect of church life with their European brothers and sisters. They attended to the preaching of God’s Word.³⁵ They partook of communion.³⁶ Some were suspended from the Lord’s table or excluded from the church altogether for sinful living,³⁷ while others were appointed to gospel ministry and served as church officers.³⁸ No distinction existed between Christians from Europe and those from India. For Carey, meaningful participation in a local church was not an English form of worship that could be reinvented by Indian Christians. Rather, the very heart of missions centered around folding these new believers into visible, church-communities that followed the commands and patterns of Scripture.³⁹ The Serampore missionaries knew they were tasked to “build up” and “watch over” these new converts,

³² The Lord’s Supper especially went against the principles of the caste system. In Carey’s day, Christians partaking of the Lord’s Supper all drank from a common cup. Sharing a cup in this way was unacceptable to anyone seeking to maintain caste. See Carey, *William Carey*, 223.

³³ Carey, *William Carey*, 196. Krishna Pal, the first Indian convert the missionaries witnessed, expressed the incompatibility of maintaining caste as a Christian in the following way: “The man who keeps his caste cannot obtain salvation. Men who have their caste are very proud, and he who is proud cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” in BMS, *Periodical Accounts Relative to the Baptist Missionary Society*, vol. 3, no. 19 (London: J. W. Morris, 1806), 554.

³⁴ BMS, *Periodical Accounts Relative to the Baptist Missionary Society*, vol. 3, no. 15, 14–15.

³⁵ William Ward, *William Ward’s Missionary Journal: 1799–1811*, ed. E. Daniel Potts (Typed transcription, n.d.), 131.

³⁶ Carey, *William Carey*, 223.

³⁷ BMS, *Periodical Accounts Relative to the Baptist Missionary Society*, vol. 3, no. 15, 14–15.

³⁸ Edward Steane Wenger, *The Story of the Lall Bazar Baptist Church Calcutta* (Calcutta, India: Edinburgh Press, 1908), 15–16.

³⁹ Carey, *An Enquiry*, 18–37.

and they did so in the context of a local church.⁴⁰

As more Indians came to faith throughout the country, Carey and his friends sought “to plant churches everywhere.”⁴¹ They saw the establishment of such congregations as a key component in the advance of the gospel:

To strengthen the cause of Christ in this country, and as far as it is in our power, to give it a permanent establishment, even when the efforts of Europeans may fail, we think it our duty, as soon as possible, to advise the native brethren who may be formed into separate churches to choose their pastors and deacons from amongst their own countrymen, that the Word may be stately preached, and the ordinances of Christ administered, in each church by the native minister, as much as possible without the interference of the missionary of the district who will continually superintend their affairs.⁴²

In order for the gospel to spread throughout India, the Serampore missionaries recognized the need for native pastors to lead local churches. By pursuing such a course of action, Carey and the others did not intend to communicate that Indian believers could not worship in the same congregation as European Christians. Consider, for example, that the very church Carey pastored in Serampore consisted of believers from both India and Europe. Rather, the missionaries understood their own limitations. They were unable to provide the needed oversight for faraway churches, and thus desired native Christians to join them as ministers of the gospel.⁴³ The missionaries then cultivated the needed spiritual gifts and maturity in the native Christians who served as church leaders, and also provide accountability as they carried out the work of the ministry.⁴⁴ In this way, healthy congregations would take root among the Christians of India, providing a continual

⁴⁰ SFA, art. 7, quoted in Michael Haykin, *The Missionary Fellowship of William Carey* (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2018), 143.

⁴¹ Oussoren, *William Carey Especially His Missionary Principles*, 272.

⁴² SFA, art. 8 (Haykin, *The Missionary Fellowship of William Carey*, 147).

⁴³ Strangely, while Carey and his friends recognized this reality with regard to national churches, they did not always practice it themselves among Europeans. This aspect of Carey’s ministry will be discussed in more detail in a subsequent section on the Lall Bazar Church in Calcutta.

⁴⁴ SFA, art. 8 (Haykin, *The Missionary Fellowship of William Carey*, 146–147).

witness to the gospel in the nation.

Carey remained committed to raising up national pastors and churches throughout his ministry. Many years later, when his son Jabez left for missionary service in Amboyna, Carey instructed him to “form [nationals] into gospel churches when you meet with a few who truly fear God and as soon as you see any fit to preach to others call them to the ministry and settle them with the churches.”⁴⁵ In addition to these instructions, Carey exhorted Jabez to instruct natives in right doctrine—especially the proper mode of baptism—and to carefully nourish and watch over the souls of new believers.⁴⁶ He also warned his son against the dangers of a national church, as well as “loose notions of church government.”⁴⁷ For Carey, strong missiology flowed out of strong ecclesiology.

The Communion Controversy

Over their years of ministry together, Carey developed deep friendships with his fellow missionaries, Marshman and Ward. Michael Haykin has noted, “The partnership of these three men . . . has few parallels in Christian history.”⁴⁸ For decades, these men—known as the Serampore Trio—labored together to translate and print Scripture in the vernaculars of the peoples of the East, as well as to proclaim the gospel throughout India. While they aligned in almost every aspect of doctrine and practice, disagreement existed between them on one front: the Lord’s Supper.

As with the ministers of the Baptist churches of the Northamptonshire Association, the Serampore Trio did not all agree on who was allowed to partake of the Lord’s Table. On the one hand, Carey adhered to strict communion, believing that only

⁴⁵ Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 131.

⁴⁶ Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 131, 190.

⁴⁷ Carter *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 190.

⁴⁸ Haykin, *The Missionary Fellowship of William Carey*, 99.

those baptized as believers by immersion should share of this meal. On the other hand, Marshman and Ward held to open communion, desiring for any who professed Christ to participate at the Lord's Table, regardless of their baptismal status.⁴⁹ Commendably, the missionaries did not allow this disagreement to sever their affection for one another or their ministerial partnership, and for five years the Serampore church followed the lead of its pastor by practicing strict communion.

On October 6, 1805, Marshman and Ward were appointed as fellow pastors with Carey in the Serampore church, ensuring that the growing congregation received the spiritual care it required.⁵⁰ It was also during this year that the church changed its stance on communion, allowing any professing believer to partake of the Lord's Supper.⁵¹ When Andrew Fuller heard of this change, he was disappointed with the missionaries' decision. He began corresponding with Ward, the primary proponent for open communion among the Serampore missionaries, exhorting the trio to return to the practice of strict communion, yet Ward remained unconvinced by Fuller's arguments.⁵² After six years, however, Marshman experienced a change of heart and felt compelled by Scripture to return the church to the practice of strict communion. While Ward felt exasperated at such a move, Carey and the other missionaries believed it wise to return to the more conservative model. Consequently, Ward consented to this change without causing division or strife.⁵³

This entire episode reveals an important facet regarding the ministry of Carey

⁴⁹ E Daniel Potts, "I Throw Away the Guns to Preserve the Ship," *Baptist Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (1963): 115. As noted in chapter 2, both views were common among Particular Baptists throughout its history. Thus, this disagreement should not be interpreted as either Carey or Marshman and Ward departing from their ecclesiological heritage.

⁵⁰ Ward, *William Ward's Missionary Journal*, 441.

⁵¹ Wenger, *Lall Bazar Baptist Church*, 162.

⁵² John C. Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1859), 1:460.

⁵³ Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward*, 1:460–461.

and his companions, namely that ecclesiological issues continued to hold a high priority in their ministry. The way the church worshiped Jesus through the ordinance of communion mattered to the Serampore Trio and deserved their intentional consideration. While they held differing positions, the primary motivation behind their convictions was submission to the lordship of Christ over his people. By seeking to move the church at Serampore first to open communion, then back to strict communion, the missionaries display an ever-present concern to evaluate their practices in light of the scriptural witness and to order their lives according to God's Word.

Lall Bazar Church

The spiritual condition of the nearby city of Calcutta constantly weighed on the minds of the Serampore missionaries. Not only were the natives steeped in idolatry, but most of their own countrymen had seemingly abandoned all vestiges of religion and piety.⁵⁴ Carey and his friends longed to start a gospel ministry in this prominent city, as they anticipated it could prove a vital hub for the propagation of the message of Christ throughout the rest of India.⁵⁵ Slowly, opportunities for such a work arose.

In 1801, Carey accepted a position as a teacher of the Bengali and Sanskrit languages at the College of Fort William in Calcutta. This office ensured Carey's presence in the major city several days each week. Accordingly, Carey started a prayer meeting, as well as a time for religious discussion with certain individuals.⁵⁶ By January of 1803, the missionaries rented a house in which they might conduct religious services, both in English and Bengali.⁵⁷ Six years later, a chapel was erected in Lall Bazar to

⁵⁴ Wenger, *Lall Bazar Baptist Church*, 5–7.

⁵⁵ Wenger, *Lall Bazar Baptist Church*, 23.

⁵⁶ Wenger, *Lall Bazar Baptist Church*, 21.

⁵⁷ Wenger, *Lall Bazar Baptist Church*, 22.

accommodate these worship services.⁵⁸

The church in Lall Bazar bore much fruit in the years that followed. It is interesting to note, however, a slight deviation from Particular Baptist ecclesiology among the Serampore Trio represented by this work in Calcutta. Carey, along with Marshman and Ward, simultaneously served as the pastors of this congregation, as well as that of the church in Serampore. John Gill, the notable theologian of the Particular Baptists, would have denounced such action. In his work, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, Gill expressed his belief that a man should not serve as a minister of more than one congregation at a time.⁵⁹ The Serampore Trio may have justified their departure from Gill's position on the grounds that they considered the Christians of Calcutta and Serampore as members of the same congregation, "two branches of one church."⁶⁰ This reasoning, however, also went against Particular Baptist norms. Once again, Gill asserted: "The church may be considered as a particular assembly of saints meeting together in one place for religious worship."⁶¹ Gill went on to argue that believers in different cities, of necessity, constituted distinct churches, for they could not gather together as one united body.⁶² Carey and his friends failed to accept Gill's position, though they felt the adverse effects of their neglect years later.

Carey's employment at Fort William College in Calcutta enabled him to organize various prayer meetings and Bible studies with the Lall Bazar Christians throughout the week. He also led Sunday worship services on a rotational basis with Marshman and Ward.⁶³ Not only did native Indians and Europeans benefit from this

⁵⁸ Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward*, 1:406.

⁵⁹ Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, 3:234.

⁶⁰ Wenger, *Lall Bazar Baptist Church*, vi.

⁶¹ Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, 3:227.

⁶² Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, 3:227–228.

⁶³ George Smith, *The Life of William Carey, D. D.: Shoemaker and Missionary, Professor of*

church, but several regiments of Fort William began to see revival among their soldiers.⁶⁴ The work increased to such an extent that by the end of 1815, more than five hundred members had been added to the combined membership of the congregations in Serampore and Calcutta.⁶⁵ Yet a significant problem also attended this work: a lack of pastoral oversight. The distance between Serampore and Calcutta prevented Carey and his friends from providing the spiritual shepherding needed for the Lall Bazar congregation. This neglect resulted in church members living out of accord with the gospel. One of the younger missionaries expressed, “We are very low when we consider the state of things at Calcutta, where some members have walked irregularly, for want of more constant inspection.”⁶⁶

Carey recognized this failing, and the missionaries determined to appoint more leaders to serve alongside them. Accordingly, in 1815, fellow missionaries John Lawson (1787–1825) and Eustace Carey (1791–1855)—Carey’s own nephew—were appointed as fellow pastors of the Baptist congregation. These younger missionaries lived in Calcutta and provided the resident pastoral care and oversight that was so needed in the Lall Bazar church.⁶⁷ A special service was set apart for the ordination of the new ministers, not unlike ordination services in England:

After a suitable hymn and an introductory prayer, Brother Ward gave an account of the different forms of church government, and particularly of that under which the church was then acting. This was followed by questions respecting the choice of the two brethren as co-pastors, and by a confession of faith from each of them. After the laying on of hands by the three elder pastors, and the ordination prayer by Brother Carey, he addressed the two brethren from Colossians 4:17, and Brother Marshman

Sanskrit, Bengali, and Marathi in the College of Fort William, Calcutta (London: John Murray, 1885), 159.

⁶⁴ Wenger, *Lall Bazar Baptist Church*, 61.

⁶⁵ Wenger, *Lall Bazar Baptist Church*, 130. This number represents those added to the churches in Serampore and Calcutta, though the actual membership was less than this amount, due to deaths or excommunications of some of their members.

⁶⁶ BMS, *Periodical Accounts of the Baptist Missionary Society, no. 31: From June 1815, to January 1816* (Bristol: J. G. Fuller, 1816), 100.

⁶⁷ Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward*, 2:110.

addressed the church from Philippians 2:16. The service was closed in prayer by Brother Ward. The whole was, in a high degree, solemn and impressive.⁶⁸

While the presence of Lawson and Eustace Carey provided initial benefit to the Lall Bazar Church, struggles continued to arise in Calcutta. At one point, two deacons who were displeased with the church's practice of strict communion endeavored to reinstate open communion in such a way that the three ministers who held to the more conservative position—Carey, Marshman, and Lawson—would have been separated from the congregation they pastored.⁶⁹ Strife also arose between the older and younger pastors, who did not see eye-to-eye on numerous principles of missionary labor. Eventually, the two younger men that had been appointed to help Carey and the others shepherd the church in Calcutta left Lall Bazar to establish a new church, leaving the Calcutta congregation with no resident pastor.⁷⁰

Although Carey and the others tried to maintain the work in Lall Bazar, it became evident that they were unable to shepherd their congregation from such a distance. In June of 1825, the church's record book states,

The church had been for some time in a very low state and the congregation had much diminished. Social prayer meetings had also been long discontinued. Many of the members attended public worship only on the Sabbath morning, and the others never attended at all. Some who still bore the name of members had been for years in a backsliding state, numbers gave evident symptoms of indifference to divine things, while a few, and but a few, appeared to be in a spiritual state of mind.⁷¹

The church acknowledged that the blame for such conditions could not all be laid at the pastors' feet; however, they also recognized the neglect of certain pastoral duties on the part of the church's leaders.⁷² Carey also lamented his inability to properly fulfill the

⁶⁸ BMS, *Periodical Accounts of the Baptist Missionary Society*, no. 31, 103.

⁶⁹ Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 122–123.

⁷⁰ Carey, *William Carey*, 342.

⁷¹ Wenger, *Lall Bazar Baptist Church*, 186.

⁷² Wenger, *Lall Bazar Baptist Church*, 186–187.

office of pastor to the believers in Calcutta, and so another missionary, William Robinson (1784–1853), was called to serve as the church’s minister.⁷³ From this point on, Serampore served as the sole focus of Carey’s pastoral duties.

While Carey’s life demonstrates a prevailing commitment to biblical ecclesiology, the Lall Bazar Church reveals that his circumstances did occasionally overshadow his convictions. Certainly, his desire to provide pastoral oversight to the believers in Calcutta is commendable. Nevertheless, the struggles within this congregation suggest he overestimated his abilities to lead two congregations in two cities. Thankfully, this error was recognized and corrected by the appointment of a resident pastor who went on to lead this congregation into spiritual health.⁷⁴

A Faithful End

Carey’s pastoral ministry in Serampore continued to bear fruit toward the end of his life. In 1827, the church’s membership consisted of nearly seventy persons, most of whom were natives of India.⁷⁵ Carey often preached twice every Sunday, once in English and once in Bengali, for the building up of the Christian community in Serampore.⁷⁶ His preaching seems to have been of great benefit to those who heard him. Mrs. Leslie—a newly arrived missionary—once remarked: “Dr. Carey [preached] in the evening. The good doctor [was] exceedingly animated and methodical; it was the best sermon I have heard since I left England.”⁷⁷ Carey’s nephew Eustace also praised his uncle’s skill in the pulpit. Though he continued to avoid the overuse of illustrations and gave little thought to

⁷³ Wenger, *Lall Bazar Baptist Church*, 187.

⁷⁴ BMS, *The Annual Report of the Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society Addressed to the General Meeting held at Spa Fields Chapel* (London: J. Haddon, 1830), 9–10.

⁷⁵ BMS, *The Annual Report of the Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society Addressed to the General Meeting held at Great Queen Street Chapel* (London: J. Haddon, 1827), 35.

⁷⁶ Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 251.

⁷⁷ Carey, *William Carey*, 352.

his preaching style, the younger Carey reminisced,

I never remember to have felt weary under a single discourse; and I think those who attended his ministry will agree with me in the remark, that his preaching was never tedious; but, on the contrary, refreshing, and invariably profitable, in proportion to the seriousness of the hearer. . . . He had gone through the sacred books so often, and with so much critical attention, and in so many languages, that there was scarcely a passage, with the insulated or connected sense of which he was not perfectly familiar.⁷⁸

As Carey aged, his worsening health hindered his ability to consistently preach to his congregation.⁷⁹ He knew his time on earth was drawing to an end, yet he could look with joy at what the Lord had accomplished, especially with regard to the planting of churches. “He would recall the fact that the little church he at first formed [in Mudnabati] had branched out into six-and-twenty churches, in which the ordinances of the gospel were regularly administered, and he would whisper, ‘What has God wrought!’”⁸⁰

Carey’s earthly service ended on the morning of June 9, 1834. Even in death, he sought to remember his hopeless condition apart from Christ. At Carey’s direction, the epitaph on his tombstone quoted a hymn by Isaac Watts, “A wretched, poor, and helpless worm, On Thy kind arms I fall.”⁸¹

Conclusion

Ecclesiology held a place of primary importance in Carey’s missionary labors. From his earliest days of seeking to establish a local church for his own spiritual well-being, to laying plans for cultivating healthy congregations throughout India, to wrestling through church division, Carey’s devotion to the local church never waned. His execution of the tenants of Particular Baptist ecclesiology proved imperfect at times, yet the

⁷⁸ Carey, *Memoir of William Carey*, 626.

⁷⁹ Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 251.

⁸⁰ Smith, *The Life of William Carey*, 430.

⁸¹ Carey, *Memoir of William Carey*, 572–573.

importance of the local church in the work of missions remained a central component of his ministry. In fact, it was this commitment to ecclesiology that laid the foundation for Carey's success as a missionary.

CHAPTER 5

“WHAT HAS GOD WROUGHT!”: CAREY, ECCLESIOLOGY, AND THE SUCCESS OF THE MISSION

One of Carey’s primary objectives as a missionary was “laying the foundation of the Church of Christ in India.”¹ While he was a firm Calvinist who rested in the sovereignty of God to build the church, he also recognized Christ’s call on his people to proclaim the gospel in all the earth. As he expressed in his influential work on the Great Commission, “Our blessed Lord has required us to pray that his kingdom may come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven, [and] it becomes us not only to express our desires of that event by words, but to use every lawful method to spread the knowledge of his name.”² In his own ministry, Carey sought to spread the knowledge of Christ by faithful preaching, the translation of the Scriptures into local languages, and the establishment of schools.³ In addition to these practices, Carey’s personal devotion to the local church on the mission field also played a pivotal role in the gospel’s advance. Had Carey’s commitment to ecclesiology proven weaker, it is uncertain that he would have seen the Christian faith established on the Indian subcontinent. How did Carey’s dedication to the church contribute to the success of his missionary labors? The following chapter will examine the various ways in which ecclesiology impacted Carey’s life and

¹ John Brown Myers, *William Carey: The Shoemaker Who Became “The Father and Founder of Modern Missions”* (New York, NY: Fleming D. Revell Company, 1887), 160.

² William Carey, *An Enquiry in the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (Leicester, UK: Ann Ireland, 1792), 1.

³ Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Worcester, PA: Christian History Institute, 1998), 173.

ministry, thus contributing to the success of his mission—the establishment of Christianity in India.

A Matter of Obedience

For Carey, the spirituality of a missionary was of primary importance in the task of missions. When his son Jabez began his missionary service, Carey advised him,

Pay the utmost attention at all times to the state of your own mind both towards God and man. Cultivate an intimate acquaintance with your own heart, labor to obtain a deep sense of your depravity and to trust always in Christ. Be pure in heart and meditate much on the pure and holy character of God. Live a life of prayer and devotedness to God. Cherish every amiable and right disposition towards man. Be mild, gentle, and unassuming, yet firm and manly. As soon as you perceive any wrong in your spirit or behavior set about correcting it and never suppose yourself to be so perfect as to need no correction.⁴

Carey’s counsel reflects his commitment to biblical faithfulness. Missionaries, as all Christians, needed to guard their hearts to ensure they were living a life in submission to God’s Word. Such was Andrew Fuller’s guidance to the missionary-elect before his departure to India. On Carey’s last meeting with Harvey Lane Baptist Church, Fuller issued a charge to the future missionaries—Carey and John Thomas—in which he impressed upon them the importance of obedience. “You are the servants of Christ . . . you must likewise *do* the will of Christ, as well as teach it.”⁵ Such counsel aligned perfectly with Carey’s own view that “real religion consists in . . . conviction, repentance, faith, *obedience*, submission, zeal, and consolation.”⁶

Failure to walk in obedience, Carey knew, would profoundly impact the effectiveness of the missionary task. He and his friends believed that missionaries who

⁴ Terry G. Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 2000), 130.

⁵ Andrew Fuller, *A Charge Delivered to the Missionaries*, quoted in BMS, *Periodical Accounts Relative to the Baptist Missionary Society*, vol. 1 (Clipstone, UK: J. W. Morris, 1800), 39, emphasis original.

⁶ Mary Drewery, *William Carey: A Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 35, emphasis added.

did not observe the commands of God’s Word should not expect his blessing on their labors. Joshua Marshman summarized this sentiment in his book, *Thoughts on Propagating Christianity More Effectually Among the Heathen* (1827). He writes,

In a work in which we are so entirely dependent on divine aid, if we wish to enjoy the divine presence and blessing, we must examine whether our motives, our general disposition and conduct, be such as a holy God can honor with his presence, without frustrating the grand design of his gospel, that of “purifying to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.”⁷

Marshman went on to say, “To expect, therefore, that God will cause those to enjoy his presence and blessing in an eminent degree in the conversion of the heathen whose spirit and conduct he cannot approve, is to expect that he will act contrary to his own righteous and holy nature.”⁸ Obedience to God’s Word in every area of life, therefore, was of utmost importance to the cause of missions. A lifestyle of disobedience would incur the displeasure of God and erode the progress of the gospel.⁹

It is not surprising, then, that Carey personally valued ecclesiology.

Participation in a local church was not an optional amenity for the missionaries in India, but rather a command to be obeyed. The Second London Confession clearly taught,

The Lord Jesus Christ calls out of the world unto himself, through the ministry of his Word, by his Spirit, those that are given unto him by his Father; that they may walk before him in all the ways of obedience, which he prescribes to them in his Word. *Those thus called he commands to walk together in particular societies, or churches.*¹⁰

Carey’s efforts to establish and participate in the life of a local church overseas demonstrates his awareness of this reality. Church involvement mattered. Jesus—the King of the church—commanded his people to meaningful membership within a

⁷ Joshua Marshman, *Thoughts on Propagating Christianity More Effectually Among the Heathen*, 2nd ed. (Serampore, India: The Mission Press, 1827), 7.

⁸ Marshman, *Thoughts on Propagating Christianity*, 10.

⁹ Marshman, *Thoughts on Propagating Christianity*, 9.

¹⁰ Second London Confession, 26.5, quoted in William Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 2nd ed. (1969; repr., Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2011), 284–285, emphasis added.

Christian community. Participation in a local church, therefore, was a matter of obedience. As a believer, Carey was called to pursue such membership, whether he lived in England or India. Moreover, the formation of churches among local converts was a critical component of the missionary task, for they also fell under the authority of the church's King. To disregard ecclesiology—either for himself or for the native believers—amounted to disobedience, and such disobedience would inevitably impact the missionaries' effectiveness in the spread of the gospel. Thus, Carey's ecclesiological devotion reveals his commitment to biblical obedience, an indispensable foundation for missionary efforts.

Ecclesiology and Carey's Life

In addition to being a matter of obedience, Carey's devotion to ecclesiology affected his personal life overseas in two significant ways. First, within an ecclesiological context, Carey found the encouragement and edification necessary to sustain his faith through difficult circumstances. Second, he also received the accountability available within a body of believers to guard his faith. Though indirectly, both these elements contributed to the establishment of Christianity in India by sustaining Carey's spiritual health and empowering him in his evangelistic pursuit.

A Source of Edification

Particular Baptists believed one of the primary functions of the local church was the "mutual edification" of believers.¹¹ In the Second London Confession, the Baptist leaders expressed, "Saints by profession are bound to maintain a holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services, as

¹¹ Second London Confession, 26.5 (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 285). See also John Sutcliff, *The Authority and Sanctification of the Lord's Day, Explained and Enforced* (Northampton: M. Luckman, 1786), 8.

tend to mutual edification.”¹² Particular Baptists knew that Christians received instruction and encouragement to help them grow in their faith within the context of the local church. Conversely, isolation from the body of Christ should be avoided, as it proved dangerous to one’s spiritual condition.¹³

Carey saw this reality play out in his own life. His early days in India were marked by religious apathy, bouts of discouragement, and feelings of dejection in the things of God. While many factors may have contributed to these struggles, Carey himself recognized his isolation from the body of Christ as a primary cause for these spiritual battles. Severed from Christian fellowship, he had no one to stir up his religious devotion. He confided,

Felt much remains of dullness, and indisposition to the things of God. I see now the value of Christian society. When I had that advantage, I have often felt that visiting a friend was like throwing oil on the fire, or like as iron sharpens iron, so have the countenances of my friends stirred me up to an holy activity and diligence in the things of God.¹⁴

Carey keenly felt his spiritual isolation. Yet this struggle served him by manifesting the true worth of Christian society. “It is good” he wrote, “to enjoy the communion of saints, and its value can scarcely be estimated.”¹⁵ His seclusion from a church caused him to long for the spiritual benefits of participating in a local congregation.¹⁶ For this reason, Carey noted with joy the times of fellowship he shared with believers, though they initially proved infrequent.

The need for spiritual edification sheds important light on Carey’s pursuit of

¹² Second London Confession, 27.2 (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 290).

¹³ Richard Hopper, *The Duties of Church Members Briefly Considered* (Leicester, UK: G. Burbage, 1778), 6–7.

¹⁴ Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 18.

¹⁵ Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 41–42. See also Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 73.

¹⁶ Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 8.

ecclesiology. When Carey established a Baptist congregation among British expatriates in Mudnabati, he was not trying to recreate a cultural institution in a new location, nor was he seeking to exert control over others by obtaining a pastoral position. Carey needed the church. The new missionary recognized that the welfare of his soul depended on communion with saints, particularly in the context of a local congregation. Accordingly, Carey prioritized the formation of churches, not only in Mudnabati, but in all the places he and his fellow missionaries labored.

Ecclesiology not only edified Carey's faith, but also the faith of his fellow missionaries. Consider, for example, an event that took place in Serampore at the beginning of 1812. In the short span of three months, Carey and his friends buried five members of their mission, including two young children. Then, on March 11, 1812, the printing shop where they produced a multitude of vernacular works—including numerous translations of Scripture—was destroyed in a fire. In addition to their printing facilities, the flames consumed a significant amount of translated material and printing supplies, rendering a great financial and ministerial loss to the missionaries.¹⁷ In the midst of this great trial, however, Carey wrote to a friend,

We have all been supported under this affliction and preserved from discouragements. To me the consideration of the divine sovereignty and wisdom has been very supporting. I endeavored to improve this our affliction last Lord's day from Psalm 46:10. "Be still and know that I am God." I principally dwelt upon two ideas. One, God has a sovereign right to dispose of us as he pleases. Two, we ought to acquiesce in all that God does with us or to us. To enable us to do [so], I recommended . . . meditations upon the perfections of God—upon his providence, and upon his promises, including the prophecies of the extension of his kingdom.¹⁸

Carey sought to edify his congregation through the preaching of God's Word. In so doing, he directed his fellow church members to the sovereign prerogative of God to do as he pleases, and the need to submit to the divine will. Such preaching strengthened the

¹⁷ S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey* (London: Wakeman Trust, 2008), 289–290.

¹⁸ BMS, *Periodical Accounts: No.24* (Dunstable, UK: J. Burditt, 1812), 515.

faith of the missionaries and helped preserve them from despair. Carey's commitment to establish a local church nearly two decades prior to this devastating loss ensured a context in which the Serampore missionaries received necessary help through this fiery trial.

Carey's missionary career may have looked quite different if his devotion to ecclesiology had proven weaker. Had the missionary remained separated from a body of believers or had he never sought out Christian society, his soul may have been overcome with despair long before the gospel was established in India. By practicing biblical church involvement on the mission field, Carey demonstrated that a missionary's spiritual health is of utmost importance, and that an essential component of that spiritual health is participation in a local church. Carey's pursuit of healthy ecclesiology contributed to his own spiritual wellbeing—as well as the wellbeing of many other missionaries—enabling him to engage in the work of missions for decades.

A Means of Accountability

An important aspect of Particular Baptist teaching was the doctrine of sanctification. Regarding sanctification, the Second London Confession explained,

They who are united to *Christ*, effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart, and a new *spirit* created in them, through the virtue of *Christ's* death and resurrection, are also farther sanctified, really and personally, through the same virtue, by his Word and *Spirit* dwelling in them; the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof, are more and more weakened, and mortified; and they are more and more quickened, and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of all true holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.¹⁹

The Baptists further taught that “sanctification is throughout, in the whole man, yet imperfect in this life; there abides [in Christians] still some remnants of corruption in every part, [from] whence arises a continual, and irreconcilable war; the flesh lusting

¹⁹ Second London Confession, 8.1 (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 258), emphasis original.

against the Spirit, and the Spirit lusting against the flesh.”²⁰ In spite of this struggle, they also believed that the Holy Spirit enabled Christians to progress in holiness.²¹

An essential factor in the sanctification process for Particular Baptists was church membership. In the context of a local church, believers provided mutual accountability for each other’s spiritual lives. As William Kiffen noted, “Being added to the church, we conceive ourselves bound to watch over one another, and in cases of sin, to deal faithfully one with another, according to these Scriptures.”²² Church membership ensured that if a Christian strayed into error, fellow members could confront the offender in love, with the hope that God would grant repentance.²³ If the erring individual persisted in disobedience, however, the congregation possessed authority from Christ to discipline him out of the church.²⁴ A church that failed to provide such discipline would “soon lose its beauty and be polluted.”²⁵ Church membership, therefore, provided the necessary accountability to preserve the purity of the church, as well as to cultivate the spiritual lives of Christ’s people.

Carey saw the need for such accountability, not only among local believers, but also among the missionaries themselves. In 1817, the Baptist Missionary Society commissioned William Adam (1796–1881) as a missionary, sending him to join Carey and his colleagues in Serampore. After a brief stay in the Danish settlement, Adam joined the younger missionaries serving in Calcutta, who were revising the Bengali translation

²⁰ Second London Confession, 8.2 (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 258).

²¹ Second London Confession, 8.2 (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 258–259).

²² William Kiffen, *A Brief Remonstrance of the Reasons and Grounds of Those Commonly Called Anabaptists, for Their Separation* (London, 1645), 13.

²³ Andrew Fuller, *The Discipline of the Primitive Churches Illustrated and Enforced* (Olney, UK: J. W. Morris, 1799), 6.

²⁴ Ian Birch, *To Follow the Lamb Wheresoever He Goeth: The Ecclesial Polity of the English Calvinist Baptists 1640–1660* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017), 124.

²⁵ Benjamin Keach, *The Glory of a True Church and Its Discipline Displayed: Wherein a True Gospel-Church is Described* (London, 1697), iv.

of the four Gospels. Assisting the missionaries in this task was Rammohun Roy (1772–1833), a monotheistic Hindu seeking societal reform for his country.²⁶ Roy’s linguistic assistance initially appeared promising, yet his objection to Trinitarian theology began to reveal itself in his proposals for certain textual revisions. Roy opposed the doctrine of Christ’s divinity and wanted the updated versions of the Gospels to reflect his beliefs. While the other missionaries broke fellowship with Roy, considering his suggestions heretical, Adam’s interaction with the Indian activist caused him to reevaluate his own religious convictions. Adam continued to dialogue with Roy and eventually embraced Unitarianism, denying the deity of Christ.²⁷ This apostasy led to Adam’s excommunication from the Circular Road Baptist Church in Calcutta and brought great sorrow to the Baptist missionaries.²⁸

Adam’s story highlights the sobering reality that ministers of the gospel may embrace heresy, fall into sin, and even prove unconverted. Missionaries, therefore, need the spiritual accountability offered by church membership just as every other believer. While church membership does not guarantee one will not eventually prove unconverted and be excommunicated from the church—as in Adam’s case—it does provide the necessary context in which an erring believer may be called to repentance.

Carey recognized his own need for the accountability of church membership. When he examined his own life, he perceived many sin struggles, as well as his need for the people of God in his sanctification.²⁹ Unsurprisingly, he pursued church involvement on the mission field. Though Carey frequently corresponded with friends in England,

²⁶ Clare Midgley, “Cosmotopia Delineated: Rammohun Roy, William Adam, and the Calcutta Unitarian Committee,” *Itinerario* 44, no. 2 (2020): 450.

²⁷ William Adam, *Letter from the Rev. William Adam, a Baptist Missionary in India, to His Brother in Great Britain, in Defense of His Own Conversion to Unitarianism* (Charleston, SC: W. Riley, 1826), 2.

²⁸ Midgley, “Cosmotopia Delineated,” 451.

²⁹ Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 53.

these long-distance relationships did not offer the immediate accountability the isolated missionary required. He longed for the mutual oversight that church membership provided and pursued it unreservedly. In so doing, Carey sought to guard his own soul from sin and promote his own sanctification. As a result, Carey found himself in a spiritually healthy position to promote the spread of the gospel throughout India.

Ecclesiology and Carey's Ministry

Devotion to the ecclesiology did more than sustain Carey's soul on the mission field. It also bolstered the church in India. By pursuing ecclesiology, Carey and his colleagues both established a community that could foster the faith of new converts, and also created a model for indigenous churches to follow once planted.

Faith Community

Early in his missionary career, Carey recognized the need for community among those Indians who professed faith in Christ. The biographer S. Pearce Carey relates an incident that impressed this necessity on Carey's mind. John Thomas, the doctor who first accompanied Carey on his missionary endeavor, had previously lived in India where he had proclaimed the gospel. Through Thomas's preaching, a local man named Ram Ram Basu embraced Christianity. Sadly, when Carey and Thomas arrived in India in 1793, they discovered,

Ram Ram Basu had fallen back to the worship of idols. Yet when they heard his story, they pitied more than condemned. British Christians, he said, had withheld themselves from him. His fellows had scorned and shunned him. When stricken with dysentery, none ministered nor gave to him. At length, a kinsman offered him a home, if he would bow again to idols. Hushing his conscience by remembering Roman Catholic image worship, he had yielded.³⁰

What was a key factor that led to Ram Ram Basu's abandonment of the Christian faith? His lack of Christian community. Having professed faith in Jesus, Basu's

³⁰ Carey, *William Carey*, 135.

own countrymen repudiated and ostracized him, yet the English believers failed to incorporate him into their own society as a brother in Christ. When trials occurred, Basu's lack of Christian friendship induced him to revert back to the pagan community of his people.

This type of incident reinforced Carey's conviction that the missionary task went beyond seeking converts. He was also called to envelop new believers into a community of believers for their spiritual wellbeing, especially in light of the persecution converts would endure from the hands of their own people. This principle is clearly related in the Serampore Form of Agreement, a document created by Carey and his friends to express their missiological convictions:

Another important part of our work is to build up, and watch over, the souls [of Indian believers] that may be gathered. . . . We must be willing to spend some time with them daily, if possible, in this work. We must have patience with them, though they may grow very slowly in divine knowledge. We ought also to endeavor as much as possible to form them to habits of industry and assist them in procuring employments We ought also to remember that these persons have made no common sacrifices in renouncing their connections, their homes, their former situations and means of support In these circumstances, if we do not sympathize with them in their temporal losses for Christ, we shall be guilty of great cruelty.³¹

In other words, Carey and his friends believed they possessed a responsibility to nurture the faith of new converts to Christian maturity, and that this progress occurred in community. By living in community with Indian believers, the missionaries were able to patiently instruct the new Christians on how to live the Christian life, as well as assist them through various trials. If Carey and his colleagues failed to provide such community, however, they were inviting a repetition of Ram Ram Basu's story.

Church membership, therefore, was of critical importance to the Serampore missionaries. The progress of the gospel in India depended on the perseverance of local believers, and such perseverance rested, in large part, on the community found in the

³¹ SFA, art. 7, quoted in Michael Haykin, *The Missionary Fellowship of William Carey* (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2018), 143–144.

local church. For this reason, Carey and his friends quickly ushered new Christians into their congregation at Serampore following their professions of faith.³² By drawing Indian converts into a Christian society, the missionaries provided the context in which the faith of new believers was built up and watched over, which in turn promoted the establishment of Christianity throughout India.

Church Model

The spiritual condition of India at the time of Carey can hardly be imagined. William Ward described how far removed the Indian population was from Christian doctrine and ideals when he first arrived as a missionary:

Amongst these idolaters no Bibles were found; no sabbaths; no congregating for religious instruction in any form; no house for God; no God but a log of wood, or a monkey; no Savior but the Ganges; no worship but that paid to abominable idols, and that connected with dances, songs, and unutterable impurities. So, that what should have been divine worship, purifying, elevating, and carrying the heart to heaven, was a corrupt but rapid torrent, poisoning the soul and carrying it down to perdition. No morality, for how should a people be moral, whose gods are monsters of vice, whose priests are their ringleaders in crime, whose scriptures encourage pride, impurity, falsehood, revenge, and murder, whose worship is connected with indescribable abominations, and whose heaven is a brothel?³³

Ward's commentary shows the magnitude of what Carey and his associates were seeking to accomplish. Not only were the masses of India unconverted, but their understanding of religion was diametrically opposed to Christianity. Yet the missionaries continued resolute in their goal of bringing the lost to the true worship of God.

To carry to such a people the divine Word, to call them together for sacred instruction, to introduce amongst them a pure and heavenly worship, and to lead them to the observance of a sabbath on earth, as the preparative and prelude to a state of endless perfection, was surely a work worthy for a Savior to command and

³² As a test of true sincerity, those Indians who made professions of faith in Christ were required to renounce caste and be baptized. If a person was unwilling to take these two steps of faith, the missionaries concluded his profession was false. Conversely, once a person renounced caste and was baptized, they were joyfully accepted into church membership. See George, *Faithful Witness*, 131.

³³ William Ward, *Farewell Letters to a Few Friends in Britain and America on Returning to Bengal in 1821* (New York, NY: E. Bliss and E. White, 1821), 56–57.

becoming a Christian people to attempt.³⁴

When Indians did embrace Christ, the missionaries recognized the difficulty of leading people from such an idolatrous background to Christian maturity. An indispensable means of accomplishing this task was providing godly examples for the natives to follow. “Those around us,” they wrote, “in consequence of their little knowledge of the Scriptures, must necessarily take our conduct as a specimen of what Christ looks for in his disciples. They know only the Savior and his doctrine as they shine forth in us.”³⁵ Indulging in sin or neglecting spiritual duties could produce fatal effects on the new believers. Conversely, providing a positive example of godly living would strengthen the new faith of the Indian Christians.

Such examples proved necessary, not only for personal conduct, but also for corporate worship. Idolatry was the only form of religious devotion the fledgling Christians had ever known; the missionaries knew, however, that devotion to Christ demanded the abandonment of these idolatrous traditions. Yet the pure practices of true worship remained shrouded in darkness to the ignorant minds of these young believers. The threat of combining elements of Christianity with Hindu worship was significant. In order for the Indian Christians to embrace the biblical pattern of social religion, they required instruction and a model. Carey and his colleagues provided this teaching and example through their own devotion to ecclesiology. In this context of the Serampore church, these infant believers discovered the importance of social religion, church membership, and gospel proclamation.

The model of the local church which the Baptist missionaries provided to Indian converts bore much fruit. At the end of Carey’s life, more than twenty-five churches existed throughout the country, all following the example set forth by the

³⁴ Ward, *Farewell Letters*, 57.

³⁵ SFA, art. 7 (Haykin, *The Missionary Fellowship of William Carey*, 145).

church at Serampore.³⁶ Though difficult to calculate in a quantifiable manner, the ecclesiological model which Carey and his friends provided the Indian church greatly contributed to the establishment of Christianity in the nation. By pursuing healthy ecclesiology themselves and bringing new believers into the Christian community, Carey and his friends provided the necessary teaching and example for biblical worship, thus guarding the Indian believers from syncretism.

Conclusion

When considering the factors that led to the establishment of Christianity in India, Carey's ecclesiological devotion should not be overlooked. By establishing and participating in a church on the mission field, Carey pursued obedience to the church's King. Such obedience, Carey and his friends believed, was necessary, "If we hope for success on scriptural grounds."³⁷ Additionally, within the context of a local church Carey received the encouragement and accountability necessary to walk in Christian faithfulness, without which he would have struggled to labor continuously in the cause of Christ. Indian believers also benefited from Carey's commitment to ecclesiology, for the church in Serampore shepherded these infant Christians into a believing community that nurtured their newfound trust in Jesus and portrayed a model of ecclesiological faithfulness. In many significant ways, therefore, Carey's devotion to ecclesiology contributed to the success of his missionary efforts.

³⁶ George Smith, *The Life of William Carey, D. D.: Shoemaker and Missionary, Professor of Sanskrit, Bengali, and Marathi in the College of Fort William, Calcutta* (London: John Murray, 1885), 430.

³⁷ Marshman, *Thoughts on Propagating the Gospel*, 2.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Contained within Carey's work on missions is a brief history of the expansion of Christianity from the days of the apostles to his own time.¹ Carey's purpose in providing this historical overview was to strengthen his argument that Christians should seek the conversion of the lost around the world. By looking to the church's past, Carey discerned guidance for the church's future. This thesis seeks to accomplish the same goal. In looking back to Carey and the theological convictions that shaped him, the church today may receive direction as it continues to obey the Great Commission. Carey's devotion to the local church has the potential to rouse the people of God toward an ecclesiological missiology.

Carey and Ecclesiology

What did Carey believe about the local church? Like his Particular Baptist forebearers,² Carey held that the church was a divine institution, created by God, subject to the authority of its King, the Lord Jesus Christ, who exercised his authority by his Word in the autonomous life of each individual congregation. The members of the church were to be believers who had followed the biblical command to be baptized by immersion following a credible profession of faith and who covenanted together with other Christians to be a local church in a specific location. Because Jesus was the

¹ William Carey, *An Enquiry in the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (Leicester, UK: Ann Ireland, 1792), 14–37.

² See the Second London Confession, 26, quoted in William Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 2nd ed. (1969; repr., Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2011), 283–289.

church's King, Scripture alone dictated how the church should worship. Furthermore, the church was called to extend the message of the gospel to the lost world.

How did Carey's devotion to ecclesiology manifest itself in his ministry? In England, Carey led two congregations in the proper application of Particular Baptist ecclesiology. He preached the Word, instituted covenants, pursued discipline on straying members, and even dissolved an erring congregation to re-establish it on biblical principles, all because of his desire to submit to the authority of Christ as the church's King. In India, Carey's devotion to ecclesiology may be seen in his unwavering commitment to establish local churches that submitted to the authority of Christ, both among himself and his fellow Europeans, as well as among the Indian community. As in England, Carey directed these churches to adhere to the biblical instructions given for church life and worship.

How did ecclesiology contribute to Carey's missionary success? Carey's devotion to ecclesiology empowered him to walk in obedience to the commands of Scripture regarding the church. It also cultivated an environment in which the missionary received the encouragement and accountability he needed to proclaim the gospel to a lost nation. By remaining committed to the local church, Carey also provided indigenous believers with a community in which they could be protected from recanting their faith, as well as nourished into Christian maturity. In many significant ways, then, Carey's devotion to the tenants of biblical ecclesiology laid a foundation for his missionary success.

Toward an Ecclesiological Missiology

In this thesis, I have sought to demonstrate the commitment which Carey displayed for the local church and the impact it had on his ministry—namely, that Carey's ecclesiological devotion fueled his missional success. To merely observe these facets of Carey's life, however, falls short of the Christian historian's task. The church

must not only learn *of* history, but also *from* history. Therefore, one more question remains regarding Carey's ecclesiological devotion: what does it mean for the church today?

Carey's devotion to ecclesiology summons the church to move toward an ecclesiological missiology. What does this phrase mean? It is my way of expressing the theological conviction that missions—from first to last—must be defined and directed by proper ecclesiology. Local churches send missionaries to the nations. These missionaries pursue the establishment of new churches upon biblical principles which submit to the scriptural instruction of how the church should live and worship.³ These churches mature in faith as they progressively learn to submit to the authority of Christ as the church's King. The process then repeats itself as the people of God multiply around the world. Missions is, at its very heart, an ecclesiological endeavor. Carey's own ministry demonstrates this commitment to ecclesiology that defines the missionary task.

To dismiss the importance of the local church in overseas ministry is to compromise missional labors, harm missionaries spiritually, and sacrifice an indispensable component of obedience to the Great Commission. Yet a great temptation exists for missionaries today to neglect the importance of the local church in their ministries. Sadly, it is all too easy to dismiss elements of ecclesiology as unnecessary—such as intentionally covenanting with believers as a church, preaching the Word, and church discipline. Carey's commitment to ecclesiology calls the church to something greater, something more biblical and more beautiful. Though a costly endeavor, missionaries today must pursue this same ecclesiological devotion, for the missionary task cannot be accomplished apart from a commitment to the local church. As Carey's friend, Christopher Anderson, once stated in a sermon,

³ Missionaries should not merely seek to establish local churches for national believers. They must also pursue personal involvement and meaningful membership in a local church themselves.

Continue, my beloved brethren, continue to labor on, in the assurance that the great Head of the Church left behind him, not only the doctrines which must be received to the saving of the soul, but his own appointed scheme for spreading this faith, in every age, and in every land. Never forget, that *from the bosom of the church*, as such, deliverance must arise on behalf of her long-neglected Lord: that *from the church, as the church*, shall the word of God sound out into every nation under heaven; and that *Zion alone shall have the task and the honor of crowning the King of Zion.*⁴

⁴ Christopher Anderson, *The Christian Spirit Which is Essential to the Triumph of the Kingdom of God* (Edinburgh: A. Balfour, 1824), 46–47, emphasis added.

APPENDIX 1

THE MOULTON CHURCH COVENANT¹

We whose names are underwritten do now declare that we embrace the Word of God as our only guide in matters of religion, and acknowledge no other authority whatsoever as binding upon the conscience. Having, we hope, found mercy at the hands of God in delivering us from the power of darkness, and translating us into the kingdom of his dear Son, we think and feel ourselves bound to walk in obedience to his divine commands. On looking into the sacred Scriptures, we find it was common in the first ages of Christianity for such as professed repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ voluntarily to unite together in Christian societies called in the New Testament “Churches.” Their ends in doing so were to honor God and promote their own spiritual edification. Having searched the written Word, we trust, with a degree of diligence in order that we may know how to act, as well as what to believe, and sought unto God by prayer for divine direction, we heartily approve of, and mean to follow their example. With a view to this, we now solemnly, in the presence of the all-seeing and heart-searching God, do mutually covenant and agree, in manner and form following:

I. To maintain and hold fast the important and fundamental truths of revelation. These we apprehend to be such as respect the natural and moral character of Jehovah, and the various relations he stands in to all his rational creatures; the original purity, but present depravity of human nature; the total moral inability, and yet absolute inexcusableness of man as a guilty sinner before God; the perpetuity of the divine law,

¹ The text for this covenant was provided in digital form by Margaret Williams, curator of the William Carey Museum at Carey Baptist Church in Moulton, England.

and equity of its awful sanction: the infinite dignity of the Son of God in his original character considered as a divine person possessed of all the perfections of deity, and his all sufficiency for the office of mediator between God and man, in consequence of this union of the divine and human natures in one person; the acceptance of our persons with God, and the enjoyments of all good from him, through his mediation; the proper divinity, and blessed agency of the Holy Spirit in our regeneration, sanctification, and consolation. In one word that our full salvation from its first cause to its final consummation is a display of the sovereign goodness, accomplishing the gracious purposes of him who works all things according to the Counsel of his own will, and known unto whom is the end from the beginning.

II. To seek by all proper means the good of the church with which we stand connected. To this end we engage to attend regularly, as far as we have opportunity, all seasons of public worship; church meetings, and meetings for prayer appointed by the church. When we are absent we will be ready to give an account why we were so, if required. We will diligently watch for the appearances of God's work in our congregation and if we see any setting their faces Zion-ward we will endeavor to instruct, and encourage. And having hopeful evidence of the reality of God's works upon their souls, will lay before them the privileges they have a right to, and the duties that they ought to be found in, of following Christ in his ordinances and institutions. If called to the painful work of executing the penalties of Christ upon the breakers of the law of his house, we will endeavor to exercise it in the spirit of the Gospel, without respect to persons. In all questions that shall be debated at our church meetings, the brethren shall speak but one at a time and if a difference in sentiment should take place, we will endeavor in brotherly love to weigh the matter deliberately and fully, and then to put it to the vote, in order that it may be determined by the majority. Also, we engage that according to our ability we will contribute our share towards defraying the necessary expenses attending the worship of God. We likewise [engage] to keep the secrets of the church and not to expose its

concerns to the world around.

III. To esteem our pastor very highly in love for his work's sake. This we will endeavor to manifest by frequently and fervently praying for him and diligently attending on his ministry, encouraging his heart and strengthening his hands to the utmost of our power, in the work of the Lord freely consulting him as we have occasion and opportunity respecting our spiritual affairs, treating him affectionately when present and speaking respectfully of him when absent, as he is a man of like passions with others. We will endeavor to conceal and cover with a mantle of love his weaknesses and imperfections. Also, to communicate unto him of our temporal good things, knowing that they that preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.

IV. To walk in love towards them with whom we stand connected in bands of Christian fellowship. As the effect of this we will pray much for one another. As we have opportunity, we will associate together for religious purposes. Those of us who are in more comfortable situations in life than some of our brethren with regard to the good things of providence, will administer as we see occasion and have opportunity, and ability to their necessities. We will bear one another's burdens, sympathize with the afflicted in body or mind, so far as we know their case under their trials. And as we see occasion, advise, caution, and encourage one another. We will watch over one another for good. We will studiously avoid giving or taking offence. Thus, we will endeavor and make it our study to fulfill the law of Christ.

V. To be particularly attentive to our station in life and the peculiar duties incumbent on us in that situation. We who are husbands or wives will conscientiously discharge relative duties towards our respective yokefellows. We who are heads of families will daily maintain the worship of God in our houses and endeavor to instruct those under our care, both by our words and actions. We who are children will be obedient to our parents in the Lord. We who are masters will give unto our servants that which is just and equal. We who are servants engage to be diligent and faithful, not acting

with eye-service, as man-pleasers, but with singleness of heart, as unto God, knowing that we have a Master in heaven. We will in our different places of abode enquire what we can do for the good of the church to which we belong, and as far as we have ability, we will open, or encourage the opening of a door, wherever we can for the preaching of the Word, remembering that we ought to be as the salt of the earth.

VI. To walk in a way and manner becoming the Gospel before them that are without, that so we may be well doing put to silence the ignorance of gainsayers. We will practice the strictest honesty in all our dealings and faithfulness in fulfilling our promises. It shall be our study to represent a fair picture of religion before the eyes of the world, in the whole of our conduct and conversation. We will abstain from all vain amusements and diversions by which time would be foolishly wasted, money spent, our minds carnalized, and we exposed to many and great temptations. We engage in a special manner to sanctify the Lord's Day. In fine, it shall be our study to keep our garments unspotted by the flesh and to walk as becomes saints.

VII. To receive such and only such into our communion as in the judgment of charity are, we think, born again, have been baptized according to the primitive mode of administering that ordinance. And profess their hearty approbation of and subjection to this our solemn church covenant.

These things and whatever else may appear to be enjoined by the Word of God we promise in the strength of divine grace to observe and practice, but knowing our insufficiency for anything that is spiritually good in and of ourselves, we look up to him who gives power to the faint, rejoicing that in the Lord we have not only righteousness, but strength. Hold thou us up, O Lord, and we shall be safe! Amen!

APPENDIX 2

THE LEICESTER CHURCH COVENANT¹

We, the Church of Jesus Christ meeting in Harvey Lane, Leicester, being convinced of the importance of impartial discipline and pure doctrine in order that our peace and prosperity in the ways of God, do in the presence of God, and of one another, solemnly covenant and agree, in manner and form as follows:

I. That we receive the Bible as the Word of God, and the only rule of faith, and practice, in which we find the following doctrines taught, namely, that in the Deity are three equal persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who sustain distinct offices in the economy of human salvation; We believe that all things were fully known to God from the foundation of the world, that he from eternity chose his people in Christ to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth; that all rational creatures are under indispensable obligation to obey the Law of God, which is holy, just, and good, but that all men have broken it and are liable to eternal punishment; that in the fullness of time God sent his Son to redeem his people whose blood was a sufficient atonement for sin; and by the imputation of whose righteousness we are accounted righteous before God, and accepted with him; and that being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We further believe that men are totally depraved, and that the carnal mind is enmity against God, and that we are convicted, and converted only by the sovereign operations of the Holy Spirit upon our hearts, being made willing in the day of his power, and that the life of Grace is maintained by the same

¹ The Leicester Church Covenant was taken from Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Missionary Fellowship of William Carey* (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2018), 131–35.

Divine Spirit, who is the finisher as well as the author of our faith, that those who are received thus shall persevere in the way of holiness, and at last obtain everlasting happiness through the mercy of God.

II. That we will pay the strictest regard to our conduct in the world, acting with the strictest honesty and integrity in all our worldly dealings, we will likewise abstain from all unlawful amusements and diversions by which time would be wasted, money spent, our minds carnalized, our brethren's minds hurt, or religion dishonored. We will abstain from worldly labor on the Lord's Day, and carefully sanctify it, we will pay the strictest regard to our promises, and by an holy conduct endeavor to honor the cause of God.

III. Also that we will endeavor to train up our families in the fear of the Lord, and to instruct and govern our households as little charges entrusted to us.

IV. That we consistently attend the worship of God on Sundays, at Church Meetings, and other meetings appointed by the Church; if we ever are absent we will be ready to give a reason why, if required; if we are absent from public worship three Sabbaths, or should attend by only in three weeks for six weeks together, or if we are once absent from the Lord's Supper, or twice from Church Meetings without just cause, it should be a sufficient reason why the Church should visit and enquire the reason, and deal accordingly, as shall be required. At our Church Meetings only one of our brethren shall speak at a time, and if in any matter a difference should take place, we will endeavor to weigh the matter deliberately and fully, and then to put it to the Vote that it may be determined by the majority to which the minority shall peacefully accede; all our sisters shall have the same right to vote as the brethren, and be as capable of giving evidence in any matter; yet they shall not be permitted to dictate. We will not watch for each other's faults but will visit each other, mourning with the mourners and joining in the joy of them that rejoice; we will warn, rebuke, exhort, and encourage with long suffering, and desire to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. If called to act

against those who break the Law of our Lord's house we will do it in the spirit of the Gospel, admonishing, suspending, or excluding, as the matter of the case requires.

V. We will regard and highly esteem our minister for his work's sake, constantly attending on his ministry and freely consulting him on the concerns of our souls, contributing according to our ability to his comfortable support, and avoiding all that may weaken his hands, or discourage his mind; in a word we will all seek the good of the Body with which we are connected and if the good of the Body calls us to sacrifice our own case or interest, we will cheerfully do it; esteeming the honor of Christ as far preferable to our own.

VI. We will seek out those in our congregation who appear under concern of soul, and having good evidence of a work of grace on their hearts, will set before them the Privileges they have a right to, and the duties they ought to be found in, and endeavor to remove the stumbling blocks out of their way that they may enjoy the communion of saints.

VII. To receive such, and only such into our communion who make a credible profession of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and who have been baptized according to the primitive mode of administering that ordinance, that is, by immersing them in water, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

VIII. That in all personal misunderstandings the person offended shall go to the offender, and in a spirit of love seek to be reconciled, before the matter be reported to any other. That all debates of the church shall be kept as secret as possible. That no person under censure shall have a voice in the Church. That this covenant be READ at the admission of members, and that all things be done decently, and in order.

These things and whatsoever else we find contained in the Word of God, we (in a dependence on divine support) solemnly promise in the presence of almighty God to observe, and do, but knowing our insufficiency to do any things without divine help, we look up to the strong, for strength, and daily influence – Hold thou us up, O Lord, and we

shall be safe, Amen.

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ABSTRACT

MAY I AGAIN TASTE THE SWEETS OF SOCIAL RELIGION: THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL DEVOTION OF WILLIAM CAREY

Luke Andrew Waite, ThM
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022
Faculty Advisor: Michael A. G. Haykin

William Carey has served as an example for over two hundred years of how to effectively fulfill the Great Commission. One of the primary sources of Carey's success as a missionary was his devotion to the local church. Chapter 1 introduces the topic of Carey's ecclesiology and its significance in his life and ministry. Chapter 2 considers Carey's ecclesiological context by examining Particular Baptist ecclesial thought and its expression within the Northamptonshire Association in the late eighteenth century. Chapter 3 examines Carey's ecclesiological formation and praxis at Moulton and Leicester, his two pastorates in England. Chapter 4 explores Carey's ecclesiological commitment during his missionary service in India. Chapter 5 expounds on the way Carey's devotion to the local church affected the overall success of his ministry. Finally, chapter 6 presents how Carey's example can serve the church today as it seeks to continue the missionary task.

VITA

Luke Andrew Waite

EDUCATION

BA, Boyce College, 2018

MDiv, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018

MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Associate Pastor, Pleasant Green Baptist Church, Hopkinsville, Kentucky,
2012–2013

Associate Pastor, Belmar Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky, 2016–2018

Associate Pastor, Northshire Baptist Church, Manchester Center, Vermont,
2020–2022