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Patterns of Missionary Education: The Baptist India Mission 1794-1824

PREFACE

STATISTICALLY it was an impressive achievement. Within barely fifteen months of 1815-16 over 100 schools were founded near Calcutta having an average total attendance of 6,703 Indian pupils educated at seven shillings and sixpence a head per year.

Ridiculed by Prendergast as "the most absurd infatuation that ever besotted the weakest mind,"¹ and vindicated by Wilberforce as a contribution to the "blessed work of substituting light for darkness"² the educational work of Serampore has long provided material for partisan pronouncements rather than a critical study. To many the pedagogic achievements of Serampore are synonymous with the college that remains, while the native schools which lasted less than thirty years are lightly dismissed as a trial run for that greater work. This essay is written in the belief that these early experiments, while interesting in themselves, deeply influenced a century of mission policy and point to an urgent re-assessment of the relationship between education and evangelism in a missionary context.

Carey was the pioneer of the Baptist Missionary Society. It was founded as a result of his persistent urging of the Christian's "obligation to use means for the conversion of the heathen." Carey and Thomas were the first to volunteer, arriving at Calcutta in November, 1793. Carey began missionary work at Mudnabati, where he developed the wide programme of activities made famous later at Serampore when he became professor of the Bengali, Sanskrit and Marathi languages in Lord Wellesley's college of Fort William. At Serampore he was assisted by Ward, an experienced printer and editor, with Marshman, a schoolmaster, who joined him on a basis of equality, yet it is inevitable that their combined efforts, agreed plans and joint publications should often be attributed to Carey the pioneer.

The experiment with native schools falls into two clearly distinct periods for both of which the pattern is described by texts from Serampore. The *Plan for the education of the children of converted natives* drawn up at Serampore in February, 1802, indicates the pattern as it began on Moravian lines, while the *Hints relative to native schools*, published at the same place fourteen years later, shows its development under Lancasterian influence.³

The Moravian Pattern

Each member of the Serampore trio had teaching experience of some kind in England before offering to the society: Carey in Moulton and Leicester, Marshman at the Broadmead Charity School, Bristol, and Ward in the villages near Hull. Although it is probable that of their different missionary tasks, teaching, preaching and translating or printing the Scriptures, the last absorbed most time, they gave real priority to the establishment of schools. This is evident from Carey's instruction to his son William regarding their intention to commence a new station at Dacca in 1811: "One of the first things to be done there will be to open a charity school and to overlook it."

Within a year of his arrival in India in 1793, Carey had opened a school at Mudnabati,¹ while officially employed as an indigo planter. Again, within a year of his moving thence to Serampore in 1799 (when joined by Marshman and Ward) he reported that a Bengali free school at this new centre had upwards of forty children.²

For the Eurasian community the Marshmans opened a boarding fee-paying school at Serampore in 1800. From the profit of this venture and Carey's salary at Fort William, the Benevolent Institution for the Instruction of Indigent Children was opened at Calcutta in 1810. This similarly worked among the Eurasians with 140 boys and 40 girls regularly attending by the end of the first year.³ First organized by Leonard it grew to have 400 pupils under Mr. and Mrs. Penney, who came to the institution from Lancaster's Borough Road School in 1816.

This appointment on Lancaster's recommendation conveyed in a warm letter of greeting to Carey,⁴ may have given rise to the anachronism first perpetrated in George Smith's authoritative biography, that "Carey had all the native schools of the mission conducted upon Lancaster's plan."⁵ Carey had in fact opened his first school in Bengal before Lancaster did in London,⁶ and Ward had published a plan of education in India the year before Lancaster published his in England.⁷ George Smith's comment could only be justified by the contention that the Serampore trio derived their Lancasterian ideas from the earlier experiment of Bell at Madras. But the evidence will not support this interpretation,⁸ for Marshman unmistakably ascribes their use of the system to Lancaster's *Improvements* which arrived at the earliest in 1807 and indeed it is inherently improbable that with the existing internal communications ideas would have travelled across 1,000 miles of India more directly than from London.

In the Baptist Missionary Society archives there is a copy of Lancaster's textbook on Arithmetic and Orthography signed by

William Ward in 1810. It is after this date that the remarkable proliferation of schools occurs, marked by Lancasterian influence and according to the pattern of Marshman's *Hints relative to Native Schools* published in 1816. But Carey had been teaching native schools since 1794 on a very different pattern described by Ward in his *Plan for the Education of the children of converted natives, or youths who have lost caste*, printed in 1802.

This plan proposes: "That these youths shall be instructed in Divinity, History, Geography, Astronomy, and in reading and writing English and Bengalee. That elementary books shall be prepared on the above subjects and printed in the Bengalee language." Under the heading "Instructors" it provides "that there shall be a Bengalee master for learning exercises on the above subjects, a master for teaching the Bengalee, and another for teaching English. One of the brethren shall give frequent lectures on the above subjects, but especially on divinity. Family prayers with reading of the Holy Scriptures shall be attended to morning and evening."

Admittedly the ultimate purposes of the two methods were similar. Ward's declaration in the *Plan* could equally have been appended as a more remote objective to the later *Hints*: "To provide for the education of the native youth in those principles which enlarge the mind, lead to the worship and service of the true God, and to a holy and useful life, cannot fail to be an effectual advantage to society; and may be the means, in a few years of sending out into this part of the heathen world persons who shall be peculiarly instrumental in turning their fellow countrymen from darkness to light and from dumb idols to serve the living and true God." Similar, too, is the characteristic emphasis on vernacular teaching and the surprising width of syllabus, but there are significant differences.

In the 1802 *Plan*, Divinity is given special emphasis and is placed first on the list of subjects instead of being relegated to the last place as in the 1816 *Hints*, where it appears as ethics and morality. In the *Plan* the teachers were the early converts helped by the missionaries themselves, whereas the later *Hints* envisaged Hindoos trained in teaching methods. Similarly, in the *Plan*, most of the pupils were children of Christian parents rather than the Hindoos who came for education under the later system. In the earlier pattern, Petumber, who Ward believed would make "an excellent Christian schoolmaster" was to "begin school at 8 o'clock with reading the Scriptures and Prayer." Here family prayers could be held twice daily, for the school was regarded as part of a Christian community rather than part of an educational network.

This Christian concept of the school was the distinguishing feature of their early pattern in missionary education. The idea of the school as a Christian community is to be found in both the Bengali

native schools, and the school (scarcely regarded as missionary in character), run essentially for profit at Serampore; it is to be found in the writings of Carey, of Marshman, and of Ward. Before these last two joined him Carey wrote to Fuller from Mudnabati in 1798: "Our school now consists of 21 children who every day write and read to us some portions of the Scriptures, join us in the morning worship, sing hymns very pleasantly and improve considerably in writing and accounts."

Probably more familiar is Marshman's account of his daily routine at the fee-paying school which he organized at Serampore, and a short quotation is adequate to convey the family atmosphere. "At seven my school begins and continues till eight. Then we assemble in the hall for family worship which each brother leads in turn. This consists of singing, reading the word in rotation and prayer. After which Men, Women and Children (including boarders of which we have three at present) breakfast at one table on tea and bread and butter as in England. At half past nine school begins again . . ."¹⁰

Whether for boarders or day-boys, Bengalis or Eurasians, fee-payers or free-places, the school was regarded as a Christian community. This was essentially the Moravian pattern of Nain, of Nazareth and of Gnadenhutten, and it was from the Moravians they learnt it.

Moravian influence on the Serampore Mission has been consistently under-rated or ignored by Baptist historians although the documentary evidence is overwhelming. In his *Enquiry into the obligation of Christians to use means for the conversion of the Heathen* William Carey repeatedly cited the example of the Moravians. "Have not the missionaries of the *Unitas Fratrum*, or *Moravian Brethren*," he asks, "encountered the scorching heat of Abyssinia, or the frozen climes of Greenland and Labrador, their difficult languages, and savage manners?" The *Enquiry* was published in May, 1792. Five months later in the back parlour of Widow Wallis' home, Lower Street, Kettering, Carey is reputed to have thrown down on the table some numbers of the *Periodical Accounts relating to the Missions of the Church of the United Brethren*.¹¹ According to a later narrative, he challenged the twelve other ministers present, "See what the Moravians have done! Can we not follow their example . . ."

To devise a system is in historical terms to copy a pattern. Carey's teaching experience at Moulton, enforced by poverty and hampered by ill-discipline, provided neither a relevant nor a happy precedent for a mission school in Bengal. Accounts of the Moravian achievements in North America offered a more suitable model. Horne was to set them up as the exemplars of Protestant missions in his *Letters on Missions*, mentioned by Fuller, Ryland and Marshman and early

to be found in the Serampore library. Having examined the work of Methodists, S.P.C.K., and other missionaries, Horne concluded : "The Moravian Brethren have been among us what the Jesuits were in the Roman Church. They have laboured and suffered, and effected *more than all of us.*"¹²

Carey's similar estimate of the Moravian work is confirmed in his letter of 1798 to the committee of the Baptist Missionary Society :¹³ "With the Moravians none are yet to be compared either for zeal, labour, perseverance or success, but after them you were the first to engage in the Godlike work of Missions."

The pioneer of the Baptist Mission proudly followed the Moravians' example. Nor were his colleagues any the less indebted. Marshman is recorded as saying, "Thank you! Moravians, you have done me good. If I am ever a missionary worth a straw I shall, under our Saviour, owe it to you."¹⁴ A suspiciously similar remark is elsewhere attributed to Ward, the last of the trio, "If I have anything about me worthy the name of a missionary I have derived it from the accounts of the Moravian brethren."¹⁵

At home, in 1796, the committee made a donation of £20 to the Moravian Brethren,¹⁶ and in 1813, the secretary made the remarkable suggestion of voting 100 guineas to Moravian Missions in respect of their losses due to war.¹⁷ The gesture testified to the close relations between the missions, and was perhaps appropriate in that one of the earliest subscriptions to the Baptist Missionary Society came from a Moravian.¹⁸ When the B.M.S. was founded, the request for advice on the qualifications requisite in a missionary was met by a full answer from La Trobe, Secretary of the Brethren's Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel, describing as an example the Moravians' methods and experience.¹⁹ Ryland was sent Carey's copy of the Moravian *Periodical Accounts* for forwarding,²⁰ but of the Baptist Committee Samuel Pearce probably stood closest to the Moravians. Pearce knew "The sufferings of the Lamb" with that characteristic insight of Moravian worship and prayed Carey to share this experience.

In his valuable but often inaccurate study,²¹ Dr. Oussoren compares Carey's missionary principles with those of the Pietists, especially the Moravians. The dissertation is notable for its unique appreciation of the Moravian influence on Carey, but on the topic of education Oussoren concludes "we could not find any place which informed us he that (sic) took this method of the Moravians or the Pietists."²² In view of the above acknowledgments indicating the debt of Serampore to Moravian inspiration it would seem surprising to find Oussoren correct in denying any interaction on a major aspect of mission work.

The outstanding educational concern of the Moravians was emphasised by both their friends and enemies. It is a curious co-incidence

dence that John Hartley of Bedford, "a lovely man" well known to Ward, through whom the early gift from the B.M.S. was sent by Fuller to the Moravian Society, was himself commended at the English Provincial Helpers Conference "for the pains which he takes to instruct the children."²³ Wesley acknowledged when writing to the Moravians after his visit to the Herrnhut, "I greatly approve of your conferences and bands, of your methods of instructing children . . ."²⁴ A few years later Rimius penned a violent, even indecent, attack against them in which it was commented as a point of ridicule that "they pay an uncommon attention to the Instruction of Youth. Besides those who have the care of orphans there are others that are intrusted with that of all the other children."²⁵

The Orphan House had attracted Wesley's attention, too, and it is curious that Carey mentioned when writing in 1799 of the school at Mudnabati "among the scholars there are several orphans whom we wholly maintain." Just as in Moravian practice so here the Bible was the main subject and medium of instruction. From John Fountain's description of the school at Mudnabati come other authentic Moravian notes.²⁶ "It is pleasant to hear several of the dear children join every morning in a gospel hymn," he wrote, echoing the Moravian emphasis on hymns,²⁷ often the first writings to be translated on a Moravian mission station. Then with fervent aspiration he longed for the pupils, "O that they may become the children of God."

After the move to Serampore the Moravian pattern became even clearer. The missionaries were professedly united in a Moravian community, living "in one family, in one house," dining at a common table, having no private property, but with their common stock, their weekly meetings to settle disagreements, and their love-feasts.

At this time, too, was published the *Plan for the education of the children of converted natives* which, unlike the later *Hints*, reproduced the characteristic Moravian emphasis on scripture teaching and family prayers within the pattern of a school as part of a Christian community. During this earlier phase of Serampore, educational aims and methods were unquestionably Moravian in their details and inspiration. Even when Lancaster's influence changed the whole pattern from about 1810-13 the fundamental principle of Comenius remained—teaching in the vernacular—a basic rule observed by that apostle of Moravian education.

Circumstantial evidence, such as Ward's correspondence with the Brethren missionaries teaching a rapidly growing school at Bavians Kloof,²⁸ points to the same conclusion, but it is excluded from Oussoren's judgment by the narrow restrictions with which he hedges his preface to the comparison of methods. "We omit principles of Von Spangenberg, and we will limit ourselves to William

Carey's, some Pietists and Von Zinzendorf's principles."²⁹ Ward, Marshman, Loskiel and Spangenberg himself are thus dismissed. Yet among the books at Serampore in 1804 were Loskiel's *History of the Mission of the United Brethren among the Indians in North America* and Spangenberg's *Account of the Unitas Fratrum*.³⁰

Marshman's concern to lay sound educational foundations in a correct orthography, a system of grammar and an extended vocabulary is paralleled in Loskiel's account of Zeisberger's work.³¹ "In the year 1776 the Delaware Reading and Spelling Book, compiled by Brother Zeisberger, was introduced into the schools at Schoenbrunn, and Gnadenhutten, and gave great pleasure to the scholars."

Perhaps more striking is the account of Brother Rauch who in 1740 declared to the white people his intention to preach to the heathen of North America while he earned his bread with the labour of his hands. A farmer offered him board and lodging "on condition that he should instruct his children; for added he, we white people are as wicked and ignorant as the heathen. The missionary, considering this as a gracious direction of Providence in his behalf, commenced schoolmaster."³² Marshman read accounts of the Moravian missions with great profit on his voyage to Serampore³³ and it is at the least a remarkable coincidence that within a few months of his arrival the decision was made to open a school for Eurasian children helping to support the mission community by means of the fees charged. Fees were fixed at £40-45 and the following advertisement appeared in a Calcutta newspaper :

"Mission House, Serampore. On Thursday, the first of May, 1800, a school will be opened at this House, which stands in a very healthy and pleasant situation by the side of the river. Letters addressed to Mr. Carey will be immediately attended to."

The Lancasterian Pattern

Among the different schools organized by the Serampore trio "the most important and happily the least expensive," reported Carey, "are schools for the instruction of the natives of India." By 1813 there were twenty such schools and the mission was considering their extension, but for "the iron hand that paralyzed their efforts."¹

Subject to the continuing variation of government policy,² and liable to the deportation of their assistants (without proof of misconduct),³ the prohibition of their activities, and the sequestration of their press⁴ (even when working in Danish territory) at the hands of the East India Company, the Serampore trio could scarcely implement Marshman's educational plans outlined in the *Periodical Accounts* of 1813. "It is an imperious duty," urged Carey, "of all who love the Lord Jesus to labour in all proper ways with the legislature to obtain leave for missionaries to settle in India and

to travel from place to place, or settle in any of the provinces without control, unless they are guilty of civil crimes. At present our hands and feet are bound."⁵

The story of the action taken to meet Carey's plea requires a separate paper in which to relate an early endeavour in ecumenical co-operation organizing a parliamentary petitioning committee surely unique for the speed and success with which it gathered unprecedented support.⁶ Among the signatories of the petitions presented within two months were 55,000 "Friends and Supporters of the Baptist Mission in India." The crisis over the 1813 renewal of the East India Company charter was instrumental in the formation of the Baptist Union and in the later move of the B.M.S. Committee from Kettering to London. In India, the final acceptance of the vital clause was full vindication of the work by the Serampore missionaries, and clear authority for the development of their educational plans.

Echoing Wilberforce's resolution of twenty years earlier the thirteenth revised resolution declared, "That it is the duty of this country to promote the interest and happiness of the native inhabitants of the British dominions in India; and such measures ought to be adopted as may tend to the introduction among them of useful knowledge, and of religious and moral improvement; and in the furtherance of the above objects, sufficient facilities shall be afforded by law to persons desirous of going to and remaining in India for the purpose of accomplishing those benevolent designs."⁷

Strengthened by this recognition, Carey pressed for expansion. Good superintendents were recognised to be of the highest importance for schools conducted on the Lancasterian system, and for this task Carey recommended in his review of 1814 that the missionaries themselves, pious and well-disposed friends in the country, and old pupils of the Benevolent Institution would be fit candidates. The following year he urged again "relative to schools, it is to be wished that they should increase in number, and this could be done to a considerable extent at a small expense, as some of our brethren have not one school near them, and most of them could superintend with ease three or four more schools than their present means will permit them to establish."⁸

In 1816 Joshua Marshman wrote and published with the agreement of the brethren, *Hints relative to native schools with an outline of an institution for their extension and management*. The title was reminiscent of that adopted by Joseph Lancaster, but its effect was even more spectacular. Between July, 1816 and October, 1817, there were 103 schools opened with an average attendance of 6,703 pupils.⁹ Well over 10,000 pupils were entered on school rolls, but the lower figure was calculated by Marshman from a comparison of inspectors' and teachers' reports.

A discerning eye might find in these schools illuminating glimpses of educational theories adopted many years later. Perhaps there was a glimmering of "maturation" in Carey's statement that "we are endeavouring to instil into their minds Divine truth as fast as their understandings ripen." Was it Comenius or "progressivism" that made Marshman determine that a plan for education "must combine order with delight" while "arousing a lively curiosity" among the students? Whose theory of educating the intelligent inspired Carey to realize that "many of these boys will be youths whose minds require something to feed upon and that it will always be an advantage to have too full rather than too scanty a choice of books."?

Undoubtedly the most interesting parallel derives from the launching in 1818 of the first Bengali periodical—*Dig Dushun*—a monthly magazine for Indian youth, printed at Serampore and devised to be read at the native schools.¹⁰ In its content, if not its layout, it is surprisingly similar to the current magazines *Finding Out* and *Knowledge*. The 23-page edition of September, 1818, is typical, comprising articles on :

Lightning and Thunder

The Fixed Stars

Destruction of the Alexandrian Library

Natural History of the Camel

The City of Babylon

Infinite Divisibility of Matter

(A dialogue between tutor and pupil.)

Obidah, or the Vanity of Riches

(A Fable)

Division of Time—Roman and Gregorian revision

The Cataract of Niagara in Canada

Other articles include Manners of the Laplanders, Trial by Jury, the Origin of Painting, Salt mines near Gracow, the echo, (a dialogue), the expedition of Xerxes into Greece, and a fascinating statistical account of the City of London. Much of the material is strikingly similar to articles in the third edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*!¹¹ But there are some interesting additions including a serialised "History of Hindoost'han" running to 150 pages of Bengali, through seven editions.

While determined that "the instruction given should be upon an open and liberal scale"¹² the Serampore missionaries were strongly agreed in their primary objective of "improving the natives in the knowledge of their own language." This insistence on vernacular education was the characteristic of Serampore, dogmatically declared in Marshman's bald assertion that the "hope of imparting efficient instruction to them or indeed to any nation in a language

not their own is completely fallacious."¹³

The curriculum began on firmly Lancasterian foundations. The pupils were instructed with a correct system of orthography, a sketch of grammar, a simplified system of arithmetic and an extended vocabulary of 3-4,000 words. When these foundations had been carefully laid, the pupils entered upon a more ambitious set of five courses for each of which they wrote, by dictation in Bengali, a compendium of 100 octavo pages. These courses which were developed in "simple axioms in short and perspicuous sentences" comprised the following subjects:¹⁴

1. An account of the solar system, laws of gravity, motion and attraction.
2. Geography, beginning with Hindoost'han, but giving special attention to Britain and Europe.
3. Natural history, meteorology, light, heat, air and water, mineralogy and chemistry.
4. History and chronology, being an account of the principle events since the creation. The course gives special emphasis to Hebrew and Oriental history, but includes the English constitutional developments.
5. Ethics and morality, to inculcate "just ideas of themselves" and to include an anthology of Scripture with exhortations to Piety and humanity.

A surprisingly wide range of subjects was covered in these courses for which all the material had to be translated into Bengali. Some indication of the flexibility of that language is given by the use of Sargent's 1810 translation of the First Book of Virgil's *Aeneid* and by John Mack's advanced lecture course in chemistry at Serampore College. At a more elementary level was the first scientific copy-book which, set in simple axioms, lent itself to the catechetical method of teaching. There could be no accusation of water-tight compartmentalization of subjects levelled against such a text-book, but neither is it simply the chaotic mixture of the subjective and objective, value judgements and scientific facts which it may appear. As an extract of the first six points will illustrate, Carey believed these different facets of truth could be combined in the unity of purpose to undercut pagan superstition and beliefs grounded as they often were in faulty chronology.

1. The earth has been created nearly 6,000 years.
God hath created all things out of nothing.
The earth is 21,875 miles in circumference.
2. The earth in 24 hours turns round on its own axis like a wheel.
This motion causes day and night.
The length and shortness of the days are caused by the annual motion of the earth.

3. The eye of God is in every place beholding both the evil and the good.
The clouds are never more than 3 miles above the earth. The highest mountains are little more than 5 miles above the level of the sea.
4. God hath created of one blood all the nations of the earth. India has been known to the European part of the world above 2,000 years.
It is said that Menu the first sovereign of India reigned about 3,000 years ago.
5. God has appointed all men once to die and after that to receive judgment.
The earth and the other planets move round the sun. From the exhalations of the earth the clouds are formed from which proceeds rain.
The soul of a man is of more value than the sun, the moon, and all the stars.
6. The two most powerful nations on earth are England and Russia, and these are in alliance with each other.

The far-sighted vision of the Serampore trio has become a biographical commonplace, yet in honesty it should be recognised that they anticipated the vices of future systems as well as their virtues, and at times perversely delighted in a refinement of these worst failings. Notable in this respect was the system of Payment by Results and its concomitant dictation for rote learning.

Dictation of useful information was proudly acclaimed as the centre of the missionaries' educational method. Here was "The most effectual means of conveying instruction" for not only was it economical in saving printing costs but it provided suitable prizes of the pupils' own work which would be taken home and read aloud, further stimulating the desire for education and more widely disseminating the knowledge imparted. Marshman valued the method beyond these incidental advantages, for "the class being ready to receive the first word are led to expect the next with calmness and expectancy, the state of mind best suited to the reception of ideas."¹⁵ The pupil's mind was a *tabula rasa* on which the tutor should inscribe, and there can be little doubt that when the passage had been taken down by dictation and read through, a sentence each, four times over, by the class, some impression had been made. By this method, Marshman calculated the five compendiums totaling 450 pages could be written and learnt within three years.

"It will be evident to the reflecting mind," affirmed Marshman, "that nothing is done towards imparting ideas, and little towards improving the children in orthography till they are able to write from dictation the various epitomes drawn up for their use . . ."¹⁶ Working from this basic assumption Marshman later reports in in-

jured tones of surprised indignation that in some schools "it was with the greatest difficulty that a small number of their pupils could be obtained to repeat the contents of the copy-books from memory. The idleness of the boys was often pleaded as the reason but when it came to the test some of these masters . . . positively refused to make the boys commit the questions and answers to memory."¹⁷ Such an attitude was incomprehensible: the conclusion was swift. "When the committee found this to be the case they after due trial relinquished the school."

Organization was made equally simple. A "normal school" already existed at Serampore where teachers, selected and sent by the villages, could receive training in this adaptation of the Lancasterian system, before returning to arrange their schools. Under them would be ten monitors instructing themselves and classes of twelve beneath them helped by the usual Lancasterian apparatus of tables or charts, the pupils working competitively within the groups. The duties of superintendance were simplified to the most mechanical extreme, but difficulties with native teachers frequently arose and permanently handicapped the system. Nor is this surprising, in retrospect, for the method of Payment by Results which was introduced there in 1818, and which would rule English education from 1862 to 1895 has been soundly condemned on moral educational and psychological grounds. "That such a system was bad for the Inspector, bad for the teacher, and above all bad for the schools goes without saying," commented Lowndes.¹⁸

Originally the native teachers were paid according to the number of pupils attending their schools, but this method seemed both ineffective and unfair since it paid no regard to the trouble and care taken by individual teachers. The year after Marshman had published *Hints Relative to Native Schools* it was decided to alter the method of payment to "regulate the master's wages by the proficiency of the children." Such a system would give the teachers "an interest in their pupils not felt before; their diligence and ability became the master's real gain, as a school of eighty children, who, by their own and their master's diligence were brought forward so as to write from dictation, were in a few months worth more than double the sum to him that they were on entering the school."

For ease of administration a standard was therefore fixed. "One copy book for the month to be thus written and fully committed to memory, as it contains from twenty to twenty-four pages with two or three sentences at the head of each was found to furnish full employment for an industrious lad." Each master was then paid two annas per month per boy with this work properly complete on examination, and paid proportionately less in other cases according to the work done. The system appeared completely teacher-proof as the missionary or other superintendent (like the inspector in English

schools fifty years later) had merely to check the copy books and to hear the pupils recite its contents from memory. "If two or three books appear evidently written by the same hand, this furnishes a subject for enquiry when the master comes to receive his wages."

"The mechanism of this plan is perfectly simple," explains a later report.¹⁹ But there was an extraordinary refinement of this system at Serampore by means of which its most vicious element could be proudly regarded as the crowning virtue. "No one intervenes between the European superintendent and the masters," the report continues. "He sees everything with his own eyes. He rewards their exertions from month to month on the spot suffering no delay to intervene, or as promptly with-holds the gratuity if negligence be clearly apparent. All this he does too in the sight and hearing of the boys themselves who are thus taught in the most impressive manner that there is a degree of merit in real diligence." Certainly the pupils would learn that their teacher was the paid servant of a European who set the highest value on the ability to memorize the right questions and repeat the correct answers.

This method of payment was based openly on the lowest possible estimate of the teachers. It anticipated "a general spirit of low cunning which seeks every opportunity to deceive an employer," and calculated "the labour and care required in a system of deception capable of eluding discovery." Not surprisingly, the system instilled in the teachers the attitude which it expected from them. At best, the schools organized on this pattern were units in an educational network devised with Benthamite precision.

The atmosphere had changed. The difference in this second period was essentially one of orientation, from Christian community to educational method, from a care for the whole man to a concern for an expanding system.

However Spartan in appearance the system was undeniably popular. Villages applying for schools, with offers of candidates for training and school accommodation in houses or even temples, were far more numerous than could ever be satisfied. "The earnestness with which they have sought these schools exceeds everything we had previously expected," reported Carey in the Circular Letter of 1817. "Nor has the desire ceased; we are still constantly importuned for more schools although we have long gone beyond the extent of our funds."

Finance always prevented expansion. Marshman's detailed calculations show the schools to have been astonishingly economical. Allowing for equipment, building rental, teachers' wages, and materials, the expense averaged three rupees annually per pupil in a school for 70 boys, or seven shillings and sixpence a year at their current rate of exchange. Even so the cost was prohibitive²⁰ for the

expenses were met from funds at Serampore earned by the missionaries with little help from England.

After the death of Fuller in 1815 relationships became increasingly strained between the Baptist Missionary Society and the Serampore brethren. An unhappy controversy arose over finance and property, causing the secession of the younger missionaries to establish separate work in Calcutta. In 1827 the relationship between the Serampore brethren and the Home Committee was severed. But, already, when Ward came to England in 1818 he found that calumnies were widespread and from the committee had spread such a lack of confidence that generous friends, willing to support schools, withheld their gifts in fear of misappropriation.

In 1821 Carey lamented to Ryland "the ungenerous conduct of the Society in whispering suspicions, when they had most abundant proof of their falsehood, in suppressing all our correspondence, and almost totally neglecting all care of the translations, the schools and the College, the only things for which we wish their help—too plainly shew that they feel no interest in Serampore. Nothing but tenderness for a Society which was like my life-blood would have induced me to submit to such a series of injustice so long: but now I see no object to be accomplished by further forbearance."²¹

The brethren could no longer support their various endeavours by separate appeals. Some schools were therefore closed and an unsatisfactory attempt was made to shed the financial burden of the others by combining them with the older indigenous schools, improving the latter's syllabus.²² In 1824 the remainder were incorporated in Serampore College.²³ It was a sad end for a great experiment, but Carey had proved to the Anglicists and Orientalists alike that there was a demand for education in the vernacular, and that European knowledge could be conveyed through this medium.

The Vernacular Fabric

Despite the transformation which occurred in the native schools of Serampore, some of the underlying principles from the earlier Moravian phase survived into the later period, submerged beneath Lancasterian method. Most notable of these was education in the vernacular. The "mother tongue schools" of Comenius were still to be seen in the new system which recognised as a primary objective "improving the natives in the knowledge of their own language."²⁴ It was a monumental task for when Carey arrived in India, Bengali had no printed and hardly any written literature. The wisdom of his policy is not at question in this brief section for the Anglicist Orientalist Vernacularist dispute is still the concern of qualified scholars, but an attempt must here be made to suggest what the Serampore brethren believed and why.

Carey would have accepted the premiss of Macaulay's later ver-

dict "that it is possible to make natives of this country thoroughly good English scholars."² But he would strongly have rejected the deduction that "to this end our efforts ought to be directed." Dr. Aggrey's famous dictum may be suitably mis-quoted for Carey believed: educate a man through English and you educate an individual, educate him in the vernacular and you educate his family. While the one method entailed a completely fresh start with the mastery of a foreign language in every generation, the other enabled continuous growth.

"The advantages for communicating instruction with ease and efficiency which the one method (vernacular teaching), possesses above the other, are such as will appear evident from the slightest comparison. For ideas to be acquired with effect in a foreign language, opportunity, leisure, inclination, and ability must combine in the case of every individual; and even then scarcely one in ten would so thoroughly acquire the English language as to obtain due instruction from the mass of knowledge contained therein." Comparing the knowledge of Sanskrit in Bengal to that of Greek in Europe at the time of the Reformation, Carey remarked "To a gentleman of leisure and of fortune in England, the knowledge of Greek is doubtless of the highest value as tending to enlarge and elevate his mind. Few, however, would deem that a sufficient reason for attempting to introduce that admirable language to the Sunday and charity schools throughout the three kingdoms."³

Carey and Marshman did not merely denounce as impracticable and expensive the attempt to educate India through the English language, but they recognized the dangers which would result from the occasional success of the efforts to which the Macaulay minute later gave approval. "Those individuals in whom such ability for acquiring the English language united with due opportunity of improvement, would scarcely remain to till the ground, as to labour at any manual occupation. They would therefore by their education be unfitted for the ordinary callings of life." "Their minds would be instantly raised above the hammer, the chisel, the plough."

This was more than a Victorian insistence on the right stations in life by a "consecrated cobbler" who became a professor. It was a clear-sighted warning of the dangers of making another caste in India, an isolated caste of a workless intelligentsia having a monopoly of education and neither able to return to their "paternal employ," nor allowed to rise in the company's service. Carey foresaw a growing number of Indians, educated in English, competing with Europeans for commercial and administrative posts, but denied such promotion and turning to corrupt activities. The market of copyists being overstocked, "nine-tenths therefore unable to find honest employment and with their knowledge of English incapable of returning to the axe or the plough must either have dragged out

a miserable life in the utmost want and distress or have added to the general profligacy of manners by turning to nefarious means."⁴

It was exactly this fear which had moved Sir Francis Bacon to protest to James I some three hundred years earlier in England: "For the great number of schools which are in your Highness' realm doth cause a want and likewise an overthrow; both of them inconvenient and one of them dangerous; for by means thereof they find want in the country and towns, both of servants for husbandry, and apprentices for trade; and on the other side, there being more scholars bred than the state can prefer and employ, and the active part of that life not bearing a proportion of the preparative, it must needs fall out, that many persons will be bred unfit for other vocations, and unprofitable for that in which they were bred up, which fills the realm full of indigent, idle and wanton people which are but *materia rerum novarum*."

This early precedent for Carey's complaint, and its recurrence in the writings of educationalists during the intervening centuries,⁵ neither justifies nor repudiates the fears of Serampore. Yet, the frequent progress from school to prison to parliament in the recent history of newly independent countries may seem to strengthen their contention. Away from an imagined disaster, Carey pleaded for education, not restricted to the élite but for the common people in the vernacular serving "to expand their minds and enrich their language."

Some Useful Threads

The fabric of vernacular education was thus worked at Serampore on two clearly distinct patterns. In the earlier years under Moravian influence, native schools were primarily Christian-community centred, but later, though still "mother-tongue schools" they expanded as units at one level of missionary endeavour—education. A longing that children might grow within the family of the Church, was transformed into a pre-occupation with a widening programme.

This change has its parallels in the modern Church, but more frequently nowadays through the dispiriting effect of failure than the dangers of success. Whereas in the earlier days at Serampore only converts or missionaries would have been willing to teach under Carey's direction, when his reputation grew the demand for education became more insistent; native "pagans" were eager to teach and their children to learn. The timely advent of Lancasterian teaching methods enabled expansion on this scale, but the distinctive Christian witness was lost in the system which developed.

Some pertinent questions emerge at a time when churches and governments overseas with missionary societies and voluntary agencies at home are pleading for more teachers. Is it reasonable to

suggest that the strategy of missionary education took a wrong turning about 1810, starting along a road which more than a century's journey is showing to be a humanitarian cul-de-sac? Is it enough to replace Lancasterian apparatus by more approved educational techniques? Young governments have now assumed responsibility for their schools so that missionary societies are less concerned to organize education networks of vast proportions. Carey planned to educate a continent: our task is no smaller but more clearly defined. How far can and should we in these circumstances return to the earlier Moravian pattern of mission schools at Serampore?

There seems to be an inherent bias towards the later pattern. On the one hand learning abroad is often considered worthwhile only in so far as it is examinable, giving real advantage to mechanical repetition, and on the other the value of school prayers is being questioned in English practice. Yet while the true end of religious education is envisaged as encounter with God, the teaching of doctrinal, ethical and scriptural truths cannot be regarded as an adequate substitute for worship within the concept of the school as part of a Christian community. Even when this is agreed the co-ordination of religious and secular subject teaching raises further problems.

In both phases at Serampore the Christian and secular elements of teaching were regarded as correlative, but in the earlier phase under Moravian influence Christian teaching was predominant, and in the later phase under Lancasterian method the emphasis was primarily on factual instruction. To the missionaries themselves such a division between the elements of education would have seemed repugnant for they considered the whole as a process of enlightenment where indigenous schools had served only "to make darkness visible." "By enlightening the minds of the natives," declared Wilberforce in a memorable debate, "we should root out their errors without provoking their prejudices and it would be impossible that men of enlarged and instructed minds could continue enslaved by such a monstrous system of follies and superstitions as that under the yoke of which the natives of Hindoostan now groan. They would, in short, become Christians, if I may so express myself, without knowing it."¹

This naive conviction of the evangelistic result produced "from the progress of science, from the diffusion of knowledge" was shared by Carey and Marshman in their extension of schools on the Lancasterian pattern after 1813, and lingers still if less openly expressed. In principle it is basically sound for as Zinzendorf and later Pestalozzi reasoned all true learning derives from the God of truth and in Him all true knowledge finds unity. Therefore in one sense all education is religious. But in practice the connection is less frequently perceived as school teaching can rarely achieve this level

of ultimate reality. Instead, as a recent study of mission schools among the Luo has shown,² the secular syllabus may tend to undercut both Christian education and existing ethical standards.

The acknowledged immanence of the supernatural with its absolute sanctions and permeation of human activity in the realms of social relationships and physical causation alike, forms a traditional framework of life closer to Christianity than is Western materialism. But our methods of education frequently destroy this framework of authoritarian belief by inductive reasoning based on mechanistic theories of secondary causation and proximate realities in science and the arts. Experimentation in chemistry, testing of hypotheses in physics, and sifting of evidence in history will intentionally encourage a spirit of questioning and methods of inductive reasoning, undermining traditional authority but at the same time preventing its replacement by a new authoritarianism of Christian dogma. Where there is an apparent conflict of methods education in secular subjects may therefore strengthen opposition to the presentation of the Christian faith rather than ensure its acceptance.

In the later pattern of Mission schools at Serampore this dilemma was avoided by making instruction in both secular and religious subjects unwaveringly authoritarian. Both could be dictated, then learnt from compendiums and finally tested through catechisms recited with the superintendent. The value of such authoritarian methods of instruction in the school-room has already been considered; in the church room it is pungently judged by Roland Allen: "It would be better that our converts should be polygamists, drunkards and thieves, if they had so far realized the Holy Ghost as to give up cannibalism for themselves, than that they should be outwardly the most respectable of men at the bidding of a foreign missionary, if they adopted prayers and trousers alike at his command, and, so far as they thought at all inclined to think the trousers the more important."³

To such methods of teaching the risky but rewarding alternative is to stimulate vital questions instead of inculcating orthodox answers. Carey had this better aim in view when teaching earlier on the Moravian pattern at Mudnabati. "I trust," he wrote in 1799, "these schools may tend to promote curiosity and inquisitiveness among the rising generation."⁴ This object was being achieved a few years before in the Moravian school at Niesky where Schleiermacher, one of the pupils, noted, "My tutor urged me to inquire into the facts, and quietly think out conclusions for myself."⁵ When, as part of the worshipping family of the church, a school provokes its pupils to ask, "What mean ye by this?" as a sincere enquiry and not a ritual question, education and evangelism have achieved their ideal in unity.

NOTES

Except where otherwise stated the references First, Second and Third Reports apply to the reports of an *Institution for the encouragement of native schools in India*, published at Serampore in 1817, 1818 and 1820 respectively. Similarly, *Hints* has been used as an abbreviation for the book *Hints relative to native schools with an outline of an institution for their extension and management, Serampore*, 1816.

Preface

¹ Prendergast, *Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 26, p. 1,080, 1st July, 1813.

² W. Wilberforce, *Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 26, p. 1,072, 1st July, 1813.

³ For supplementary material I am indebted to the Baptist Missionary Society for access to manuscript sources, and also to the librarians of the Moravian Church House, Regent's Park College, Oxford, the University Library, Cambridge, and the British Museum. Dr. J. P. C. Roach of Corpus Christi College has kindly given time, advice and encouragement for this paper which began as a dissertation for the Cambridge University Department of Education.

The Moravian Pattern

¹ Carey to Ryland, 27th January, 1795.

² Carey, Marshman, Ward and Brunson to the Society, 15th August, 1800.

³ Carey to Ryland, 24th May, 1811.

⁴ Printed in *Circular Letters* (Serampore), Vol. 10, February, 1817, pp. 22-23.

⁵ G. Smith, *Life of Wm. Carey*, London (1885), p. 148.

⁶ The comparative dates are 1794 and 1796 or 98, cf. David Salmon, *Joseph Lancaster* (1904), p. 4.

⁷ The comparative dates are 1802 and 1803.

⁸ *Hints*, p. 34.

⁹ W. Ward to Rev. Morris, 1st April, 1802.

¹⁰ J. C. Marshman to his father, 17th August, 1800.

¹¹ This incident is recounted in several biographies written this century—e.g. S. Pearce Carey (1923), E. A. Payne (1936), and A. J. Lewis (1962). The present writer has been unable to find any reference to it or to Carey's challenge on the occasion in accounts earlier than J. E. Hutton, *History of the Moravian Church*, 2nd edn. (1909), p. 252.

¹² M. Horne, *Letters on Missions* (Bristol, 1794), p. 34.

¹³ Carey and Fountain to the Society, December, 1798. I am indebted to Miss Evans for drawing my attention to this reference.

¹⁴ J. E. Hutton, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

¹⁵ *Baptist Magazine*, January, 1813, p. 37.

¹⁶ C. I. La Trobe to A. Fuller, 20th December, 1796.

¹⁷ Fuller to Ryland, 28th May, 1813.

¹⁸ Northampton Letter, *Baptist Annual Register*, Vol. 1, May, 1793.

¹⁹ La Trobe to Rippon, 26th June, 1793, printed in *Baptist Annual Register*, Vol. 1, p. 531.

²⁰ Secretary's Note Book, Vol. II, 1797-1801, Moravian Church House.

²¹ A. H. Oussore, *William Carey, especially his Missionary Principles* (Leiden, 1945).

²² *Ibid.*, p. 266.

²³ Minutes of the English Provincial Helper's Conference, 19th March, 1788.

²⁴ Letter drafted but not sent, September, 1788, *Journal*, Vol. II, p. 496.

²⁵ H. Rimiuis, *A candid narrative of the Rise and Progress of the Herrnhuters* (1753), p. 9.

²⁶ J. Fountain to A. Fuller, 12th October, 1798.

27 "Our little children we instruct chiefly by hymns," A. J. Lewis, *Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Pioneer* (1962), p. 163.

28 *Periodical Accounts of the Missions of the United Brethren*, March, 1793.

29 A. H. Oussoren, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

30 Cf. *A Catalogue of the books belonging to the Mission Library at Serampore* (1804). Dr. Ryland's copy in the B.M.S. archives.

31 G. H. Loskiel, *op. cit.*, translated and published in London, 1794, Part III, p. 113.

32 *Ibid.*, Part II, pp. 11-12.

33 J. C. Marshman to his father, 4th September, 1799.

The Lancastrian Pattern

1 Carey to Sutcliff, June, 1813.

2 Cf. K. Ingham, *Reformers in India* (1955), Chap. 1.

3 Ld. Minto's order for expulsion of Johns, Lawson, and Robinson, 5th March, 1812, also Carey to Ryland, 14th April, 1813.

4 Edmonstone to Carey under Ld. Minto's authority, 8th September, 1807.

5 Carey to Fuller, March, 1813.

6 J. Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists*. Vol. 4 gives the best available account of the movement the significance of which is barely suggested by E. A. Payne's *Short History of the Baptist Union*.

7 Section 33 of 53, George III cap. 155.

8 *Circular Letters*, Vol. 8, January, 1815, p. 28.

9 *First Report*, p. 12.

10 *Second Report*, pp. 20-22.

11 Cp. "The Whale," *Dig Durshun*, January, 1819—with "Balena" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 3rd edition (1800).

12 *Circular Letters*, Vol. 8, January, 1815, p. 21.

13 *Hints*, p. 10.

14 *Hints*, pp. 14-16.

16 *First Report*, p. 8.

15 *Hints*, p. 22.

17 *Third Report*, p. 21.

18 G. A. N. Lowndes, *The Silent Social Revolution* (1937), p. 13.

19 *Third Report*, p. 19.

20 *Second Report*, p. 81.

21 Carey to Ryland, 14th June, 1821. From copy of original MS. at College Road, Northampton.

22 *Second Report*, p. 34.

23 *Fifth Report of Serampore College*, 1825, p. 7.

The Vernacular Fabric

1 *Hints*, p. 11.

2 T. B. Macaulay, 2nd February, 1835.

3 *First Report*, p. 3.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 36.

5 Cf. Dr. Young's Historical Sketch in *Spens Report* (1938), p. 7.

Some Useful Threads

1 W. Wilberforce, *Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 26, p. 832, 22nd June, 1813.

2 M. G. Whisson, *The School in Present-day Luo Society*, unpublished thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D., Cambridge, 1963.

3 R. Allen, *Educational Principles and Missionary Methods* (1919), p. 132.

4 Quoted from G. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

5 From A. J. Lewis, "An Adventure in Education," *Moravian Messenger*, May, 1959.