

EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY

VOLUME 17

Volume 17 • Number 3 • July 1933

Evangelical Review of Theology

*Articles and book reviews original and selected from
publications worldwide for an international
readership for the purpose of discerning the
obedience of faith*

EDITOR: BRUCE J. NICHOLLS



Published by
PATERNOSTER PERIODICALS

doubt did Fuller, the first B.M.S. Secretary. But how many people read it? The striking sentences on the Christian minister, alluded to above, were quoted by the Anglican, Melville Horne, in the *Letters on Missions* which he issued in 1794, as [p. 315](#) well as by Christopher Anderson in his fine memorial sermon for Carey in 1843. Otherwise, references to the *Enquiry*, save in biographies of Carey, are hard to find.

Perhaps the truth is that its prose style was not sufficiently polished or elaborate for those whose lives spanned the gulf between the English Augustans and the Victorians, nor had it sufficient of the conventional popular theology and piety about its phrases. Confirmation of this view is to be found in the fact that when Isaac Mann wrote to John Ryland in 1817 suggesting a new edition, the worthy doctor replied: 'I very much question whether it would be expedient to reprint Dr Carey's Pamphlet NOW, or whether it would add at all to his reputation to do so'. Ryland was overruled, it is true, but the 1818 edition of the *Enquiry* is a very diminutive paper-covered publication with the statistical information set in connected form in smaller type, and with three short appended notes, one on Carey's early days, one on the translations that were being made at Serampore and one on the number of adherents of the chief religions of mankind. Interest in the *Enquiry* was revived in 1892 at the time of the B.M.S. centenary; and in 1934, for the hundredth anniversary of Carey's death, a facsimile was produced by the Carey Press by the photographic process.

It is not, however, as a literary curiosity that it deserves attention, nor simply as a document underlying the modern missionary movement. It still has a message. Its arguments are needed for a twentieth-century apologetic. Its shrewd common sense still indicates the kind of recruits needed for work abroad. Its exhortation to missionaries 'to encourage any appearance of gifts amongst the people of their charge' is not yet universally heeded. Its very detachment, under-statement and absence of verbiage give it effectiveness to-day, even though its facts and figures need replacing by those in the *Interpretative Statistical Survey* and Latourette's *History of the Expansion of Christianity*, and it needs supplementing by certain other lines of approach, and most notably by an emphasis on the nature and function of the world-wide Church, such as is given by Wilson Cash in his recent James Long Lectures. But the ordinary Christian has no time or capacity for large-scale works. He wants the gist of the matter presented in terse and unadorned fashion, and here Carey remains supreme. It will indeed be a pity if many are not led by the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of its appearance to study the *Enquiry* and to face its challenge.

The late Dr. Payne was President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland. [p. 316](#)

The Enquiry

William Carey 1792

(Excerpt)

SECTION 1

*An Enquiry whether the Commission given by our Lord to his
Disciples be not still binding on us.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ, a little before his departure, commissioned his apostles to *Go, and teach all nations*; or, as another evangelist expresses it, *Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*. This commission was as extensive as possible, and laid them under obligation to disperse themselves into every country of the habitable globe, and preach to all the inhabitants, without exception, or limitation. They accordingly went forth in obedience to the command, and the power of God evidently wrought with them. Many attempts of the same kind have been made since their day, which have been attended with various success; but the work has not been taken up, or prosecuted of late years (except by a few individuals) with that zeal and perseverance with which the primitive Christians went about it. It seems as if many thought the commission was sufficiently put in execution by what the apostles and others have done; that we have enough to do to attend to the salvation of our own countrymen; and that, if God intends the salvation of the heathen, he will some way or other bring them to the gospel, or the gospel to them. It is thus that multitudes sit at ease, and give themselves no concern about the far greater part of their fellow-sinners, who, to this day, are lost in ignorance and idolatry. There seems also to be an opinion existing in the minds of some, that because the apostles were extraordinary officers and have no proper successors, and because many things which were right for them to do would be utterly unwarrantable for us, therefore it may not be immediately binding on us to execute the commission, though it was so upon them. To the consideration of such persons I would offer the following observations.

First, if the command of Christ to teach all nations be restricted to the apostles, or those under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, then that of baptizing should be so too; and every denomination of Christians, except the Quakers, do wrong in baptizing with water at all.

Secondly, if the command of Christ to teach all nations be confined to the apostles, then all such ordinary ministers who have endeavoured to carry the gospel to the heathen, have acted without a warrant, and run before they were sent. Yea, and though God has p. 317 promised the most glorious things to the heathen world by sending his gospel to them, yet whoever goes first, or indeed at all, with that message, unless he have a new and special commission from heaven, must go without any authority for so doing.

Thirdly, if the command of Christ to teach all nations extend only to the apostles, then, doubtless, the promise of the divine presence in this work must be so limited; but this is worded in such a manner as expressly precludes such an idea. *Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the world.*

That there are cases in which even a divine command may cease to be binding is admitted—As for instance, if it be *repealed* as the ceremonial commandments of the Jewish law; or if there be *no subjects* in the world for the commanded act to be exercised upon, as in the law of septennial release, which might be dispensed with when there should be no poor in the land to have their debts forgiven (Deut. xv. 4.) or if, in any particular instance, we can produce a *counter-revelation*, of equal authority with the original command, as when Paul and Silas were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Bythinia. (Acts xvi. 6, 7) or if, in any case, there be a *natural impossibility* of putting it in execution. It was not the duty of Paul to preach Christ to the inhabitants of Otaheite¹ because no such place was then discovered, nor had he any means of coming at them. But none of these things can be alleged by us in behalf of the neglect of the commission given by Christ. We cannot say that it is repealed, like the commands of the ceremonial law; nor

¹ i.e. Tahiti.

can we plead that there are no objects for the command to be exercise upon. Alas! the far greater part of the world, as we shall see presently, is still covered with heathen darkness! Nor can we produce a counter-revelation, concerning any particular nation, like that to Paul and Silas, concerning Bythinia; and, if we could, it would not warrant our sitting still and neglecting all the other parts of the world; for Paul and Silas, when forbidden to preach to those heathens, went elsewhere, and preached to others. Neither can we allege a natural impossibility in the case. It has been said that we ought not to force our way, but to wait for the openings, and leadings of Providence; but it might with equal propriety be answered in this case, neither ought we to neglect embracing those openings in providence which daily present themselves to us. What openings of providence do we wait for? We can neither expect to be transported into the heathen world without ordinary means, nor to be endowed p. 318 with the gift of tongues, & c, when we arrive there. These would not be providential interpositions, but miraculous ones. Where a command exists nothing can be necessary to render it binding but a removal of those obstacles which render obedience impossible, and these are removed already. Natural impossibility can never be pleaded so long as facts exist to prove the contrary. Have not the popish missionaries surmounted all those difficulties which we have generally thought to be insuperable? Have not the missionaries of the *Unitas Fratrum*, or Moravian Brethren, encountered the scorching heat of Abyssinia, and the frozen climes of Greenland, and Labrador, their difficult languages, and savage manners? Or have not English traders, for the sake of gain, surmounted all those things which have generally been counted insurmountable obstacles in the way of preaching the gospel? Witness the trade to Persia, the East-Indies, China, and Greenland, yea even the accursed Slave-Trade on the coasts of Africa. Men can insinuate themselves into the favour of the most barbarous clans, and uncultivated tribes, for the sake of gain; and how different soever the circumstances of trading and preaching are, yet this will prove the possibility of ministers being introduced there; and if this is but thought a sufficient reason to make the experiment, my point is gained.

It has been said that some learned divines have proved from Scripture that the time is not yet come that the heathen should be converted; and that first the *witnesses must be slain*, and many other prophecies fulfilled. But admitting this to be the case (which I much doubt)² yet if any objection is made from this against preaching to them immediately, it must be founded on one of these things; either that the secret purpose of God is the rule of our duty, and then it must be as bad to pray for them, as to preach to them; or else that none shall be converted in the heathen world till the universal down-pouring of the Spirit in the last days. But this objection comes too late; for the success of the gospel has been very considerable in many places already.

It has been objected that there are multitudes in our own nation, and within our immediate spheres of action, who are as ignorant as the South-Sea savages, and that therefore we have work enough at home, without going into other countries. That there are thousands in our own land as far from God as possible, I readily grant, and that this ought to excite us to ten-fold diligence in our work, and in attempts to spread divine knowledge amongst them is a certain fact; but that it p. 319 ought to supersede all attempts to spread the gospel in foreign parts seems to want proof. Our own countrymen have the means of grace, and may attend on the word preached if they choose it. They have the means of knowing the truth, and faithful ministers are placed in almost every part of the land, whose spheres of action might be much extended if their congregations were but more hearty and active in the cause; but with them the case is widely different,

² See Edwards on Prayer, on this subject, lately re-printed by Mr. Sutcliffe.

who have no Bible, no written language, (which many of them have not), no ministers, no good civil government, nor any of those advantages which we have. Pity, therefore, Humanity, and much more Christianity, call loudly for every possible exertion to introduce the gospel amongst them. [p. 320](#)

Reflections on the Enculturation/Social Justice Issue in Contemporary Mission

Frederick S. Downs

*Reprinted with permission of the American Baptist Historical Society
from The American Baptist Quarterly VIII/4 December 1989*

In this thought-provoking article, the author reflects on the issue of enculturation and/or social justice in the context of Carey and missions today. He argues that Carey sided with Paul against James on this issue. He compares Carey's attack on caste with the protests of the Dalit Movement in India today.

Editor

One of the oldest missiological issues for Christians is the relationship between faith and culture. It was implicit in the James/Paul controversy of the apostolic period. From the perspective of this paper the issue can be described in the terms of varying responses to the question: is there a normative Christian culture? James argued that there was: Palestinian Jewish culture. Therefore it was necessary for anyone desiring to become a Christian first to become a Jew. Paul argued that there was no normative Christian culture. Christianity was a culturally pluralistic faith. At the time Paul's argument prevailed. In the history of Christianity, however, the voice of James has continued to be heard, and there have always been those, perhaps the majority, who have acted on the assumption that there is, in fact, a normative Christian culture into which converts must be initiated.

CAREY ON THE SIDE OF PAUL?

To give an example, among those involved in missionary work in nineteenth-century India there was a heated debate on the subject. One side argued the case of James, the other the position of Paul; and as usual there were the Peters trying to establish a compromise position! In effect the Jameses argued that in order for the people of India to become Christians they must first embrace western culture. [P. 321](#) They had some persuasive arguments; the Jameses always do. The main stumbling block for Indian people who might otherwise wish to become Christian was the traditional culture, particularly the caste system. Caste and traditional Indian culture were so closely related, it was argued, that the only way Christian missions could succeed was by doing everything possible to destroy that culture. The best way to do this, they believed, was through the introduction of English education—or, at least, western education in the vernacular medium. When exposed to the obviously superior western culture, traditional Indian culture would crumble. In the pre-Darwinian days they placed great emphasis upon